Canadian Literature / Littérature *canadienne*

A Quarterly of Criticism and Review
Number 237, 2019, House, Home, Hospitality
Published by The University of British Columbia, Vancouver
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Editorial

Articles

Articles, *continued*

Poems

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Reviewers

Opinions and Notes

Canadian Literature, a peer-reviewed journal, welcomes original, unpublished submissions of articles, interviews, and other commentaries relating to writers and writing in Canada and of previously unpublished poems by Canadian writers.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 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.

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Notice of Change

As of 2019, *Canadian Literature* will refer to our journal by issue number and not by season and year. Four issues per calendar year will continue to be published. Please note that issue 236 is published as 2018, but 237, 238, and 239 will be published as 2019. For the calendar year 2020 we will publish issues 240, 241, 242, and 243.

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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*, *European Reference Index for the Humanities, 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

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SUBSCRIPTION FOR ISSUES 236-239
CANADA (GST INCLUDED): INDIVIDUAL $60; INSTITUTION $242.55
OUTSIDE CANADA (SHIPPING INCLUDED): INDIVIDUAL $90 USD; INSTITUTION $272.55 USD

ISSN 0008-4360

Managing Editor: Donna Chin
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Production Staff: Janin Balleza, Niamh Harold, Brendan McCormack, Beth Veitch
Design: George Vaitkunas
Illustrations: George Kuthan
Printing: Hignell Printing Limited
Paper: recycled and acid-free

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

Editorial

Be Our Guest

Brendan McCormack

> A new magazine always appears in a double guise. It is in one sense the arriving guest, anxious to exert whatever attractions it may possess on its potential host—the particular public to which it has chosen to appeal. But at the same time it sets out to become a host itself, offering its hospitality to writers and their ideas, and ready to welcome to the salon of its pages the most brilliant and the most erudite of guests.
> —George Woodcock, Editorial, *Canadian Literature* 1

> When you invite Indigenous scholars into your colonial institutions, as guests … there is an implicit expectation you will be on your best behaviour. In fact, *visiting* is one of the things that deeply informs Métis being. Hosting and being hosted is one of the ways we build up our nationhood, renew kinship obligations, and restore relationality. *We take hosting, and being hosted, very seriously.*
> —Zoe Todd, "Your failure of imagination is not my problem"

I can recall with clarity my first visit to this journal's home offices, which are housed in the Anthropology and Sociology building at the northwesternmost reaches of UBC's Vancouver campus. Upon the Point Grey cliffs, overlooking the Salish Sea and North Shore mountains, nestled between the historic, Tudor-style Cecil Green Park House and the glass-walled, post-and-beam Museum of Anthropology, the setting was—still is—extraordinary. The home of *Canadian Literature* I found tucked away amidst this splendour was, well, just a little more ordinary. *Homely*, even. I'm not sure what I was anticipating, or if I'd ever truly stopped to consider the journal existing elsewhere than its pages. As a copyeditor and aspiring Canadianist, though, I was certainly eager to enter what I imagined as the house built on George Woodcock's foundations, since remodelled by a succession of editors. If there were in fact "hallowed halls of CanLit" (Lederman) someplace, surely the field's eminent elder statesjournal made its home there. Yet as I descended that day into the bowels of the building in

which I'm now writing, each downward step to its semi-subterranean, concrete-blocked basement seemed a step away from my inklings of a journal whose purported "Kerrisdale values" were once debated in these pages (Ricou and Weir). In hindsight, I should have expected no more than the eminently modest, warmly austere, but spacious and serviceable offices I found, along with the convivial team of staff and students who liven them and make the journal tick. It was not that the emperor had no clothes, really, but that those clothes were much less tweedy than I'd envisioned, closer to what I wear on a modest budget—function over fashion. Today, less oblivious to the economics of academic publishing, and to the reality that literary journals tend more toward house-of-cards than hallowed hallways, I better appreciate the journal's real privilege of having any place to call home.

I'm one of many students who have found a home at *Canadian Literature*, whose institutional commitment to the support and mentorship of emerging scholars is one of several new wings added to the blueprint of its initial 1959 design. This year marks the journal's sixtieth birthday, and there's no shortage of housekeeping in our offices as we prepare to host anniversary events during Congress at our UBC home, on the unceded land of the hən̓q̓əmin̓ən̓-speaking Musqueam people whose hospitality makes the university's work possible. Hosting—and what it means to be a good host—is very much on our minds as we extend invitations and welcome visitors to celebrate and reflect on the journal's past and future. Our public festivities will include a reading, emceed by poetry editor Phinder Dulai, featuring Jordan Abel, Sonnet L'Abbé, Daphne Marlatt, Cecily Nicholson, and Shazia Hafiz Ramji—some of the innovative writers who've appeared or been discussed in these pages over the years. A reception will follow with a short program to honour the journal's history and recognize those building its future with a 60th Anniversary Graduate Student Essay Prize. The events are scheduled for the evening of June 1, 2019, at Green College, and are free and open to the public (see canlit.ca for details). We hope you'll be our guests.

Maybe it's just frequency illusion, but amidst the housekeeping, I can't stop seeing the language of house, home, and hospitality everywhere in the everyday discourse of the journal, including in this issue. For those of us who live in essays, these concepts are built into the interior design of our intellectual work—among the "metaphors we live by" (*pace* Lakoff and Johnson), whether tacitly or intentionally adopted. Composition textbooks often ask students to imagine their papers like a house, introductions a *doorway* into a many-roomed textual/intellectual space *built* with a clear

structure. Articles house arguments that need *support*, that rest on *solid* or *shaky* intellectual *foundations*. We *scaffold* pedagogies and *construct* interpretive *frameworks*. Behind the journal's doors, editing is done *in-house*, following a *house* style that's accessible from the *home* page of our website, which *hosts* our archives and *houses* other supplements. We track *visitors* online, *welcome* submissions, and collaborate with *guest* editors. Yes, tracing this wordplay is maybe too much fun. But it's more than an exercise in pedantry, just as these metaphors are not simply stylistic embellishments, but necessary for making sense of the often-intangible processes and domains—including the Web—wherein scholarship is materialized and exchanged. They pervade the journal's quotidia because they permeate conceptions of its social relations and the content it "houses."

House and home. Stuart Hall distinguishes: "It is our use of a pile of bricks and mortar which makes it a 'house,' and what we feel, think, or say about it"—including the "words we use" and "stories we tell"—which "makes a 'house' a 'home'" (3). The articles housed in this issue tell a range of stories about the complicated, often difficult politics of making home, of feeling or being at home together. The "notion of *home*," as Aubrey Hanson reads it in Katherena Vermette's *The Break*, "is a complex one" for the novel's Métis women—an affective, relational space where "multiple understandings are interwoven." The "word *home* appears on 113 of the book's pages"—and by my count, 124 times in Hanson's article. This is no stylistic error; iteration and recursion reveal home as a continual process of departures and returns, a space that falls apart and is held together, that maintains kinship and calls people into ethical relations. Reading Rita Wong's work, Alec Follett articulates the need for settlers who call Turtle Island home to reimagine destructive relations with water and Indigenous knowledges in support of environmental justice. James Hahn attends to the ethics of poetry that makes home in another's life story, reading Stephen Scobie's documentary reconstruction of Robert McAlmon and the literary violations of his private intimacies. Spaces of home traverse the place and partitions of house and page, negotiating home between public and private spheres, and across political and epistemological borders.

Hanson builds a Métis epistemology of home from Maria Campbell's assertion that stories are "a start to finding our way home." Storying home, for Campbell, is a decolonizing imperative given the nation-state's displacements, including those of its academic institutions and archives of colonial knowledge-production. The colonial hostility of the Canadian

archive is Jane Boyes' concern in her reading of *Janey's Arcadia*, wherein Rachel Zolf's glitchy poetics reveal the "irony of settler 'hospitality'" in nation-building texts that construct Canada as a welcome home to some through violent erasures of others. Working in the archives of McClelland & Stewart, Deanna Reder and Alix Shield recover crucial missing pages from Campbell's 1973 autobiography *Halfbreed*, scrubbed from the original manuscript without consent by its publisher. The excised pages—and RCMP "incident" therein—recount a brutal violation of home and body; and the textual violence of their excision is part of wider histories of destructive editorial practice in CanLit's publishing houses. Reder and Shield's restorative work newly informs the legacy of Campbell's foundational text, which has long inspired Indigenous literary community across generations finding home in its pages. In their dialogue on mentorship, anti-racism, and allyship, Sharanpal Ruprai and Sheniz Janmohamed describe the formative influence of path-clearing texts for South Asian women of colour writers navigating CanLit's structures. Their note takes conversation to the page as a model of mentorship and positionality, asserting the need to build community spaces of exchange while acknowledging "when to step out of conversations and give space and respect by listening."

Which brings me back home, to the house this journal's pages started building six decades ago. How has the house become a home? How does *Canadian Literature* enact hospitality? Whom does it welcome as visitors? What conversations can it still productively host? How might it become a better guest? Where is its welcome worn, and when is it time to step away and listen? On one hand, these are practical questions of *feasibility* in a rapidly changing publishing landscape, particularly as the move to open access shifts the foundations of traditional publishing models. Like other journals, we are deeply invested in welcoming more visitors and subscribers, and in making the journal the kind of accommodating space that all sorts of scholars see as a valuable home for their work.

On the other hand, these are ideological questions of *responsibility* for a journal such as this, whose creation in 1959 not only reflected the cultural nationalist climate that made its title possible, but helped support the institutional framework of a cultural formation, "CanLit," that now appears so inhospitable, so *unhomely*, and for many always has been. While *Canadian Literature* is not reducible to CanLit, it's also not *not* CanLit, and *that* house, to read the conceptual metaphor in the title of the important recent collection *Refuse*, lies in *ruins*—open to renovation, up for new

ownership, or slated for demolition, depending on perspective. The mythic home of CanLit as a "tight-knit community" (Lederman) was always gated. In "refuse: a trans girl writer's story," Kai Cheng Thom asks: "can you reform/ remake/revolutionize / a place you never lived in?" (108). For some, home is—must be—elsewhere. For those still dwelling in that ruinous house and contemplating their complicities in the state of its edifice, the question remains, as the editors of *Refuse* suggest, how to "imagine and build other ways of being together" (13). At this moment when CanLit is at once uninhabitable and ripe for rebuilding, it is incumbent upon its institutions—including its journals—to reimagine their hospitality and social relations.

When Woodcock first introduced *Canadian Literature* to its readers sixty years ago, his opening words enacted an ideal of intellectual hospitality that was broadly construed (addressing "no clan, little or large"), though implicitly elitist (welcoming "the most brilliant" and "erudite" guests), and paradoxically reciprocal. Announcing open-house for the first scholarly "home" of its kind in Canada, he footed the threshold between journal and literary public by knocking on both sides of the proverbial door: welcoming as guests those same people and institutions whose hospitality the journal's existence would depend on as hosts. Fifty years and two-hundred issues later, Margery Fee described how "home" for *Canadian Literature* still persisted within that "lucky conjuncture" of reciprocal relations—material and social—supporting the journal's identifications, along with something less tangible linking the web: "a belief that puzzling out social meanings is vitally important, and one of the best places to focus that effort is in the production and study of literature, broadly defined" (9). Ten years later still, I think this belief holds, though the lucky conjuncture supporting *Canadian Literature*'s real or imagined identifications is increasingly disjunctive, the relational web precariously woven. And the Web itself is where puzzling out social meaning in CanLit now happens on social media; tweeting, blogging, podcasting, and other non-traditional publishing enable an immediacy of engagement attendant to the times.

Canadian Literature is no longer the "new magazine" Woodcock introduced, though, and technology has expanded the "salon of its pages" in directions difficult to conceive in 1959. (Woodcock's final editorial cautioned against the culturally corrosive effects of mass media he perceived in 1977. What would he write about Twitter?). The verbal definition of *hosting* itself has evolved with the digital age, now encompassing the work of computers and servers that host data and make it accessible over networks and the

Internet. Last year, the open-access *CanLit Guides* educational project, housed online by *Canadian Literature* to support literary study and bring the journal's discourse into the classroom and homes of the public, successfully launched sixteen new chapters hosted at canlitguides.ca. That site has already been visited nearly 200,000 times since, by a global audience reaching from Australia to Angola to Azerbaijan. What the journal houses, the way visitors access it, and the publics it serves have not remained static, and nor will they.

Reder and Shield's article on *Halfbreed* that leads this issue was first published on canlit.ca in May 2018. The editor of *Canadian Literature*, Laura Moss, decided to launch it online immediately in recognition of the significance and timeliness of the intervention. It was just too important to sit on in-house. It's been visited nearly 10,000 times on our website, half of those in the first weeks, when the article and Campbell's pages it documents made national headlines. Certainly, its wide dissemination communicated the value of the kinds of literary scholarship happening in Canada, and housed in journals like this, to a wider public. Reder and Shield conclude with hopes of a re-release of *Halfbreed* keeping with Campbell's original intentions, and a new edition—with the once-excised pages returned home—is now slated for shelves later this year. The story of that article and its afterlife invites sober reflection on the violent impositions upon particular homes, bodies, and texts in the colonial house of Canada and literary houses of the nation's publishers, but also on the potential of committed writers and scholars to host conversations built upon alternative foundations and platforms. Just what kind of house this journal can or should be for these conversations is a question now sixty years in the making, and part of our necessary homework.

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Pauline Peters

Guardians

Down near the edge of the water you will find Mothers wide as gods,
guarding the gates to the ocean.
Down near the edge of the water you will find Mothers wide as gods,
listening to the lakes, their ears whorled shells, tilted toward the water,
guarding the gates to the ocean.
Down near the edge of the water you will find Mothers wide as gods,
water pouring through their fingers, making new Niagaras,
guarding the gates to the ocean.
They embrace waves high as churches and soothe the heaving waters,
They stroke the arched back of the sea and smooth her wrinkled surfaces,
guarding the gates to the ocean.
Down near the edge of the water you will find Mothers wide as gods
speaking underwater languages, down near the edge of the water,
guarding the gates to the ocean.

Deanna Reder and Alix Shield

"I write this for all of you"
Recovering the Unpublished RCMP "Incident" in Maria Campbell's *Halfbreed* (1973)[1]

"I write this for all of you," announces Métis author Maria Campbell in her 1973 autobiography *Halfbreed*, "to tell you what it is like to be a Halfbreed woman in our country" (8). Campbell describes her life growing up in extreme poverty in northern Saskatchewan in the 1940s and 50s—a poverty created by the 1885 defeat at Batoche that pushed Métis claims aside in favour of European settlement. After her mother's death and a short, failed marriage at age fifteen in a thwarted effort to keep her younger siblings together, Campbell drifted West, scrabbling together a living by whatever means she could. After two suicide attempts and a nervous breakdown, she decided, at the age of thirty-one, to confront everything that had happened to her and began to write her life story.

Her publisher, McClelland & Stewart, suspected that the book would be successful, but never anticipated that the initial print run of 4,500 copies[2] would immediately sell out. They ordered an additional 4,000, then another 2,500,[3] and struggled in that first year of publication to keep up with demand. Professors from across Canada lobbied for a paperback edition to teach in their classes.[4] Universities at that time had little, if any, Indigenous content, and certainly nothing from a Métis perspective.

Deanna Reder

Few understood before Campbell's book that Métis peoples were shunted literally to the margins of society, to the sides of the roads called Road Allowances where the land had no price and no value. They were left, writes Campbell in *Halfbreed*, with "no pot to piss in or a window to throw it out"

(26). By using her autobiography to give an account of the often forgotten tales of Métis resistance against unwinnable conditions, Campbell inspired a generation of Indigenous writers to tell their own stories. Delaware playwright Daniel David Moses called her "the Mother of Us All" (Lutz 83).[5]

So it is with some hesitation that I declare that this book is special to me and my family because many would say the same. However, my ties to this book are strong, not just because I am Métis and Campbell was born in the very same part of the world as my mother, in the very same month and year—April 1940—but also because it is the only book I ever remember my mother reading. She was excited to recognize the descriptions of places, ways of living, and people, like Métis leaders Jim Brady, who lived for a while in her hometown of La Ronge, and Malcolm Norris, whose son she had briefly dated as a teenager. Looking back, I realize that this demonstrated to me how Indigenous people rarely see our lives accurately depicted in mainstream media, so that finding a book written by someone who looks and lives like us is validating and precious.

I can even go so far as to credit Campbell with inspiring my current research on the neglected and understudied canon of Indigenous writing in Canada. My doctoral work focused on Indigenous autobiography in Canada, and as a professor at Simon Fraser University I have taught *Halfbreed* often over the years.

In April 2017, I attended an international conference in Dublin where Maria Campbell had been invited to speak. Called "Untold Stories of the Past 150 Years," the conference marked Canada's sesquicentennial by gathering together scholars, poets, and storytellers to share examples of neglected histories. For many of us, Campbell was the highlight of the event. *Halfbreed,* after all, is one of the most famous Indigenous autobiographies published in Canada. The book explains how the state used social institutions—schools, police, media—to make Indigenous peoples ashamed of their cultures. As Campbell's great-grandmother, Cheechum, states in the book: "They make you hate what you are" (90).

To my surprise, I ended up being seated next to Campbell herself; on the other side of Campbell was my research assistant and settler scholar, Alix Shield. Hoping to write on the publishing history of *Halfbreed* as a case study in her doctoral research, Alix asked Campbell about her manuscript, which we had heard had been handwritten on hundreds of pages of foolscap. Campbell explained that she hadn't seen any need to keep these papers and had probably burned them. Knowing that Alix was about to go on a research

trip to Ontario that fall, I asked Campbell if there might be early drafts in the McClelland & Stewart fonds at McMaster University. She was encouraging. We promised to let her know what we found.

Alix Shield

In October, six months after our meeting in Dublin, I was visiting the McMaster University archives in Hamilton as part of a month-long research trip. Around the same time, news was breaking of the Harvey Weinstein scandal; women were coming forward with allegations of sexual assault, coercion, and harassment against the film producer. And it was only the beginning of a movement that would gain momentum over the next several months.

Deanna and I already knew, thanks to the important archival work of historian Brendan Edwards, that a particular "incident" involving the RCMP appearing in Campbell's manuscript had been deemed by publishers as too "libellous" to include in *Halfbreed* and was removed prior to the book's publication.[6] We had also heard that Campbell's autobiographical text had been revised from around 2,000 handwritten pages to less than 200 (Lutz 42). After several weeks in the archives, I set aside a day to explore Campbell's files in the McClelland & Stewart fonds. I sat down with a pile of manuscript pages, and began skimming them for any editorial notes. Some of the names had been scratched out and changed, but otherwise the editorial marks were very minimal. About a hundred pages in, I came across a page-and-a-half that had been struck out with a giant red "X." The excised passage contained a story from Campbell's childhood, taking place when she was only fourteen years old:[7]

> During all this time Dad worked for Bob and poached on the side, and as usual the Mounties and wardens were often at our house. We were eating fairly well, as Dad made good money from the sale of meat. One day he was away and Grannie and I were drying meat in the bush. We had a tent set up about a mile from the house and all the children were with us. I raced home to get something we'd forgotten just as three R.C.M.P drove up in a car. They said they were going to search the house as they knew Daddy had brought meat home the day before. I let them in and said that everyone else was at the store, and prayed that no one would come from the camp. While one Mountie was upstairs and another in the barn, the third followed me into the kitchen. He talked for a long time and insisted that I knew about the meat.
>
> Suddenly he put his arm around me and said that I was too pretty to go to jail. When I tried to get away, he grabbed my hair and pulled me to him. I was frightened and was fighting back as Robbie came running into the room. He tried to hit the Mountie but was knocked to the floor. I was nearly to the door when the other one came in. All I can recall is being dragged to Grannie's bed where the

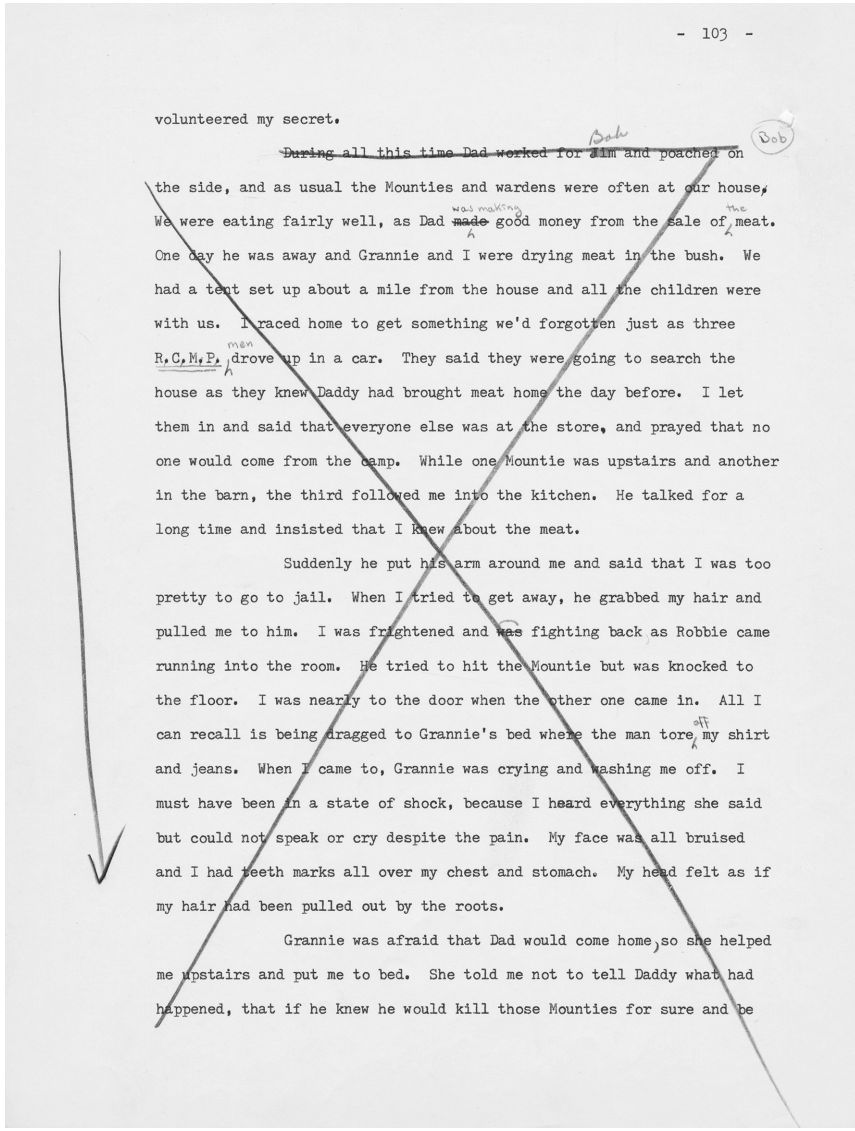
> man tore my shirt and jeans. When I came to, Grannie was crying and washing me off. I must have been in a state of shock, because I heard everything she said but could not speak or cry despite the pain. My face was all bruised and I had teeth marks all over my chest and stomach. My head felt as if my hair had been pulled out by the roots.
>
> Grannie was afraid that Dad would come home, so she helped me upstairs and put me to bed. She told me not to tell Daddy what had happened, that if he knew he would kill those Mounties for sure and be hung and we would all be placed in an orphanage. She said that no one ever believed Halfbreeds in court; they would say that I had been fooling around with some boys and tried to blame the Mounties instead. When Daddy came home she told him that King had gone crazy and had thrown me. Dad sold King because he was afraid that I might be crippled or even killed next time. I don't know what Grannie told Robbie. After that, he always hated the police, and when he grew up he was in trouble all the time and served prison terms for assaulting policemen. My fear was so great that I even believed they would come back and beat me to make sure that I told no one. For weeks afterwards, if I heard a car coming into the yard, I would be sick to my stomach with fear. (Campbell, "Halfbreed Woman")[8]

The significance of this passage was immediately clear. I phoned Deanna soon after, whispering through the phone from the library basement. I explained that I was still in the archives and urged her to read the pages that I was about to send.

Deanna Reder

I was very familiar with the chapter in question because of the dissonance I experienced when first reading the book. I now realized that the gap I noticed in the narrative was created by the decision to simply X out the rape. Chapter Twelve, and indeed the whole book, shifts when you learn that Maria, on the brink of womanhood and growing in competence and confidence, is violated. The result is a blow to her and to her family. While in the published version there is no explanation for Robbie's subsequent rebelliousness that saw him placed "in fifteen foster homes" before eventually moving to Alaska (147), the excised passage could explain his lifelong hatred for the police and his later convictions for assaulting them.

In a 1989 interview with Hartmut Lutz, when Campbell complains that this passage was removed, she states: "That whole section makes all of the other stuff make sense. And you can almost tell at what point it was pulled out. Because there is a gap" (Lutz 42). Earlier in the story, when the family suffers the loss of their mother, Grannie Dubuque arrives to take care of the children. This relieves Maria, the eldest, from the burden of providing childcare. Now, with this missing passage recovered, one can imagine the trauma the



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volunteered my secret.

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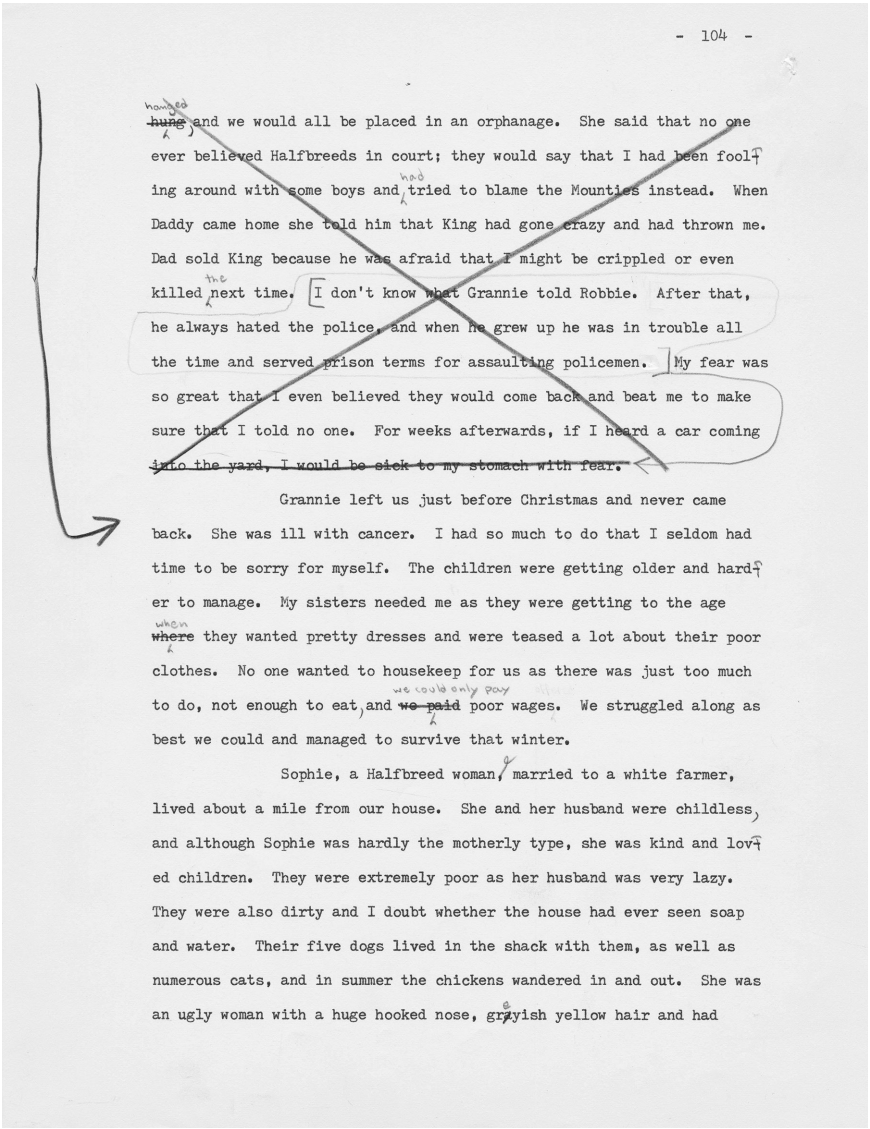
Excised manuscript page from "Halfbreed Woman."
Used by permission of Maria Campbell.



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hanged
~~hung~~ and we would all be placed in an orphanage. She said that no one ever believed Halfbreeds in court; they would say that I had been fooling around with some boys and had tried to blame the Mounties instead. When Daddy came home she told him that King had gone crazy and had thrown me. Dad sold King because he was afraid that I might be crippled or even killed the next time. I don't know what Grannie told Robbie. After that, he always hated the police, and when he grew up he was in trouble all the time and served prison terms for assaulting policemen. My fear was so great that I even believed they would come back and beat me to make sure that I told no one. For weeks afterwards, if I heard a car coming ~~into the yard, I would be sick to my stomach with fear.~~

Grannie left us just before Christmas and never came back. She was ill with cancer. I had so much to do that I seldom had time to be sorry for myself. The children were getting older and harder to manage. My sisters needed me as they were getting to the age ~~where~~ when they wanted pretty dresses and were teased a lot about their poor clothes. No one wanted to housekeep for us as there was just too much to do, not enough to eat, and ~~we paid~~ we could only pay poor wages. We struggled along as best we could and managed to survive that winter.

Sophie, a Halfbreed woman, married to a white farmer, lived about a mile from our house. She and her husband were childless, and although Sophie was hardly the motherly type, she was kind and loved children. They were extremely poor as her husband was very lazy. They were also dirty and I doubt whether the house had ever seen soap and water. Their five dogs lived in the shack with them, as well as numerous cats, and in summer the chickens wandered in and out. She was an ugly woman with a huge hooked nose, greyish yellow hair and had

Excised manuscript page from "Halfbreed Woman."
Used by permission of Maria Campbell.

grandmother went through, acting as a surrogate mother, having to both care for her granddaughter after a sexual assault and hide this news from her son-in-law. Her subsequent and unexplained departure resulted in the breakup of the entire family, when they couldn't manage without her.

Also, it is in this excised passage that we read that there is a disruption in Maria's memory when she recalls being dragged to her grandmother's bed but nothing else, describing what she calls a "state of shock" that causes a sense of disassociation in which she "heard everything [Grannie] said but could not speak or cry despite the pain." With Grannie Dubuque gone, Maria had little opportunity to express her grief, so she suppressed it, dismissing her emotions by minimizing what happened: "I had so much to do that I seldom had time to be sorry for myself" (88), she writes in the book. While the passages that follow don't lament the loss of her grandmother, Campbell describes going to the school dance with her new housekeeper, Sophie, and insulting her. Asked by friends if her chaperone was her mother, Maria responds: "'That old, ugly Indian?'" and describes feeling "shame and hatred for her, myself, and the people around me" and "wanting to cry so badly, but not being able to" (90). Her lack of legal or social outlets to speak about the rape compounds her inability to voice her anger and pain until it erupts in self-damaging ways. In fact, her unmentioned physical and sexual assault by the police troubles the rest of the narrative.

Alix Shield

The excision also changes the book right from the beginning. In the Introduction to *Halfbreed*, Campbell writes about the difficulties of returning home to Saskatchewan, and explains how writing this book was part of coming to terms with her past: "Like me the land had changed, my people were gone, and if I was to know peace I would have to search within myself. That is when I decided to write about my life" (7-8).

That Campbell was even willing to share the rape publicly is extraordinary. Yet when reading the archival correspondence between members of McClelland & Stewart's editorial team, I began to realize how insistent they were about removing this passage, even though, as Campbell states, "I had insisted it stay there" (Lutz 42). When the *Halfbreed* manuscript was first sent over to McClelland & Stewart by Jim Douglas (of Vancouver publishing house Douglas & McIntyre), the editors agreed that significant revisions were required in order for it to be published. The manuscript was submitted under Campbell's legal name, June Stifle, but was to be published under the

pseudonym Maria Campbell; this name was chosen for sentimental reasons, after her great-grandmother, and not as a means of hiding her identity.[9] The manuscript changed hands several times, and eventually landed at the desk of Jack McClelland. A memo, provided by Jim Douglas, accompanied the manuscript and described it as follows:

> This is the story of her life and a grim life it has been . . . . A life of violence and meanness on the part of her men and her church and the police. Her first sexual experience was to be raped by RCMP officers in her own home—and it goes down from there. It is the round of indignity and degradation that sociologists write about. Here, an articulate, intelligent half-breed tells us what it is really like. (Douglas)

After reading through the manuscript, McClelland responds to Douglas' endorsements with skepticism:

> I'm afraid that I don't agree with your assessment as to how we should proceed. Aware as I am of your usually realistic and discerning eye when it comes to manuscript evaluation, I have concluded that you must have been overwhelmed by the author's personality, by your meeting with her and possibly unduly influenced by her agent (or whatever his function is) who I suspect maybe [*sic*] prone or susceptible to the same influence. (McClelland, Letter to Douglas)

McClelland goes on to outline the significant revisions and excisions necessary before the project could proceed. This included expanding the childhood material, and condensing the later "Vancouver" section. Even in these early stages of manuscript consideration, McClelland identified the sexual assault incident as one that he believed could pose problems:

> One point that really bothers me is her experience with the RCMP. I don't know, because I haven't checked with a lawyer but my suspicion is that this could not be used. The RCMP could almost certainly get an injunction stopping the distribution of the book and they almost certainly would. Then it would be up to her to prove the incident. I presume that this would be almost impossible and a messy business that she wouldn't want to be involved in. . . . I haven't any doubt about the incident itself. I am sure it occurred just as I know it occurs today, but I think the only time one can do anything about it is when it occurs. (McClelland, Letter to Douglas)

While McClelland suggests that the rape scene is not worth such legal complexities and is therefore dispensable, his approach fundamentally opposes Campbell's own reasons for writing the book "as a kind of therapy to purge myself" (qtd. in Woods). As part of the book's "Preliminary Publishing Plan," McClelland & Stewart proposed a strategy for marketing the book in which Campbell would play the role of victim to emphasize the "major

theme of injustice to be promoted personally by the author" ("Preliminary"). Yet the injustice of her sexual assault, despite her insistence at its importance, wasn't allowed to be mentioned.[10]

Upon examination of the original submission, McClelland decided to move forward, under the strict condition that Campbell provide a revised draft following his recommendations, including the removal of the rape scene. But that didn't happen. Instead, Campbell sent the manuscript back early the next year with minimal changes, prompting Executive Director Anna Porter to question her progress: "Has she in fact revised it since your correspondence with Jim's query[?] [I]f she has, the revision has been completely unsuccessful" (Porter, Letter to McClelland). At this stage, the "RCMP Incident" was proving a point of contention between the author and her publisher. In a letter addressed to June Stifle (Campbell) on January 15, 1972, one year before the book was published, editor David Berry writes: "I don't know if Dianne or Jack McClelland told you that we are taking out the incident with the Mounties. We'd like to keep it in, but our lawyer advises us that unless it could be proved the RCMP could get an injunction to stop the sale of the book."

After receiving several partial revisions from Campbell over the next ten months, David Berry writes a letter to Jack McClelland in November 1972: "I thought you should know that she has re-inserted the Mountie-rape incident in the revised manuscript. Her own lawyer apparently thinks this is OK, but as we might feel differently about it I thought you should know." Several days after this memo was sent, McClelland writes a letter to his lawyer, Mr. Robert I. Martin, asking for advice: "Sometime [sic] ago we discussed a problem relating to a book by a Métis woman . . . We concluded jointly that we could not safely include this incident. Her lawyer tells her that we could. I would like to include it if we can, but I am still of the opinion that it could lead to an injunction."

Over the next two months, McClelland & Stewart pushed to get the book finished and into production. In a letter dated January 12, 1973, David Berry writes to Campbell with an update: "We made very few changes in the manuscript, and since there was a big rush to get it to the printer I didn't think it would be worthwhile to send it back to you." At this point, an internal memo was sent around McClelland & Stewart stating that they were to "drastically advance the schedule on this book" and that "we had all better give this title special attention whenever possible" (Scollard). It's difficult to know at this stage if Campbell was being deliberately left out of editorial

conversations. By the time the master proofs were arranged in February of 1973, the entire page-and-a-half had been crossed out with red pencil, and was never mentioned again.

Deanna Reder

In January 2018, we emailed Campbell with news of Alix's discovery of the excised passage. "Wow you actually found it," she replied. "I didn't think [Jack McClelland] kept it because when I asked him for it he said he had destroyed it so I wouldn't get into trouble" ("Re: research after Dublin").

We arranged to visit her at her home in Saskatoon in late February. As we sat at Campbell's dining room table, Alix presented her with a prayer tie—tobacco wrapped in red cloth—and I gave her some sweetgrass and a small gift. Campbell brought us tea and prepared the meatloaf she was making for our lunch. Once Campbell was seated, Alix showed her the scans of the missing passage. Campbell shared how, when she received her author's copy by mail in 1973, she went directly to the point in the book where the passage should have been. That's when she discovered it had been removed.

Campbell encouraged us to write about our findings, but did not want to be involved. Now seventy-eight, she is busy as a teacher and an activist with little interest in going back to talking about those days. As our visit was drawing to a close, Campbell shared a story with us. When she was a girl her family would get assorted books for twenty-five cents a box, and she remembers that sometimes there would be a book by poet E. Pauline Johnson in the batch. Her favourite poem by Johnson was "The Cattle Thief." Campbell remembers falling upon the poem with pride—the thought that an Indigenous woman could be a writer amazed her. She used this example to explain how often in her life she had received awards, but the awards themselves were never important. What convinced her to accept them was the thought that such acknowledgements might set an example for young Indigenous girls to believe in themselves.

Halfbreed became a bestseller, and arguably remains "the most important and seminal book" written by an Indigenous woman in Canada (Lutz 41). Had this passage not been removed, the effect is, of course, impossible to say. It would have allowed the author to publicize a rape she never reported out of fear she would have been disbelieved; this might have inspired an earlier generation to consider the mechanisms that silence women. Campbell lays bare the racism that continues to complicate an Indigenous woman's account of sexual assault—as Grannie Dubuque warned in the excised passage,

"[N]o one ever believed Halfbreeds in court." Campbell's description of the sexual assault might have raised awareness and conversations that now, amidst today's National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, are coming into public discussion. In the Lutz interview, Campbell is asked if she would ever like to rewrite *Halfbreed*. She responded: "Yes, some day. I don't think I'd make changes. What I would do with the book is, I would only put in that piece that was taken out. I wouldn't want to touch what's there, because that was the way I was writing then, and I think that it's important it stays that way, because that's where I was at" (47). Only now, with the recovery of this excised passage, forty-five years since its first publication, can a reissue of Campbell's book be done as she originally intended.

NOTES

1 This article was originally published on the canlit.ca website in May 2018. Maria Campbell supports the publication of the article and has granted *Canadian Literature* permission to publish it and to reproduce the original excised manuscript pages on the web and in print. Since the problems surrounding the excised pages came to light when this article first appeared on the journal's website, there has been renewed interest in the book. Over five thousand people read the article in the weeks after it was published. A new edition of *Halfbreed* is being released in November 2019 with McClelland & Stewart. It will include the missing passage, a short introduction by Kim Anderson, and a conclusion by Maria Campbell. Further, M&S will be issuing an audiobook read by Maria Campbell herself.

2 See Porter, Letter to Witmer. In this letter, Anna Porter, Executive Director at McClelland & Stewart, suggests to Glenn Witmer (and copied to other M&S staff including J. G. McClelland, L. Ritchie, D. McGill) that in this initial print run of 4,500 copies, books should be sold for $5.95. This same letter also states that *Halfbreed* "has great magazine potential," and that they plan to send a set of galleys to *Weekend* magazine for possible publication.

3 See "Re-print Purchase Order for 'Half Breed Woman'" and "Delivery required by September 26th." Both of these purchase orders are addressed to the Alger Press (Oshawa, ON), and are signed off by Peter Scaggs, of McClelland & Stewart's production department.

4 See Audley, Letter to Porter and copy to Glenn Witmer and Don Roper, 31 Aug. 1973; Audley, Letter to Porter, 28 Sept. 1973; Porter, Letter to Dave McGuill and copy to Paul Audley, 17 Oct. 1973. These letters discuss the possibility of McClelland & Stewart issuing a quality paperback version of *Halfbreed*, citing requests from professors at the University of Toronto and Brock University who expressed interest in teaching *Halfbreed,* especially if the book were offered at a lower price point.

5 In an interview with Hartmut Lutz, as recorded in *Contemporary Challenges: Conversations with Canadian Native Authors* (1991), Lenore Keeshig-Tobias credits Daniel David Moses for this quotation.

6 See his article in McMaster University's *Historical Perspectives on Canadian Publishing*

digital series, titled "Maria Campbell's Halfbreed: 'Biography with a Purpose.'" This "incident" is also discussed in Hartmut Lutz's interview with Campbell in *Contemporary Challenges*.

7 The authors have decided to reproduce the passage as Campbell wrote it before further edits, except for one name change to correspond to the names in the published book.

8 We are grateful to Maria Campbell for giving us permission to reproduce these unpublished pages from the original typescript manuscript.

9 See Berry, Letter to McClelland. In this letter, McClelland & Stewart editor David Berry explains to Jack McClelland that although they having been working on the *Halfbreed* manuscript with June Stifle, she has expressed that she would actually prefer "to use the name Maria Campbell as her professional nom-de-plume, but doesn't care about concealing her real identity and would not object to the use of a photo on the jacket or to in-person promotion."

10 A clipping from *The Globe and Mail* titled "RCMP harassing Indians, committing sexual acts against women, head of group charges" was found among the McClelland & Stewart "Halfbreed Woman" correspondence at McMaster University, addressed to the attention of editor David Berry. This article was published on January 13, 1973, only months before the publication of *Halfbreed.* Also in 1973, the same year that *Halfbreed* was published, the RCMP celebrated their organization's centennial anniversary.

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Hendrik Slegtenhorst

Legacy

It's the winter moon of misery
That gives pause; the vagueness
Of good intentions, the underlying
Capacity to exterminate.
My father insisted there were
A lot of good people. And I have wanted to believe
That our stardust binds heart and soul.

Having survived the firebombing of Hamburg,
Watching the dawn rise upon the pulverized city,
Creates an optimism I should accept. The risk
Of leaving everything—language,
Culture, family, friends, history—
Rests on a decision so profound
That pessimism has no place.

Yet he worried.
All the time. He worried about loss, especially
The loss of others. And it settled in
The sanctuary of his heart. Often I think
That is what he gave me
That means the most. For with that, I too
May be able to weep myself into paradise.

Aubrey Jean Hanson

Holding Home Together

Katherena Vermette's *The Break*

For the characters in Katherena Vermette's novel *The Break*, the notion of *home* is a complex one, as multiple understandings are interwoven through their experiences. At one point in the story, Flora—the Kookom (grandmother) at the centre of the family—inquires after Gabe, her daughter Lou's partner. Gabe has been away for a while with his extended family, and Flora asks Lou, "So, Gabe's not coming home?" (282). Lou tells her mother, "He's not coming home, Ma. He is home" (283). In reading this richly layered novel, understanding home means travelling with these characters as they hold each other together; conversely, understanding how they hold each other together means recognizing how they think about home.

In my own experience as a Métis woman, *home* is affective and relational, not merely a static sense of place. When I was growing up, we moved a fair bit, even when it was just within Calgary. Until my mid-thirties, the longest I had ever lived in one house was three years. The exception was my maternal grandparents' house, which was the extended family home from the 1960s until the early 2000s. I lived there directly, at times, or very nearby. Even when my house changed frequently and we moved—when my mom was renting places and raising us girls as a single parent, or later when I moved around as a student—that family home was there, a quiet constant in the background. I always prided myself on my ability to handle change, to move without feeling disrupted, and did not think consciously that I was attached to anywhere. Home was wherever my mom and sister were, or wherever we were when we were with my dad.

I think I did not realize how stable a sense of place I had until it came time for my grandparents to sell their house—they had moved back to Medicine

Hat and were living in a smaller condo—and I started to mourn that house. I spent time in that house in my dreams, sifting through layers of time: family gatherings, meals, games, visits with my grandparents and my innumerable aunties and uncles and cousins. I had not realized consciously that despite all our moves we were always in orbit around that house, and that my mom was not parenting alone, but in a web of relations spanning outward from my grandparents. I had not realized consciously that while I lived in many places I was deeply at home in that house, and, even deeper than that, I was at home in my connections with my kin.

In the past few years, my grandfather and then my grandmother have passed away. Ever so slowly, the creep of age and Alzheimer's muffled my grandmother's spark, drained the ever-present vibrant flow of her stories, and weakened the strong body that had raised and held together four generations of proud people—a rambling, prairie Catholic-Métis-German family. Before she died, my grandmother celebrated her ninetieth birthday with all nine of her children. After she passed on, I remembered the way she was years before: her eyes bright, her voice laughing, her hands baking, her mind always weaving together the past with the present, the there with the here, constantly narrating for us how things were and might be. When she died, I learned that *that* was home.

This personal learning was still swirling in my mind when I picked up *The Break.* At first, I was reading the novel for portrayals of resilience, of enduring sexual violence, of the strength that resides in women's bodies. I was looking for the ferocity of the love between the Métis women. However, my attention was increasingly drawn to the prevalence of *home* in the story. The word *home* appears on 113 of the book's 350 pages.[1] The notion of home seems tremendously significant. While I started out looking at the strength of the women in the story as they grapple with the impacts of violence, and at the ways in which their strength is relational, I began to see how that relational resilience takes place through multiple and shifting conceptions of home.

Reading Katherena Vermette's *The Break*

Vermette is a Métis woman living and writing in Winnipeg. She writes about the city's North End, where she also set her Governor General's Award-winning book of poetry, *North End Love Songs* (2012). Her first novel, *The Break*, was published in 2016 to widespread public, critical, and academic attention. In examining this text, I position myself as a scholar of Indigenous literatures, but also personally as a Métis woman. In keeping

with critical approaches established within Indigenous literary studies, I write from my personal positioning, situating my understandings in relation to my own experiences as well as the text and its contexts, both critical and socio-cultural. As Métis scholar Jo-Ann Episkenew contends, it is vital for readers of Indigenous literatures to approach texts in ways that are socially responsible, that connect to the real-world experiences of Indigenous people, and that acknowledge the interconnections between literary representations and Indigenous community well-being. Episkenew in particular offers cautionary advice to non-Indigenous academics who are not well informed about the contemporary realities of Indigenous peoples, arguing that "scholars need to be cognizant of the authority that society accords their voices" ("Socially Responsible" 57). Her call for responsibility can be extended to all literary critics, including Indigenous ones, given that scholarly "articles have an effect on the social situation of the Aboriginal people who are their subjects" (57). Building upon this ethic from Episkenew, I am interested in "the applications of Indigenous literature as it moves outside the boundaries of the text to affect the material world" (*Taking Back* 193), and I read *The Break* through both the text and its context. Sharing how my understandings of the text are shaped by my positioning and experience is one way of enacting this kind of responsibility.

In this article, I focus on notions of resilience and home for urban Indigenous women through a reading of *The Break*. As a Métis reader taking up a text by a Métis author, I read largely for the Métis specificity in the book, which is abundant. However, the book has both Métis and First Nations characters, and can also be taken up under the broader rubric of Indigenous literatures. As an important note on distinctions between Métis and First Nations, I appreciate how this book resists explicit labels, taxonomies, or divisions, relying on implicit cues about characters' positionings or experiences rather than explaining them clearly for readers. For example, when I read the book, I took Rita—Cheryl's best friend—to be Anishinaabe rather than Métis. As her daughter Zegwan (Ziggy) verbalizes, Rita's children's names are "Anishinaabe" (60), and Lou mentions how, in the past, Rita "lived on reserve" and was more "traditional" (40). Pointers are scattered throughout the text for careful and familiar readers to find, but the novel refuses to lay things out too clearly. The fact that the central family, the Charles and Traverse family, is Métis, is likewise not explained heavy-handedly; rather, it is treated as known through humble, implicit clues. For instance, Cheryl calls her daughter "my girl" (55); the

family calls their grandmother "Kookom" (87); and, in the hospital room, Cheryl looks at Officer Tommy Scott and thinks, "Yes, he's definitely Métis. Looks like one of Joe's brothers" (113). In reading this text, I am particularly examining its Métisness, but I am also reading it as Indigenous—that is, I use "Indigenous" as a more general term, within which "Métis" experience is a specific subset. Along with Métis scholars like Chantal Fiola, I believe it is vital for Métis and First Nations Peoples to be recognized as kin; to see that the divisions between us are the result of colonial processes; and to look for ways "to recognize and reject these colonial divisions, while embracing and celebrating our differences, in order to heal our relationships" (11). In this spirit, my arguments here focus on urban Métis women, but also urban Indigenous women and people more broadly, as appropriate to the range of characters portrayed in Vermette's novel.

My reading of *The Break* addresses significant aspects of the text, but also takes on particular significance given the contexts surrounding the novel. At the time that I was first reading this book in 2017, Canada's 150th birthday was generating attention, and Indigenous people were voicing counter-narratives in response to national celebrations. I was also well aware, as I read, of the prevalence of violence against Indigenous women and Two-Spirit people in Canada and of the public dialogues around that issue. I wondered what *The Break* might offer to such dialogues, in terms of challenging Canadian narratives that fail to recognize Indigenous women's presence in cities. For instance, how does *The Break* make space for Indigenous resilience and unsettle narratives that prioritize the Canadian nation? How, in particular, might understanding what *home* means to Vermette's characters help to foreground Indigenous women's experiences? I asked these questions in order to respect the processes of personal and cultural expression that the literary arts embody, while also attending to the calls that Indigenous literatures make for social change.

In framing my reading theoretically, I am working under a rubric of reading for resurgence, which offers a way to engage with literary texts in order to support, align with, foster, sustain, and nurture the self-determination of Indigenous communities and peoples. I build upon the work of Indigenous scholars who are thinking through resurgence, in the sense of Indigenous survivance—as formulated by Anishinaabe scholar Gerald Vizenor—as well as celebration, politics, culture, reclamation, and revitalization. Broadly speaking, I align resurgence work with the (re)strengthening of Indigenous ways, rather than with the dismantling of colonial systems, structures, and

ideologies that comprises the work of decolonization. In prioritizing resurgence, I follow scholars and artists like Leanne Betasamosake Simpson (Michi Saagiig Nishnaabeg) and Craig Womack (Muskogee Creek/Cherokee) to view decolonization as a vital but distinct process that takes place alongside, but which should not supersede or subsume, resurgence work.

I believe that artistic practices are integral to community resurgence, and I understand the literary arts as a potential site for Indigenous people to imagine and enact community resurgence. In so doing, I look to Simpson, who invokes a celebratory, vitalizing process, describing resurgence as "a flourishment of the Indigenous inside" (16). Building upon such understandings, I define resurgence as the regrowth of Indigenous communities from strong roots toward strong futures, building upon tradition and heritage through processes of revitalization and reclamation in order to create healthy, vibrant, self-determining nations. Reading for resurgence connects my understandings of literary texts to that vital work. In relation to *The Break* more particularly, reading for resurgence brings me to examine the notion of resilience. While the term "resilience" has been defined and deployed in a wide range of ways across disciplines, I define it here through the language of the novel: resilience means "fighting" (278), "holding each other up" (291), being "okay" and "strong" and able to "heal" (329); it means not being "broken" (318) despite experiences of unspeakable violence. My arguments below illustrate how these characteristics of reslience run through the novel, emphasizing the vital contribution that *The Break* makes to portrayals of urban Indigenous women.

This article moves in two parts. In the first, I expand on the concept of reading for resurgence by setting out the key terms underlying my examination of *The Break*. I also stress why it is urgent to recognize urban Indigenous women's resilience, looking at the context surrounding Vermette's book. In the second part, I proceed with my reading of the novel. This reading foregrounds the resilience of the women in the text by demonstrating how kinship and mobility, as well as multiple conceptions of home, are at work in their stories. I conclude with a consideration of why it matters to hear stories expressing the resilience of Indigenous women in urban spaces.

Resilience—Home, Mobility, and Kinship

The primary concepts through which I am reading for resilience in Vermette's *The Break* are home, mobility, and kinship. The interrelatedness of these terms helps to map out the conceptual framework supporting my

arguments. The first term (home) arises out of my reading of the text itself. In seeking to draw out ways of understanding the novel from within the novel, I am remembering Anishinaabe scholar Kimberly Blaeser's powerful call to look "for critical methods and voices that seem to arise out of the literature itself" (53). This call was part of a necessary push to "approach Native literature from an [I]ndigenous cultural context" or to "frame and enact a tribal-centered criticism" (53). Articulated twenty-five years ago now in Okanagan writer and scholar Jeannette Armstrong's foundational collection *Looking at the Words of Our People* (1993), Blaeser's call has been a persuasive touchstone for Indigenous-centred studies of Indigenous literatures, and a growing body of scholarship has responded to and developed critical framing and enactment along those lines.[2] The second two terms (mobility and kinship) emerge from my reading of the text but also from my considerations of critical contexts in relation to resilience and home. I will explore each term briefly before moving on to how they shape the women's lives in the novel.

With so many Indigenous people living in cities, understandings of *home*, and of what it means to belong in urban spaces, are vital to community well-being and self-determination. Responding to Anishinaabe artist Rebecca Belmore's performance piece *Vigil*—which commemorates missing and murdered Indigenous women in Vancouver—critic Elizabeth Kalbfleisch suggests that the increasing prevalence of urban Indigenous populations "calls for the recognition of an ideological home, one that is central to cultural memory and political agency and to maintaining the relevance and currency of the adopted inhabited home" (285). I am interested in what such recognition would look like for Métis people, whose conceptions of home or homeland have been shaped through particular histories and experiences.

In looking to scholarly literature for considerations of home, I find a number of helpful examinations that relate to Métisness and/or urban Indigeneity—separately if not together. For instance, scholars have looked at fluid conceptions of home and Métis experience (MacFarlane); notions of homeland for the Métis (Andersen; St-Onge, Podruchny, and Macdougall); and the growing numbers of self-identified Métis in Canadian cities (Laliberte). In my reading thus far I have found one scholarly text that specifically articulates Métis experiences in relation to *home*, and that is from Métis author Maria Campbell. In her foreword to the book *Contours of a People: Metis Family, Mobility, and History,* Campbell writes that "coming together to share these stories is a beginning or a start to finding our way home. Home

meaning the place where the spirit dwells" (xxv). Campbell's consideration of home as both located in communal practice and as spiritual residence connects well to what I see in the experiences of Vermette's characters.

Equally vital to understanding Métis people's experiences of home in relation to urban space is the understanding that urban Indigenous people are mobile. In using the word *mobility* in my reading, I am referencing the thinking of authors in *Contours of a People,* the collection on Métis identity edited by Nicole St-Onge, Carolyn Podruchny, and Brenda Macdougall, in which mobility is one fundamental concept for understanding the Métis as a people. Additionally, mobility among urban Indigenous people means that they "transgress the classic rural / urban binaries" that have shaped so much research on Indigenous populations (Peters and Andersen 387). Such binaries are colonial restrictions imposed on the identities of Indigenous people, locking them into fixed categories rather than recognizing and affirming their ways of being. Consequently, it becomes important to attend to the work of artists like Vermette who insistently portray urban Indigenous resilience in characters who are mobile and who exercise agency in their articulations of home.

Related to the mobility of the Métis is the notion of *kinship*: while on the move, Métis people have been tied together through bonds of relationship. St-Onge and Podruchny argue that "extensive webs of kinship" were key to Métis survival and adaptation in difficult environments historically (82), and set kinship alongside mobility in terms of Métis ethnogenesis. Kinship is also a broadly used category of analysis across Indigenous literary studies. Cherokee scholar Daniel Heath Justice, for instance, takes up kinship and community as "interpretive concepts" for "ethical Native literary criticism" (149), exploring "the relationship of our literatures to our communities—and the role of that relationship in ensuring the continuity of [I]ndigenous nations into the future" (150). Communities are continually shaped through stories, through imaginative work done within relationships. Within Indigenous literary texts, explorations of kinship can illuminate significant sites of survival and self-determination.

Urban Indigenous Women's Resilience

In contextualizing my reading of *The Break*, I want to consider why stories of Indigenous women's resilience matter for Indigenous women, and what effects such stories might have on Canadian consciousness if they are taken up by broader readerships. I am reading, first and foremost, for resurgence,

but am also aware of the unsettling impacts such texts can have when they are published and read in Canada or even held under the umbrella of Canadian literature. As a scholar of Indigenous literatures and Indigenous education, I feel that multiple, often-conflicting impulses are at work in my scholarship and teaching. At times, focusing on the resurgence projects of Indigenous peoples while also teaching non-Indigenous learners about these projects offers opportunities to build better relationships between groups. However, these two undertakings are often "irreconcilable," to borrow a term from Métis scholar David Garneau, who argues the necessity for spaces where "Indigeneity is performed apart from a Settler audience," where Indigenous "people simply are, where they express and celebrate their continuity" without translating for others (33). In relation to *The Break* and my readings here, I believe there is space for considering both. I am reading primarily for resurgence, but also asking attendant questions about what impacts the stories told by this book about urban Indigenous women's resilience might have on the surrounding work of unsettling Canada.

For one thing, as allied scholar Paulette Regan points out, Indigenous stories unsettle the peacemaker myth and collective understandings of Canada as a peaceful, benevolent nation (105). Indigenous stories challenge many Canadians' prior understandings of history and their own positioning in relation to Indigenous peoples—which, as Lenape and Potawatomi scholar Susan Dion argues, sometimes makes those stories difficult for settler audiences to hear and understand, resulting in "dynamics of denial" (59). In addition, the story of urban Indigeneity remains largely unheard. More than half of Indigenous people in Canada live in cities.[3] While Indigenous peoples in Canada are often portrayed within dominant discourses as being elsewhere—in the distant past or on rural reserves, and further distanced through the idea of the "romantic, mythical Other" (Dion 56)—Indigenous peoples are in fact ever-present, both in time and place. Until recently, most studies of urban Indigeneity were framed through a "deficit model" (Newhouse and FitzMaurice xvii), which posited Indigenous people as out of place in urban spaces, or "Indigenous peoples and their cultures as incongruous with modern urban life" (Peters and Andersen 1). However, scholarship is increasingly recognizing that cities can be "spaces of Indigenous resilience and cultural innovation" (Peters and Andersen 2): cities are Indigenous places.

Furthermore, the resilience of Indigenous peoples in enduring and resisting colonial violence is not a story that is heard often enough in Canadian contexts. Across Indigenous communities, people are working to

expose and dismantle colonial structures while reclaiming and revitalizing Indigenous ways of knowing and being. This decolonizing and resurgence work takes place at multiple levels—from individual mental health and family relationships, to language and education, to justice and governance—all of which are interdependent and essential to the well-being and self-determination of communities. The resilience of Indigenous peoples in Canada is remarkable as they work to regenerate their ontological and epistemological frameworks, to engage in traditional and innovative artistic expression, and to celebrate the validity and strength of their nations. I agree with Onondoga scholar David Newhouse and Kevin FitzMaurice that the narratives of loss, displacement, and dysfunction, or the "theme of lack" in deficit-oriented studies of urban Indigeneity (xii), marginalize understandings of cities as Indigenous spaces, failing to recognize resilience and resurgence within urban Indigenous communities. Unangax scholar Eve Tuck has, further, called for a "moratorium on damage-centered research" (423) that views urban Indigenous people "as broken" (409); in a related spirit, I emphasize resilience and resurgence in my readings here.

The resilience of Indigenous women in particular is not a story that is told, or heard, often enough. News and statistics tell a dire story, one that also must be heard. More than a thousand Indigenous women are missing or have been murdered in Canada: in 2017 Patty Hajdu, Canada's Minister for the Status of Women, "pointed to research from the Native Women's Association of Canada (NWAC) that puts [the figure] at 4,000" (Tasker). In my teaching, I find that students often ask, simply, why this crisis is taking place—a naive and vital question. The prevalence of such violence, paired with everyday racism, can foster a culture of acceptance, normalizing violence against Indigenous women. Mechanisms of power and oppression coalesce around Indigenous women's bodies within the socio-cultural context of the colonial nation-state—whether because of the equation of "the Native female body with the conquest of land in the 'New World'" (Finley 34) or because interlocking axes of racism, colonialism, sexism, poverty, and other forms of oppression constrain the Indigenous female body as a "rightful target" of violence (Razack 144). Such destructive narratives must be countered and undone through Indigenous women's own stories.

Recognizing these counter-narratives, I contend that listening to stories of Indigenous women's resilience, like the stories in *The Break*, can precipitate important shifts in perspective. Considering the impacts literature can have, I have a particular interest in texts by Indigenous writers who interweave the

realities of intersectional colonial violence with the resilience of Indigenous people in ways that open up space for well-being in our communities or for resurgence work to take place. I recognize the danger in looking for literary works that convey a clear narrative of empowerment: there is a risk of that arc overcoming the difficult and honest work of artists to portray, to represent, to dream, and to imagine. Acknowledging that risk, I work as a reader to examine those texts that confront colonial violence while recognizing Indigenous agency, focusing my readings on perspectives from Indigenous women.

Reading for Resilience: *The Break*

It is from within these contexts that I turn to Katherena Vermette's novel *The Break*. Narrated by ten distinct characters in interwoven segments, the novel seems to circle around the central incident of physical and sexual violence perpetrated against thirteen-year-old Emily. I prefer to see how the violence ostensibly at the centre of the story reveals what is truly central, however, which is the resilience embodied in the web of women in this family. The members of the Charles/Traverse family gather together to support Emily, who endures a brutal attack that takes place in "the Break" (3), a strip of open space in Winnipeg where Hydro towers run in a long line north. Her aunt Stella's house borders on the Break and it is Stella who witnesses the attack on the snow-swept field on a bitterly cold winter night. Accompanying Stella through this experience is the spirit of her mother, Rain, whose violent death has caused significant pain in the family, but whose narrative presence perhaps highlights the cohesiveness of the family relationships despite very real trauma.

By contrast to the resilient kinship in Emily's family, the devastating violence in the text overlaps with disrupted kinship webs. Phoenix, the young woman who leads the attack on Emily, has a past that is heavy with violence, trauma, and loss. Her staggeringly vengeful attack takes place after she sees Clayton—who seems to be her former boyfriend and the father of her unborn child—taking an interest in naive young Emily: Phoenix has already realized that "Clayton didn't love her" (150) when Emily shows up at Phoenix's uncle's house, invited by Clayton to a party there that night. The sharp ruptures in Phoenix's kinship webs help to explain—but not, of course, to justify—what has driven her to commit such an unthinkable act. Unlike Stella and Emily's family, Phoenix did not have a strong web of extended kinship to draw upon when her mother—dealing with her own

experiences of sexual violence and loss—was unable to parent her in healthy ways. Instead of a kin web of unquestioningly supportive women, Phoenix experiences state care and institutionalization. Her mother and her uncle, while still alive, are of little help. The portions of the narrative focused on her perspective feature nostalgic memories of familial loss. In my view, the novel does not demand forgiveness for Phoenix, but rather invites readers to see with open eyes the circumstances that have led her to where she is. She is not a faceless villain, but another young woman whose intergenerational struggles with sexual violence, poverty, and disconnection from family have led her to become solitary and hard. The novel leaves readers wondering what might be next for her and her unborn child.

By contrast, the strong family of Flora (Kookom), her children Cheryl and Rain (Lorraine), and their children Lou (Louisa), Paul (Paulina), and Stella, now raising their own children in turn, shows how urban Indigenous women's resilience can exist as embodied and enacted kinship. For these women, enduring is simply a way of being. When faced with a crisis, the women—daughters, sisters, mothers, aunties, grandmothers, and cousins, both living and in the spirit world—weather it together in their web of relationships. The interwoven narratives from the different women's perspectives emphasize this web. Together, the women endure the violence by being together and supporting each other in a powerful and primal enactment of relationship. This togetherness is highlighted by the experiences of Stella, who is separated from her relatives until the attack happens, after which she is drawn back. She has become distanced because she has moved out of the family neighbourhood, married a white man, Jeff, and has stopped visiting her relatives. Jeff is not comfortable with her travelling across town on the bus to take their children to what he considers a bad neighbourhood. Stella devotes her time and care only to her nuclear family, trying to be a really good mother, which is perhaps understandable given the loss of her own mother that she suffered as a child. As soon as she witnesses the attack, however, it becomes clear that her nuclear family model will not help her to cope with this crisis. She quickly realizes that her husband cannot understand or support her in the way that she needs. For instance, after hearing her conversation with the police, who do not believe Stella's assertion that the late-night attack she witnessed was a sexual assault, Jeff says to her, "They know what they're talking about. . . . It's okay. But with your past, hon, you know you could've just been dreaming. You could've just been confused" (15). Instead, Stella craves the support of the women in her

family. She wants to call her Kookom or her auntie: "Aunty Cher would've listened. She probably would've come over, made the coffee, yelled at the cops when they started acting like they didn't believe her" (15). Stella begins to recognize that she needs these women in her life.

While Stella moves in and out of the family web, the other women in the family draw together to handle the situation—gathering around Emily at the hospital and supporting Emily and her mother, Paulina, when the police come to ask questions. It is not just the things they do that make them strong; it is how they are together. Resilience is not magical or glamorous; it is the everyday business of enduring together—getting coffees, taking walks, making phone calls, buying sandwiches, sitting together over late nights, cleaning houses, getting blood out of fabric, putting blankets over the blood that will not come out. Resilience is just how things are, how they have to be. They can be falling apart, but they are, as Lou so clearly puts it, "not completely fucked. . . . everything's going to be okay" (288). Vermette's novel portrays urban space as a site of potential struggle and violence for Indigenous women, but it more powerfully portrays their resilience as they live out their relationships in the place they call home. In my reading, exploring what *home* means for the women in this novel illuminates the relational nature of their resilience—of the strength with which they are holding each other together.

Understanding Home in *The Break*

In illuminating the intertwined yet distinct notions of home that traverse Vermette's text, I am making two points. First, I want to show that, by holding differing but simultaneous understandings of home, and maintaining mobility between them, characters in this novel are able to draw upon multiple sources of resilience. That is, they have more than one figurative home to go to when they need to be safe or strong. Second, I want to show that home is not only a sense of place, but also a responsibility for action and mutual caretaking. *Home*, in this sense, is about navigating webs of kinship, and coming home is about stepping up to enact those kinship relations. *Home* calls people into ethical ways of being-in-relation. My purpose in drawing out these two interpretations is to argue that Vermette's novel portrays home in ways that open up possibilities for Métis women (and Indigenous women more broadly) to be resiliently at home in urban spaces despite ongoing gendered colonial violence. In what follows, I will move through the four conceptions of home that I see in this novel.

The first is the home of matriarchal kinship, of the everyday being together of kookoms, mothers, aunties, sisters, and children. This humble, embodied home is evoked through kitchens, babies, musty smells, tea, Noxzema, stories, mundane conversations, time, and photographs. It feels like home, in this sense, when the women are just being together. Woven into this conception of home is the web of relatives connecting the women in the story, those marked in bold text in the family tree at the front of the novel—Flora, Cheryl, Rain, Lou, Paul, Stella, Emily. One strong example of this conception of home is the dynamic between Stella and Kookom. Stella has been away tending to her nuclear family apart from her extended family, but she comes home to her grandmother's house after witnessing the attack. Kookom tells her, "it never feels like home until you are here" (199). After Stella returns she is able to feel this sense of home again as well: "Stella leans in to the soft couch, the smell of it soothing, perfect, imperfect, home, and falls asleep to the coos of her child and the gentle snoring of her Kookom, and in the shadow of her mother's face. And for the first time she feels she is exactly where she is supposed to be" (273). This sense of home is the home of women's relational resilience: they are enduring violence, supporting each other, surviving in the city, embodying care, sharing stories, tears, laughter. The young police officer investigating the attack, Tommy, sees "all these women holding each other up" (291), and they remind him of his mom and aunts. Marie, Tommy's mom, tells him that the women seem familiar because he is recognizing his own belonging in Métisness. She says to him, "they're your people, that's why" (301). Tommy shares a parallel sense of home to that of the Charles and Traverse family: he remarks, on entering Marie's apartment, that it "feels like home even though he's never even spent a night here. . . . Everything smells like her and that's what she is, home" (297). Tommy recognizes home as embodied through his maternal relations.

The second *home* is the simpler but distant home of the bush, the land, far outside of the city. This is the home where the men are, away from the women at the core of the story. Louisa sets out the distinct Indigeneity of this home space as she listens to Paulina describe Pete's family home. Paul tells Lou, "His parents still live in the house they all grew up in out in the bush just outside his reserve. The bush! . . . He hunts and everything"; and Lou considers this image: "a real house in a real community with a real family. Real Indians! Not city half-breeds like us" (42). With this line Lou voices—and, with humour or irony, pokes fun at—persistent misconceptions, including the notion that urban Indigenous people are less authentic, that

Métis people are not authentically Indigenous, and that urban and reserve populations are discrete. While challenging these misconceptions, the text is able to set out a rural/reserve (and largely First Nations) sense of home as fitting within an urban (and largely Métis) story. This sense of home is evoked through connections to the land, through breath and air, through good work like chopping wood, through cleanness and open spaces, through ceremony, and through past memories. This home, too, takes shape through kinship, but noticeably through separations between men and their women and children. This is the home that is meant as the characters repeatedly note that Gabe has gone "back home" (52), meaning that he is no longer home with Lou and the children. Similarly, Zegwan and Rita miss the home where Ziggy's dad and Moshoom are, and Cheryl misses the home where Joe is. Notably, this sense of home also invokes both the closeness of, and the differences between, the Métis and First Nations spaces and characters in the novel. While this second notion of home evokes a sense of health and Indigenous community, and while the women move freely in and out of this space, it is not where they have chosen to live: it is not home to their fierce survival together.

The third conception of *home* I see in the text is actually its inverse, a sharp contrast with the other two I have outlined. Revolving around Phoenix, this aspect of the novel sets out a striking absence of home, which is significant given the violence that Phoenix inflicts on Emily. In the early pages of the novel, Phoenix stumbles thankfully, half-frozen, into her uncle's house, having run away on foot from the detention centre where she has been in custody (121). There is no suggestion that this house is home to her: she notes that "the place is a total dump" (25) and although "they're family" (26), right away her uncle tells her, "you can't stay here" (30). Phoenix's uncle's house is a space of disarray, of cigarettes, booze, gang associations, parties, and people moving through. Phoenix's narratives are woven through with longing, memory, and loss. Her story is more elusive but carries the suggestion of kinship webs ruptured rather than sustained. Phoenix remembers being asked by a counsellor, "when did you feel most safe?" (31), but she seems continually unable to answer this question. Phoenix remembers houses she has lived in—such as "the brown house, Grandmère's house" (233)—and thinks of the house where her one surviving sister lives in foster care (144), but she does not talk about *home*. One exception occurs within a sad little memory: Phoenix remembers sitting up through the night watching her little sisters sleep, "waiting for her mom to come home, waiting for the sun to come up so it wouldn't be dark anymore" (143). Looking back, Phoenix thinks

"she was stupid and scared like that, but she was only a little kid" (143). This memory evokes the tender relationships that are now lost from Phoenix's life and that live on only in her longing rather than in her belonging.

The fourth conception of *home* is tangled up in the other three. In looking after each other, the characters build a sense of home that exists in their mutual caretaking over time. This fourth sense is that of *coming* home, something Phoenix's mother Elsie was not doing when Phoenix was little. This sense of home is voiced by various characters over the course of the novel. After the attack on Emily, Kookom pleads to her granddaughter, "Come home, my Stella. Please" (171). Struggling alongside her family, Lou narrates, "I think of Gabe for the first time in hours, wanting him to come home, to take care of the boys and to help me convince them everything is going to be okay" (178). This sense of home is also what Lou tries to describe to Paul when the latter struggles to believe that she deserves Pete: Lou reassures her, "It's not just blind luck, hey. You worked for this . . . you made a healthy home, and a man took notice" (54). Pete is a "good" man (54), as the women repeatedly point out, and the home Paul and he have made together is one where they will stay and take care of each other; Paul can "rely on him" (287). This final sense of home is one that evokes a wholeness of the family being together, in Pete and Paulina's case, but even more so evokes a sense of responsibility and continuity in that relationship. This home is about a mutual and ongoing needing, relying on, and taking care of each other. Unlike Pete, Gabe does not come home and stay home, in this sense: Lou admits that Gabe "wants to be needed" but, she says, "I just don't need him" (283). This way of sharing home together does not seem to be in Lou and Gabe's future.

The four senses of home that I have described are helpful in understanding the novel's conclusion. All four notions are closely interwoven during the collective trip that the families take at the end of the book. As many of the characters head out of the city to share a sweat at Ziggy's father and Moshoom's place, and as Emily works to heal from the violence that she has endured, the story brings together kinship, the land, resilience, men and women (and kids) taking care of each other, and a chance to come home. Rita says to Cheryl, "it's a good place, hey? . . . I never realize how much I miss it 'til I go back," and Cheryl, "with a look," tells her, "it's your home" (348). This ending is redemptive for Cheryl and Rita, Paulina and Louisa, and even for Kookom, as the multiple conceptions of home coalesce and as the women remain mobile between them. Meanwhile, Stella's ending is a

little more ambiguous: she has gone back home to her husband and things are not fully resolved with her wider family. The kinds of home she will inhabit remain to be seen. Again, there is still no home for Phoenix, now in custody: she faces a difficult future.

One portion of the conclusion is particularly striking. It is that of Emily's final narrative section, during which her remembered experience of the attack is shared alongside her current feelings as she prepares to leave the hospital. This segment is strongly affective; it is also densely woven with understandings of home, and it is where I conclude this part of my reading. The narrator tells us that, immediately after being attacked, Emily "just thought of home, her stupid smelly home where she could be warm and where everything would go away" (310). This is the home of her mom and her relatives, the humble and sensory notion of home that is associated with being taken care of. Now, however, from her place in the hospital, she feels that "everything's Before and After" (310). The attack has changed everything for Emily. The last portion of the text written from her perspective ends like this: "Paul says she'll go home soon, and Emily knows she has to, one day, but that part feels really distant. Going home is like another After, one that's even further away than Before" (311). Emily is unsure about going home, unsure about how different things will be. She does not know what *home* means anymore.

Her uncertainty is deeply poignant, particularly when read through her relatives' understandings of home at the end of the story. Reflecting back on her life, Flora hangs on to the memories of her kin: the daughters, granddaughters, and great-grandchildren she has loved. Kookom sees how "Emily has so many: Louisa, Paulina, Peter, Jake and the wee ones. Emily is alive and strong" (335). Invoking this connection between kinship and strength, Kookom knows that "as long as they hold on to each other, they will always be okay" (335). While Emily may not feel it at that moment, she is embedded in a living web of kinship, a space in which people take care of each other, and where they belong together. Her home is just there, waiting for her.

Finding Home in the City

As I conclude, I want to reiterate my contention that representations of Indigenous women's resilience, in relation to their communities, can erode dominant and dehumanizing understandings of what it means to be an urban Indigenous woman. It is significant that the Métis women in *The Break* are finding home—an ongoing, relational process—in their

webs of kinship: holding home together is what enables them to endure, to be resilient. A focus on urban Indigenous women's resilience works to undermine the colonial notions that frame Indigenous women's bodies as being out of place in cities and as natural targets of violence. Indigenous women are living Indigenous lives in urban spaces. Indigenous women can be at home in urban spaces, and in their mobility between urban and rural or reserve spaces. It is urgent that these stories reach attentive ears. Vermette's novel portrays endurance, creativity, and a strong spirit of more-than-survival that stories Indigenous women's belonging in cities. Such genuine and complex representations are resonant for me as a reader, but beyond their links to my own experiences in urban, Indigenous contexts, I recognize the impact that a literary work like *The Break* can have on diverse communities across this land. This significant counter-narrative challenges dominant understandings of the Canadian nation and calls for better relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples. Further, such storying fosters resurgence, opening up space for Indigenous women's well-being—for being at home.

NOTES

1 Many thanks to Katherena Vermette for searching electronically through her manuscript for this number.

2 I am thinking, to cite only a few, of Craig Womack's *Red on Red*, of Chadwick Allen's *Trans-Indigenous*, and of the widespread work of Indigenous literary nationalists, as discussed by Kristina Fagan et al. For a Métis-specific consideration of literary nationalism, see the work of Jennifer Adese.

3 For recent information, see Statistics Canada's "Aboriginal Peoples in Canada: Key Results from the 2016 Census."

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Sabyasachi Nag

Maria After the Concert

Back home after a quiet week at work
When she opened the door I leaned over
To touch a speck of pixie glitter on her collar
Bone. After dinner her blood pressure rose
And she needed a rub on her shoulder
Before she could breathe properly. It was Friday.
We changed into pink night clothes—
A kind of foreplay before a series of open
Heart surgeries. On TV, experts were analyzing
Japanese bush warbler songs and how the city
Birds with more complex song structure
Were guaranteed better sex and longer lives.
This was followed by images of Salman Abedi.
Bobbies on Brandt Street, talking.
Briana Grande pooching at cameras before
The Manchester concert. All of this while she lay
Curled on my thighs like a piece of cashmere.
The bronze skin of her nape, red from absentminded
Stroking of my fingers. All of a sudden
She started dissolving in a pool of tears. First her head
Then face, then the arms—reflecting the darkness.
When she came back in form, she was charging around
The breadth of the room—a wretched half
Demon as if just out from radiation—fearing
She will be told they failed to take the tumor off her throat.
She almost knocked the TV where the topic had changed
And they were discussing benefits of donkey milk soap.
I tried coaxing her into the shower,
Washing her head. Fixing a drink.
Forgetting won't change a thing she said.

Alec Follett

"A life of dignity, joy and good relation"

Water, Knowledge, and Environmental Justice in Rita Wong's *undercurrent*

On December 11, 2017, British Columbia's NDP government made a landmark decision to continue construction on the partially built Site C hydroelectric dam, to the dismay of West Moberly and Prophet River First Nations, as well as settlers who reside along the Peace River. The decision also elicited frustration from NDP and Green Party voters, academics, environmentalists, and Indigenous peoples who, while distanced from the immediate fallout of the Site C dam, shared concerns about the multi-dimensional harm the hydroelectric project will cause to the river, to non-human beings, to local Indigenous and settler communities, and to the broader goals of reconciliation and environmentally just energy policies. The provincial government argued that the project, which was initiated by the BC Liberal Party in 2010, could not be halted because of an estimated $2 billion in sunk costs. Located just downstream from the W. A. C. Bennett Dam (Site A), in Treaty 8 territory, the Site C dam will control the Peace River's flow and flood 5,500 hectares of the river's valley (McElroy). Responding to the impending destruction, Chief Roland Willson of West Moberly First Nations is leading efforts to stop the construction of Site C. Cognizant of the harm already caused by the W. A. C. Bennett Dam, he states: "Only 30 per cent of the Peace River is left that we have access to, and they are going to flood half of that to build Site C. We want them to leave it alone" (qtd. in Hunter). For people like Willson, the dam represents a looming environmental justice disaster, in which water's autonomy and life-giving promise to those beings who live in inseparable relation to the river are sacrificed for the short-term economic benefit of primarily settlers who live far to the south.

Rita Wong, the self-described "poet-scholar who works with and for water as she lives on unceded Coast Salish lands" (Wong and Goto), is a vocal critic of the Site C dam and an advocate for decolonial approaches to water.[1] For Wong, Site C is an unnecessary and destructive project. It is also a flashpoint that highlights how different approaches to water make possible radically different futures. While the pervasive capitalist understanding of water—as a resource—has contributed to the creation of the W. A. C. Bennett Dam and subtends the logic used to justify the Site C dam, prevalent Indigenous understandings of water—as a relative who is worthy of respect—encourage a future without hydroelectric dams. Through scholarship and poetry that often begins with self-reflection on her position as a middle-class, Asian Canadian woman, racialized settler, and consumer who was born into the oil-reliant province of Alberta, Wong has long acknowledged her complicity in the colonial project and her marginalization by white settler racism, and has interrogated the relationships between positionality, knowledge, and justice. Aware that the settler tendency to enact a Eurocentric hierarchization of knowledge that suppresses Indigenous and diasporic ways of knowing is used to justify the marginalization of certain groups of people and the destruction of certain environments, Wong wants "to build better relationships than what colonization would consign us to" ("4/4"). She works toward building "better relationships" through poetry and academic work that considers how knowledges may be placed in respectful conversation and how marginalized perspectives may be recovered and deployed in an effort to create a more equitable and less destructive world. In addition to her ongoing academic and poetic inquiry into knowledge systems, water, and justice, Wong supports the water and other beings who are affected by destructive Western approaches to water at Site C by participating in paddling protests, co-organizing poetry readings, and raising awareness on social media.

Wong's compelling environmental praxis manifests most powerfully in her fourth collection of poetry, *undercurrent* (2015). The collection contemplates the intertwined social and environmental harms that occur at Site C, and elsewhere, when settler desires to maintain the status quo discourage people from working with and caring for water; and yet, the poems are also hopeful. They articulate how a shared reliance on water serves as a link between Indigenous peoples and settlers on Turtle Island (North America). Wong's poems imagine how variously self-located settlers can work together to build better relationships with water and each other by considering cautious interactions among different ways of knowing. As a white settler scholar

who values environmental justice, I find Wong's praxis instructive for how it prompts me to reflect on and work from my self-location to mobilize knowledge in ways that encourage settlers to develop respectful relationships with Indigenous peoples and water in the service of justice. In this essay, I consider the many ways that Wong arranges knowledges in support of water: from demonstrating mutually enriching interactions between Indigenous knowledge and Western science to setting Western science in a purely supportive role, and from drawing on the knowledge embedded in one's own cultural heritage to scavenging whatever knowledges are close at hand. I argue that by taking a tentative and flexible approach to the deployment of and interaction among different ways of knowing, *undercurrent* contributes to a decolonial vision of environmental justice that supports mutually sustaining relationships among Indigenous peoples, settlers, and water.

With awareness of the historic and ongoing cognitive and material violence enacted by the colonial implementation of Western knowledge systems, might there nevertheless be moments in the fight for environmental justice when knowledges may be placed in productive and ethical conversation? Scholars such as Aman Sium, Chandni Desai, and Eric Ritskes are rightfully skeptical that people can apply Western and Indigenous knowledge simultaneously without reinforcing colonial hierarchies (iv). Consequently, physical and conceptual spaces in which Indigenous peoples can exist independent from settler presence and non-Indigenous knowledges must be made a priority. Métis artist and scholar David Garneau calls these settings, in which Indigenous peoples partake in "intellectual activities based on Native rather than Western epistemologies," "irreconcilable spaces of Aboriginality" (25). At the same time, Daniel Coleman, Marie Battiste, Sákéj Henderson, Isobel Findlay, and Len Findlay have gathered to consider the feasibility and benefits of placing knowledges into conversation. Drawing on the work of legal scholar Boaventura de Sousa Santos, they propose that the Eurocentric organization of knowledge that underpins settler colonialism can be destabilized when people respectfully engage with multiple knowledge systems (142-43). Notwithstanding the need for irreconcilable spaces, and despite the colonial attitudes that restrict Western knowledge such as science, philosophy, and theology from being placed in ethical relation to Indigenous knowledge, my reading of Wong's *undercurrent* suggests that although moments when knowledges are placed in ethical relation are complicated and tentative, they can contribute to decolonial environmental justice initiatives.

My approach to Wong's poetics is informed by Tania Aguila-Way's reading of Wong's second book of poetry, *forage* (2007), which Aguila-Way describes as a collection that "stage[s] a productive encounter between diasporic, Indigenous, and scientific ways of knowing" (49). While Wong takes seriously Indigenous knowledge by placing it in conversation with other knowledges, the manner in which these ways of knowing ought to interact in order to produce a "productive encounter," rather than to replicate colonial hierarchies, requires ongoing investigation from both poet and critic. Aguila-Way proposes that Wong's early poems depict Indigenous and diasporic peoples facing similar experiences of oppression, whereas Wong's later poems in *forage* interrogate how diasporic peoples are often complicit in settler colonialism, and how diasporic knowledges can be set in relation to Indigenous knowledge (223). This complicated process of reflecting on and articulating one's ever-changing subjectivity is important for Wong and for others who, like Wong, can claim multiple identities that often exist in contradictory and modifying relation—such as how one can claim and alter a settler subjectivity by also claiming an identity that is informed by racialization or participation in a diaspora—because how one chooses to self-locate can occlude or expose power and can generate or sever connections with certain ways of knowing, communities, and non-human beings. In this essay, I extend Aguila-Way's reading of Wong's oeuvre, self-positioning, and approach to the interaction among knowledges by reading *undercurrent* for the way Wong continues to think about diasporic peoples' involvement in settler colonialism, and for the way Wong now centres Indigenous knowledge as the focal point through which productive encounters on Turtle Island occur. In doing so, I suggest that respectful interaction among knowledges is a prerequisite for the emergence of any manifestation of allyship between variously self-located settlers and Indigenous peoples. As such, I provide a different yet complementary understanding of allyship in Wong's work than is articulated by Gillian Roberts, who reads *undercurrent* for the way allies position themselves in relation to settler colonialism and social movements such as Idle No More (78).

If Indigenous peoples and other beings affected by settler colonialism are to find redress from environmental injustices, Indigenous approaches to justice must be centred. Self-defined and culturally appropriate responses to environmental harm are justice imperatives, the likes of which are enshrined in the Principles of Environmental Justice that were adopted at the People of Color Environmental Leadership Summit in 1991 in the early years of the environmental justice movement. According to the delegates,

the Principles aim "to respect and celebrate each of our cultures, languages and beliefs about the natural world and our roles in healing ourselves" (299). Indigenous activists have taken culturally specific approaches to justice that are informed by their understanding of their nations' intellectual traditions and contributions to Indigenous knowledge—which Anishinaabe scholar Deborah McGregor describes as the knowledge that has, over millennia, encouraged people to enact responsibilities to ensure that "the relationship with Creation and its beings . . . [is] maintained and enhanced" (33). McGregor proposes that an Indigenous notion of environmental justice shares similarities with the American environmental justice tradition that addresses the disproportional amount of environmental harm faced by marginalized communities, but it differs because it draws on Indigenous knowledge and thus advocates for "justice for all beings of Creation, not only because threats to their existence threaten ours but because from an Aboriginal perspective justice among beings of Creation is life-affirming" (27). McGregor explains that while people have a role to play in justice, so too do other beings: "In the Anishinaabe world view, all beings of Creation have spirit, with duties and responsibilities to each other to ensure the continuation of Creation" (27-28). For example, McGregor writes that people must "respect and treat water as a relative, not a resource," and that "water has a role and a responsibility to fulfil, just as people do. We do not have the right to interfere with water's duties to the rest of Creation" (37-38). Learning Indigenous approaches to water and justice that encourage people to support the "continuation of Creation" is not only part of becoming a better guest on Turtle Island but can also help settlers work toward an alternative to the colonial present, in which all peoples and beings thrive.

Differently self-located settlers on Turtle Island who are trying to build relationships with water and Indigenous peoples by listening to Indigenous thinkers who generously share their knowledge are participating in acts that can disrupt the widespread settler practice of centring Western thinking. Settler colonialism has long involved discrediting Indigenous knowledge and championing Western ways of knowing in an effort to further settler aims (Haluza-DeLay et al. 4). For example, governments and corporations who are in favour of megaprojects, such as hydroelectric dams, regularly deploy science to generate environmental mitigation plans to appease concerned settlers. Although mitigation processes may limit environmental damage, such efforts perpetuate settler colonialism and do not amount to Indigenous visions of environmental justice, which would align more closely with Stó:lō

writer Lee Maracle's understanding that "*we do not own the water, the water owns itself*" (37, emphasis original). According to Santos, although aware of "marginal or subordinate versions of modern Western thinking which have opposed the hegemonic version" (45), users of Western knowledge often participate in the harmful act of "abyssal thinking," which

> consists in granting to modern science the monopoly of the universal distinction between true and false, to the detriment of two alternative bodies of knowledge: philosophy and theology. . . . These tensions between science, philosophy, and theology have thus become highly visible but, as I contend, they all take place on this side of the line. Their visibility is premised upon the invisibility of forms of knowledge that cannot be fitted into any of these ways of knowing. I mean popular, lay, plebeian, peasant, or indigenous knowledges on the other side of the line. They vanish as relevant or commensurable knowledges because they are beyond truth and falsehood. (47)

The challenge, for settlers who have adopted abyssal thinking, will be to replace this epistemologically limiting and thus destructive approach to knowledge and start to take seriously visions of justice that are informed by Indigenous and other knowledges that have long since been placed on the other side of the abyssal line.

Although Indigenous knowledge is central to generating ethical relations between beings and cultures on Turtle Island, decolonial environmental justice requires more than outright rejection of all non-Indigenous perspectives. Writer and critic Larissa Lai argues that "it does absolutely no good for settler folk to appropriate Indigenous practices, but if we can have our own practices that work in solidarity with Indigenous ones, then that strikes me as hugely relation-building" (266). Relation-building practices, which contribute to intercultural, decolonial environmental justice activism that works to support the "continuation of Creation," can emerge when non-Indigenous knowledges are cautiously placed in respectful relation to Indigenous knowledge. For example, Wong's understanding of water is informed by Indigenous knowledge as well as by watershed ecology. While Wong acknowledges that "Western science is only beginning to articulate" the connections that Indigenous knowledge keepers have long since known ("What" 86), watershed ecology's focus on the interdependence between beings and watersheds can be used alongside Indigenous knowledge to advocate for increased care and respect for water. As a poet, Wong makes her home in the uncomfortable yet valuable water where knowledges meet. Immersed in this confluence, Wong considers how settlers can work across knowledges and self-locations in support of water, Indigenous peoples, and decolonial relationships.

As a self-described "settler" and "unsettler" (Wong and Christian 2), Wong regularly listens to and respects Indigenous thinkers in an effort to unsettle abyssal thinking. Splatsin, Syilx, and Anishnaabe scholar Dorothy Christian and Wong have argued that doing so is "not only a matter of justice and principle, though it is certainly that, but it is also a practical matter of developing the cultural fluencies, actions, and philosophies needed to navigate together in a spirit of peace, friendship, and respect" (Wong and Christian 8-9). At the same time, Wong also finds value in arranging Indigenous and non-Indigenous knowledges in different ways, in order to disrupt the colonial hierarchization of knowledge and to engender new ways of knowing. For example, in "declaration of intent," from *undercurrent*, the speaker states,

> water is a sacred bond, embedded in our plump, moist cells
> in our breaths that transpire to return to the clouds that gave us
> life through rain
> in the rivers & aquifers that we & our neighbours drink
> in the oceans that our foremothers came from (14)

Embedded in this stanza is the scientific concept of the hydrological cycle that describes the circulation of water from rain, to runoff, to evaporation, to condensation, and then back to rain ("Water Basics"). Also embedded in this stanza is Indigenous knowledge that, for Christian, involves understanding that "everything within Creation is sacred and interrelated" (Christian and Wong, "Untapping" 238). Implicit in Wong's poem is an intervention into science that relies on Indigenous knowledge to enrich the concept of the hydrological cycle from one that excludes people and is not sacred to one that includes people and is sacred. Meanwhile, the scientific approach that delineates the precise movement of water through cells and breath, as well as through the hydrological cycle, enriches an Indigenous approach to the world that celebrates water's movement and its inseparability from life. By embedding two knowledges within the same passage in a way that allows each perspective to complement the other, Wong generates a decolonial interaction between knowledges that is facilitated by water.

Also implicit in *undercurrent* is a different yet equally important interaction between knowledges, in which the value of science may reside in its modest ability to support an Indigenous approach to water. The speaker of "for Gregoire Lake *which way does the wind blow?*" tries to build a relationship with water that is informed by Indigenous knowledge and encouraged by what scientists know about chemicals. In the left-hand column of the poem, the speaker talks to the North Albertan lake and approaches it tentatively with thanks,

thereby indicating that the water is a being who has agency and deserves respect, just as McGregor and Maracle have argued. The left column reads:

> in the fresh morning
> i dip my hands into you tentatively
> thankful to camp on your shores
> amidst mosquitoes, mud & grass (*undercurrent* 68)

Here the speaker's interactions with the lake seem to represent an effort to build what elsewhere Maracle calls a "good relationship" with water (37). While building a mutually supportive relationship with water is always a good practice, it is made even more urgent and necessary by scientific studies that reveal the lake has been harmed by tar sands extraction.

The poem also demonstrates the risks associated with using science to support an Indigenous approach to water. The same science that helps the speaker realize that building a "good relationship" with water is an urgent task also threatens to disrupt the speaker's ability to articulate this newly emerging relationship. The interruption occurs when the right-hand column of the poem, comprised of italicized scientific terms for pollutants found at the tar sands, is read alongside the left-hand column that holds the speaker's narrative. When each line of the poem is read in full from left to right, rather than column by column, the scientific terms disrupt the narrative:

> in the fresh morning *hexavalent chromium*
> i dip my hands into you tentatively *arsenic*
> thankful to camp on your shores *aluminum*
> amidst mosquitoes, mud & grass *zinc* (*undercurrent* 68)

The terms that Wong has extracted from a study on the tar sands interrupt the speaker who is building a relationship with water. While the right-hand column offers important information—like the fact that when the speaker touches the water the speaker is also touching arsenic—it does so in a way that interferes with the speaker's story. That words describing chemicals disrupt the narrative is troubling because the speaker's relationship with water is informed by Indigenous knowledge and could exist, in all its richness, without the help of chemistry. Here, Wong's poem provides an opportunity to consider the risks associated with placing science and Indigenous knowledge in ethical relation: scientific knowledge may overshadow Indigenous knowledge and if this unnecessary imbalance occurs then the possibility of a mutually beneficial dialogue and exchange of ideas becomes difficult. However, for Wong this approach is worth the risk because science cannot be left in its current entanglement with colonialism. By attempting to sever

science from colonialism and connect it to Indigenous knowledge, Wong joins a growing group of writers who are encouraged by the new ways of knowing and being that emerge when Indigenous knowledge and science are combined. Potawatomi botanist Robin Wall Kimmerer explains that she works cautiously to create "a new species of knowledge, a new way of being in the world," in which "the beauty of one [knowledge] is illuminated by the radiance of the other" (47). Kimmerer understands that science has limits and has been used to restrict Indigenous knowledge. She explains that science only knows with the mind, but from an Indigenous perspective "we understand a thing only when we understand it with all four aspects of our being: mind, body, emotion, and spirit" (47). Rather than dismissing science entirely because it is often tied to abyssal thinking, Kimmerer, like Wong, tries to disentangle science from colonialism and place it into productive conversation with Indigenous knowledge.

While science certainly needs to be unsettled, Wong places this responsibility on the people who have benefited from the type of science that is used to silence Indigenous peoples and harm environments. Indeed, the people who live in good relation with water should not have to bear the brunt of the work needed to heal the world. The final half of "declaration of intent" encourages those individuals who benefit from and perpetuate settler colonialism, whom Maracle calls the "ordinary people" who "did the work of destruction," to create an alternative to the unjust present (36). The speaker proposes: "because i am part of the problem i can also become part of / the solution" (15). The phrasing and the "i" pronoun create a bond of identification between speaker and reader, through which readers are encouraged to think of themselves as "part of the problem." Although not everyone is part of the problem, the poem's abstract diction in words like "problem" and "solution" allows many people to locate themselves within these broad categories so that they can work toward a solution. For some readers, the problem occurs when science is used to support colonialism and harm water, and the solution involves severing science from colonialism; but for others, who each work from unique self-locations, knowledge bases, and connections to settler colonialism, the solution to injustices will differ. Through its inclusive and abstract diction, Wong's poem encourages participation and dialogue as an essential step in the process of justice.

Wong encourages readers to partake in solitary acts of self-reflection; however, she also encourages those "ordinary people" who are working to "become part of / the solution" to learn from Indigenous thinkers and from

the plants and other beings who already know how to be good relatives. Another poem, "medicines in the city," reveals that people can learn from horsetail and the wind as these natural elements enact their responsibilities to water. Wong's poem describes how horsetail resides in urban locations and cleans the poisoned water, with the wind's help:

> horsetail hints
> at abundant water beneath
> transformed into fine green nodes
>
> sprouting up from cracks in pavement
> near Main & Broadway
> atop what was once Brewery Creek
> horsetail hails the sturdy spore, the perpetual wind
> its ally in propagation
>
> scrub brush, toothbrush, remover of toxins
> horsetail ever-so-slowly heals inflictions
> a living fossil who quietly outlasts our cities
> soaking up the acid soil we leave behind (36)

Here, the wind helps horsetail propagate, thereby contributing to the plant's effort to clean the wet soil. That horsetail, aided by the wind, cleans the mess made by settlers is an act of decolonial responsibility to land and water. Wong's depiction of the relationships between horsetail, wind, water, and soil exemplifies McGregor's belief that all beings have "a responsibility for justice" (27). Not only are these beings responsible for working toward justice, but they can also teach people how to act. Kimmerer asserts that from a Potawatomi perspective, many entities are animate and can teach people how to live. She writes that elders

> remind us of the capacity of others as our teachers, as holders of knowledge, as guides. . . . Imagine the access we would have to different perspectives, the things we might see through other eyes, the wisdom that surrounds us. We don't have to figure out everything by ourselves: there are intelligences other than our own, teachers all around us. (58)

The beings in Wong's poem who each rely on their own unique skills to work together in support of the "continuation of Creation" teach that people who have different perspectives, skills, and responsibilities can cooperate to achieve the common goal of caring for water.

In a series of italicized prose vignettes that are scattered throughout *undercurrent*, Wong encourages people, who act and think in ways that ignore the vital relationships and welfare that water makes possible, to join horsetail and the other beings who are building good relationships with

water and with each other, by extension. The vignettes are spoken from the perspective of a group of beings whose desire to live well together is predicated on access to unpolluted water. The collective proclaims, "*We are the beings who need clean water in order to live a life of dignity, joy and good relation. Maybe you are part of 'us' without even knowing that you are*" (16). This water-loving multitude is comprised of many different beings, from "coyotes" and "grandmothers" to "thunderstorms," and is always growing as forgetful people begin to remember that they also rely on unpolluted water (16). Even as the collective grows, some people selfishly resist participation. The multitude appeals to these self-interested people by arguing that they have obligations to their relatives who make existence possible: "*We are your relatives. . . . We call upon you to remember your ancient oaths, your debts to all realms that enable your existence, your obligations as earth-dwellers*" (35). By foregrounding the relationships among relatives, Wong challenges a Western perspective that, according to Christian, "imagine[s] the individual as primary, as being more important than community" (Christian and Wong, "Untapping" 238). Through these vignettes Wong underscores the reciprocal relationships that all beings have with one another and especially with water. As such, recovering and enacting forgotten relationships with and responsibilities to water are a communal effort.

At the same time that the multitude celebrates community, and proposes that "*[w]e need kinship that builds peaceful relations*," they also oppose uniformity (47). Rather, they advise that "*[w]e need to respect our differences without letting them kill, destroy, displace, incarcerate and oppress us*" (47). Wong follows their directive in three of the italicized prose vignettes, in which she uses the first-person singular, instead of a collective voice, to discuss her relationship with water. In these seemingly autobiographical passages, Wong recounts participating in the tar sands Healing Walk, Salish Seas Festival, and Keepers of the Waters conference. In each of these instances Wong listens to and works with Indigenous peoples in support of water, thereby following their long-standing "requests that non-Aboriginal peoples walk beside or behind—but not in front of—Aboriginal peoples" (Haluza-DeLay et al. 5). Wong approaches water by way of Indigenous peoples' environmental justice activism because she realizes she cannot have a good relationship with water unless she has a good relationship with Indigenous peoples. She declares, "*There is still a long way to go in my journey with water, which is also a journey of becoming worthy to live as a guest on these sacred lands of the Coast Salish peoples*" (*undercurrent* 22). In

these vignettes, Wong reveals how she works from her location as a settler on Turtle Island to build relationships with water and Indigenous communities in an effort to help support environmental justice.

Wong works from a site of intertwined settler privilege and racialized marginalization to recover aspects of her cultural heritage that have been disregarded by white settler ways of knowing, in order to develop relationships with water and Indigenous peoples. In one of the vignettes, she describes being invited to participate in a canoe ceremony by the Tsleil-Waututh Nation, but she is worried that she may fail, until she states her Cantonese and English names. She writes, "*What if I tipped the canoe by accident? What if I didn't pull my weight? As I entered the canoe, I said my name out loud in Cantonese and English, then put my fears aside*" (22). She is concerned that she may not be able to pull her weight physically, but perhaps also intellectually, spiritually, and emotionally. However, by saying her Cantonese and her English names, Wong becomes supported by her cultural heritage that offers rich approaches to water. Christian and Wong explain that names provide a powerful source of pride that can connect individuals with their water-loving ancestors. They state that "when we acknowledge our ancestral and gifted names, we are asserting the continuance of cultural heritages that predate and survive through the imposition of colonial paradigms and naming practices. When we go back far enough in our familial lines, we find ancestors who lived in relationship with the lands and waters" (Wong and Christian 2). By remembering her Cantonese name in particular, Wong gestures to her ancestors and the knowledge that allowed them to build good relationships with water. Together, Wong's seemingly autobiographical and collectively voiced vignettes articulate that settlers on Turtle Island should listen to Indigenous peoples and also recover the aspects of their individual cultural heritage that encourage people to relate to water.

By including an extended quote from Bruce Lee that concludes with his famous saying, "Be water my friend," as an epigraph for *undercurrent* (5), Wong works to recover the profundity of a part of her cultural heritage that has been oversimplified by its circulation within North American popular culture. Rather than use Lee's saying as a catchphrase, or focus on his stardom and martial arts manoeuvres, the saying informs Wong's poems in a way that gestures to philosophical underpinnings of gung fu, which for Lee involves Taoist and Zen philosophy and advocating for self-preservation by acting like water (Lee, *Artist* 13). Writer Maria Popova contends that the genesis of Lee's famous quote is revealed in his essay "A Moment of

Understanding," in which he recounts his early attempts to learn gung fu. As a student, he struggles to grasp his instructor's message, "preserve yourself by following the natural bends of things and don't interfere. Remember never to assert yourself against nature; never be in frontal opposition to any problems" (Lee, *Artist* 16). Frustrated, Lee strikes the water and it moves to make space for his fist then returns to its initial state, unharmed. In this moment, Lee realizes, "was not this water the very essence of gung fu? Hadn't this water just now illustrated to me the principle of gung fu?" and thus he decides "to be like the nature of water" (17). Lee's journey to preserve himself is intertwined with his journey to understand and emulate water.

Lee helps Wong develop her relationship with water that exists independently from, but alongside, Indigenous peoples who also have culturally specific relationships with water. Lee's insights are embedded in a section of "declaration of intent" that reads,

> i will learn through immersion, flotation & transformation
> as water expands & contracts, i will fit myself to its ever-changing
> dimensions (14)

In these lines, the speaker intends to learn like Lee by immersing the self in water. The speaker also desires to match water's movements, just as gung fu artists match their opponents' movements. If the water expands the speaker contracts, and if the water contracts the speaker expands; but in either case the movements of speaker and water are inseparable, and if each being moves in accordance with the other, neither will be harmed. By using Lee to help the speaker develop a humble relationship with water, Wong demonstrates how variously self-located settlers can draw on parts of their cultural heritage that are compatible with Indigenous approaches to water. Both gung fu and Indigenous knowledge demonstrate interconnections between water and people, and involve the notion that people should learn from and respect water's movements. While all settlers can follow Wong's method of relation-building by evoking water-centric aspects of their cultures, Wong's tactic may provide specialized encouragement for Asian Canadians who, to critic Janey Lew's frustration, have not always supported Indigenous peoples' fight for and with water (281). By modelling how Asian Canadians can recover parts of their cultures in an effort to work in solidarity with Indigenous peoples, Wong enacts her earlier proposal that Asian Canadians shift away from an oversimplifying and harmful identification with whiteness and instead forge connections with Indigenous peoples by considering "[w]hat happens if we position indigenous people's struggles instead of normalized

whiteness as the reference point through which we come to articulate our subjectivities? How would such a move radically transform our perceptions of the land on which we live?" ("Decolonizasian" 158).

Wong demonstrates how cultural heritage can be a valuable tool for settlers who want to work in solidarity with Indigenous peoples; however, she follows the water-loving multitude's reminders that although differences are valuable they should not "oppress us" (*undercurrent* 47). Accordingly, Wong finds freedom from any undesirable limits that her cultural heritage would impose on her by engaging with a wide variety of approaches to water, beyond those embedded in her heritage. For example, Wong's poem "flush" uses a quote by Trappist monk Thomas Merton, who also views water as a teacher. The quote reads: "Think of it: all that speech pouring down, selling nothing, judging nobody. . . . Nobody started it, nobody is going to stop it. It will talk as long as it wants, the rain. As long as it talks I am going to listen" (42). Like Merton, the poem's speaker is willing to listen to the rain, even though the speaker is faced with the challenge of hearing the rain in water that has been distanced from the hydrological cycle due to its movement through public infrastructure. By reframing shower water as "post-chlorinated rain," the speaker "refus[es] the inertia of amnesia" that occurs when mundane interactions with water in a settler society separate it from rain and from the human body (42). Instead, the speaker who

> welcome[s] the memory of rain
> sliding into sink and teacup, throat and bladder, tub and toilet

is reminded that water is a

> bountiful abundant carrier of what everyone emits into the
> clouds, be that exhale or smoke, bleach or chemical combustion,
> flame or fragrance, the rain gives it all back to us in spates (42)

In other words, the speaker learns that what people do to the rain, they do to themselves. By placing quotes from differently located thinkers throughout her collection, and by including a lengthy bibliography, Wong demonstrates how a great many ways of knowing encourage people to build good relationships with water. In *undercurrent*, Wong continues a practice she developed in *forage* that Catherine Bates calls a "foraging poetics." Bates explains that Wong "explicitly situates her own writing within the creative and critical work she has found rummaging through the writings of others" (199). While foraging for knowledge is certainly an important part of *undercurrent*, it is only one of several tactics that Wong uses to encourage people to develop good relationships with water.

Six years prior to the publication of *undercurrent*, Wong described her poetics as a process in which she sifts through, and rearranges, the poisoned language of English in an attempt to understand the harm it causes. She writes, "immersed in the muddy, polluted stream that we call the english language, i still need the stream to live, even as i filter the pollutants, rearrange them in funny shapes in order to try to understand what they are doing to my body . . . this dirty water is what i have to drink, what i have to give back, you can call it ink" ("seeds" 22). Although some of the poems in *undercurrent* address the violence caused by the English language, the collection also sees Wong immersed within a stream polluted not only by English but with other violent ways of knowing, from Western science that is used often to support settler colonialism and the capitalist belief that water is a resource, to abyssal thinking. And yet, the stream holds a diversity of knowledges, many of which provide insights that can make possible an alternative to the unjust present. Wong filters out the pollutant knowledges and returns the insightful knowledges. She gives these knowledges back to the stream in different configurations—she splices Indigenous and scientific ways of knowing to enrich both, uses Western science to support Indigenous perspectives, draws on her own cultural heritage to work alongside Indigenous approaches, and forages around for any knowledge that may be useful. In doing so, she encourages settlers to interrogate how knowledge systems and knowledge synthesis can be both part of what Wong calls "the problem" and "part of the solution" (*undercurrent* 15). There is hope in Wong's poems that certain arrangements of knowledges will allow variously self-located settlers to work toward the common goal of supporting water in moments of crises like Site C and during everyday actions like showering, because to support water is to support life.

Interrogating harmful ways of knowing and humbly arranging knowledges in different ethical configurations are a necessary task that settlers must take up; however, Wong's poems also remind settlers who want to support water and Indigenous peoples that listening is a task that must also be prioritized—as Lai states, "there are still moments when settler folk just need to stand aside and exercise their listening skills" (266). Indeed, Wong's poems direct settlers to listen to Indigenous peoples and to water; to drink the knowledge that has been so generously shared, for this knowledge is life-sustaining and can encourage good relationships on Turtle Island that support environmental justice, or what McGregor calls the "continuation of Creation" (28).

NOTE

1 Wong's decolonial environmental advocacy extends beyond her opposition to Site C. On August 24, 2018, Wong read poetry while blocking a Kinder Morgan construction site to demonstrate opposition to the Trans Mountain pipeline, which she contends will harm the land and place Indigenous women in hazardous situations. Wong was arrested for her actions and if sentenced will be imprisoned for two weeks.

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Michael Penny

Automobilia

If you were a visitor
looking down, you'd think
this planet was made by cars.

From the sky you'd see
only highway lines
and no footpaths.

You'd note their servants
are attendantly housed
next to the car's lodgings.

You'd see vertical tunnels suck
what earth and time made
to feed and give motor

as the cars inhale
the pure air to react
it to destruction.

And do the cars know
they're ruining their home?
When you're the big winner

there's no need to worry,
sure that what you made
you're allowed to destroy.

Jane Boyes

Non-Recognition in the Colonial Archive

Rachel Zolf's *Janey's Arcadia: Errant Ad^ent$res in Ultima Thule*

In her 2014 poetry collection *Janey's Arcadia: Errant Ad^ent$res in Ultima Thule*, Rachel Zolf thinks through the role of the archive in legitimizing colonial aims by playing with the source material of the archive itself. Zolf takes as a basis for her poems texts from the settler Canadian archive and feeds them through Optical Character Recognition (OCR) software, which transforms scanned images of print texts into "malleable language" (*Janey's* 117). This technology is infamously glitchy, and Zolf uses the OCR errors, which consistently misread language used to represent Indigenous and other racialized groups (and thus misrecognize the people themselves), to expose the white supremacist perspectives of these settler texts.[1] As Joan Retallack notes in an endorsement on the back cover of Zolf's collection, the OCR errors perform "an allegory of misreading . . . inescapably charged by the cultural politics of non-recognition." If access to the colonial archives and the technology used to maintain them is necessarily linked to the rule of power, then Zolf's glitches subvert that power imbalance to "enact a process . . . of disfluent listening" (*Janey's* 117), whereby texts initially intended to glorify the Canadian state and its colonial project are read against their grain. For Zolf, this "disfluent listening," which requires reading both with and against the hegemonic representations of the source texts, enables the reader to witness the role of power in the archive and the non-recognition of marginalized groups that it engenders. I begin by situating Zolf's text in relation to archive theory and Canadian feminist innovative poetics, before moving on to argue that the OCR glitch in *Janey's Arcadia* exposes, stirs up, and disrupts the workings of power in the archive, whereby

the mis- and non-recognition of Indigenous and other racialized groups is mobilized to support the capitalist and colonialist aims of settler Canada.

A few critics have begun to note the considerable political force of Zolf's collection, and its critique of Indigenous-settler relations in Canada, both past and present, is a key emphasis in the scholarship that the collection has already attracted. To date, these studies include Gillian Roberts' examination of *Janey's Arcadia* alongside other Canadian poetry collections by non-Indigenous writers that explore what it means to be a settler, and an ally, in the wake of the Idle No More movement, and Jessica MacEachern's analysis of the feminist impulse behind the collection's soundscape, both as represented in the print text and as featured in the video created by Zolf to accompany her collection.[2] Zolf's attention to the language of Indigenous-settler relations in this, her fifth poetry collection, fits well within her oeuvre: the thematic range of her collections is considerable (from corporate language to the Israeli/Palestinian conflict and beyond), but each collection engages in what Zolf describes as "serial materialist poetics dealing with interrelated questions about memory, history, knowledge, subjectivity and the conceptual limits of language and meaning" ("Interview" 186). In *Janey's Arcadia*, Zolf's exploration of "memory, history, and knowledge" comes into play through her interest in the archive, which is evident throughout her works, but especially in this collection. The authority of the archive is troubled in part by the sense of polyvocality that Zolf cultivates in this collection and throughout her works, as she challenges a singular poetic voice and instead fosters "an exploration of subjectivity in a multiple form" ("Interview" 188). Zolf's poetics are also notable for their frequent use of digital interventions, such as the OCR glitch in *Janey's Arcadia* or search engines in *Human Resources* (2007). Because of these techniques, as well as Zolf's feminist play with "the conceptual limits of language and meaning" (186), her work is often discussed within the context of feminist innovative poetics, and specifically within a North American tradition.[3] My own approach similarly locates Zolf within this tradition, while also looking to archive theory to think through Zolf's engagement with the settler Canadian archive.

Power, Technology, and Anxiety in the Archive

As Jacques Derrida demonstrates in *Archive Fever*, the Western notion of the archive has been steeped in power since its origins. Derrida traces the etymology of the word *archive* to the Greek *arkheion*: that is, the house of the *archons*, or "those who commanded," where official documents were filed

and guarded (8-9). Traditionally housed at the site of power, the Western archive is embedded in the rule of power since those who claim power also claim the right to interpret and to determine what constitutes the archive. According to Derrida, by controlling the archive—a kind of memory of the nation—those in power also control the making and interpreting of the law; through their control of the law, these individuals have the ability to legitimize some activities (and groups of people) and criminalize others.

In her repurposing of the archive of Canadian texts that comprises her source materials, Zolf demonstrates how the concerns of white settler Canada are privileged at the expense of Indigenous peoples and visible minorities in these texts. Zolf's sources, dating largely from the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, include documents of importance to the official history of Canadian nation-state building, like an 1886 Canadian Pacific Railway immigration-recruitment pamphlet, as well as white-supremacist, moralizing narratives and non-fiction parading under a thin veneer of social progress. These latter texts, written by public figures like Emily Murphy and the Reverend J. S. Woodsworth (among others),[4] are noteworthy for their influence on contemporary debates regarding, for example, immigration policy and eugenics. That influence can be directly correlated to the privileged position of their authors, many of whom occupied positions of power and authority within the religious, political, and capitalist communities of white settler Canada and its colonial antecedents. As such, these texts, born out of white supremacist perspectives that presume to legitimize certain racialized groups and perpetuate racist stereotypes about others, enjoy privileged positions within the Canadian archive and, correspondingly, a certain amount of influence on Canadian policy. Zolf takes these texts from their place of power in the archive and resituates them in the context of her collection, which aims to interrogate and to pull apart the structures of power that prop them up.

Clearly, the status and influence of Zolf's sources are integral to her project. Zolf pointedly indicates in her author's note that Woodsworth, for example, was the founder and first leader of the Co-operative Commonwealth Foundation, which would later become the New Democratic Party, while Emily Murphy was Canada's first female magistrate and worked to get (certain) women recognized as persons under the law with the other members of the Famous Five (119; 117). Significantly, both of these figures continue to be remembered and celebrated as leftist icons well into the present: in 2004, Woodsworth was ranked the 100th Greatest

Canadian in a CBC contest ("The Greatest"), while in 2012, Emily Murphy and the rest of the Famous Five were enshrined in Canadian public memory when they were featured on the $50 bill. Zolf deliberately selects these sources to expose the hypocrisy and racism of white feminism and the white left, and to implicate contemporary Canadians, including those who espouse feminist, leftist ideals, and their valorization of such figures. Furthermore, Zolf's use of contemporary sources, including (former) prime minister Stephen Harper's denial of Canada's colonialist history, racist comments on *Calgary Herald* online articles, and the mission statement from the federally funded proselytizing organization Youth for Christ, demonstrates the ongoing legacies of colonialist attitudes and the continuation of such rhetoric in the contemporary speech of Canadian citizens and leaders alike.

According to Derrida, the archive maintains its hegemonic status by presenting itself as a coherent "system" or "synchrony" that is rooted in place—specifically, the place in which power is held (10). By gathering together these materials, those who command limit access to them, and to their signifying power. In *Janey's Arcadia*'s accompanying video, which features readings of poems from the collection voiced over National Film Board (NFB) footage depicting early-twentieth-century settlers in Canada, Zolf subverts the Canadian state's ability to limit access to its archives by appropriating its archival materials without permission and thus undermines the state's power to control these materials and what (and who) they represent. As MacEachern notes, "Zolf and her collaborators did not receive permission from the film board to use the historical footage, so the NFB logo is burned into every frame" (291). Thus the state quite literally puts its stamp on this archival footage, suggesting that "[t]he videos of wheat fields, beavers, riverbanks, and train platforms are the exclusive property of the government and, it is implied, so too are the placid smile of Miss Iroquois and the naked body of the Indigenous man riding a horse among false clouds" (MacEachern 291). The NFB stamp manifests the state's attempt to claim and control the land's resources and inhabitants by gathering their representations into the colonial archive and limiting access to them: by appropriating such archival material, Zolf interrogates not only the kinds of voices and representations that are preserved, circulated, and privileged, but also how the state gleans power from controlling these archival materials.

Access to the archive is limited in part by controlling access to the technology with which the signs of the archive are encoded. Since the archive is necessarily created through a form of inscription technology,

whether scroll, codex, digital, or otherwise, the powerful can further control the archive by controlling the development, ownership, and literacy of that technology. Zolf's use of the OCR glitch highlights the often-invisible role of technology in the archive, and especially its role in perpetuating hierarchies. The OCR glitch draws attention to the increasing use of digital resources to store knowledge, which is made problematic by the hierarchy of value embedded into the development of technology like OCR software. In Zolf's collection, English text is, for the most part, easily read by the OCR software, whereas text like the Cree syllabic alphabet is completely *mis*read (21).[5] This hierarchy of readability mirrors the legibility of the bodies that use these signifiers, so that white bodies and concerns are legible by the state, while those of Indigenous people are not. If the archive presents itself as coherent, whole, and hegemonic by "*gathering together signs*" (Derrida 10, emphasis original), then it is integral to Zolf's project to examine which signs, and which bodies they signify, are misread, and thus excluded, from the vision of the nation that the archive provides.

Although the archive presents itself as objective and whole, it is not: the archive is curated according to subjective principles that are often not consciously articulated or even recognized. Ann Laura Stoler describes colonial state archives as "piecemeal partiality," in which the anxieties and biases of its contributors fundamentally shape what kinds of knowledge are legitimized and reproduced, and which are ignored and thrown out (19). Furthermore, the colonial archive "pulls on some 'social facts' and converts them into qualified knowledge," so that opinions become reified as facts and are recirculated in the archive as such (Stoler 22). For Stoler, the colonial archive is a curated palimpsest in which its content has been "*layered* and *crafted* from practical and unevenly sedimented deceptions and dispositions that accumulated as acceptable or discarded knowledge" (22, emphasis original). The "layering" and "crafting" aspects of the colonial archive significantly work in tandem, so that archival documents filtered through and crafted by opinions and anxieties are layered on top of each other: opinions are used to reinforce and justify other opinions, and eventually are recognized as common knowledge.

In Zolf's collection, the "layered and crafted" aspect of her source texts becomes especially apparent. For example, the CPR pamphlet "What Women Say of the Canadian North-West" uses the commissioned opinions of white settler women to encourage white settlement. In this text, these opinions are quite literally layered on top of each other in a list that descends the page.

The intended effect of the pamphlet is that each positive opinion reinforces the one before and after it, so that the document relies not on a single source but on an aggregate of sources for its credibility. Commissioned by a corporation for an immigration-recruitment pamphlet, these opinions have been curated to encourage the state's colonialist project of white settlement and the CPR's capitalist project of selling train tickets and land. These two projects necessarily work in tandem, since white colonialism and white capitalism serve to bolster each other. Furthermore, the publishing of the text in English indicates that its target audience is English speakers; the text's London publisher suggests a further narrowing of the target audience to those English speakers coming from the British Isles. An examination of the women's names, provided alongside their responses in the pamphlet, indicates that the majority, if not all, of the women whose opinions are sourced for this pamphlet are similarly of British ancestry and presumably English-speaking. Thus the pamphlet demonstrates, if not consciously, a hierarchy of voices and preferred settlers. In her poetic treatment of the text,[6] Zolf highlights this hierarchy by incorporating the names of missing and murdered Indigenous women, which have been rendered in grey, crossed-out text, suggesting the dismissal of Indigenous women and the crimes committed against them. Although the pamphlet's persuasive power is predicated on its aggregation of many voices, an examination of whose voices are presented and thus valued demonstrates that the lack of diversity of these voices works to reinforce a white-supremacist view of the nation.

In the section Zolf features in her collection, the CPR pamphlet uses the limited view of these voices to dispel the idea of an "Indian" threat ("What Women Say" 40). The point of this is not to encourage exchange between Indigenous peoples and white settlers, but to allay prospective white settlers' fears and thus encourage their settlement. While the pamphlet works counter to the texts of the Dutch East Indies archives that Stoler describes, in which threats are imagined rather than dispelled, both kinds of documents are predicated on addressing political anxieties and are used to strengthen the colonial state and the normative white body of the settler. The other source texts of Zolf's collection work in similar ways, as assumptions about Indigenous people are articulated through white-supremacist settler perspectives. Because of the privileged position of such voices within the colonial archive, their racist, stereotypical ideas about Indigenous people are more frequently circulated and rearticulated. Furthermore, Zolf's strategy enables her to dismantle colonial rhetoric, as voiced by settlers in their own

words, while avoiding speaking for or on behalf of Indigenous people. Using these texts as the basis for her collection, Zolf interrogates, critiques, and breaks down the hegemonic perspectives they defend.

Zolf's Feminist Poetics

Through source texts like the CPR pamphlet, Zolf zeroes in on the problematic role of the white settler woman within Canada's colonial regime: the importance of this theme to her collection is emphasized by her central figure of Janey. The Janey of *Janey's Arcadia* is a mashup of Emily Murphy's pen name Janey Canuck, whom Zolf describes as a "plucky white-supremacist settler," and under whose name Murphy wrote a series of articles for *Maclean's* which were later turned into a series of books, and Kathy Acker's character and "guerilla icon" Janey Smith from her late 1970s novel *Blood and Guts in High School* (*Janey's* 117). Engendered from the "savage, fleshy rendezvous" of these two Janeys, one a racist white feminist and the other embroiled in a web of complicated sexualized violence, the Janey of *Janey's Arcadia* is a "mutant (cyborg?) squatter progeny" whose presence throughout the collection interrogates the role of white women in colonial violence (117). Through Janey, Zolf examines how the rhetoric around protecting white women from the supposed threat of Indigenous and non-white people is used to justify colonial violence, and how white women themselves participate in the circulation of such rhetoric, which actually works to erode the strength of their own position as women through its sexist logic. Zolf's feminist project is to interrogate the white feminism of figures like Emily Murphy, whose privileged position within the Canadian archive ensures that echoes of her voice can still be heard today.

Zolf's OCR glitch, then, is a disruptive force that breaks through and breaks up the sedimentation of white settler perspectives. The errors of OCR encourage the reader to question the authority of these texts and to look more closely at how they circulate power in a white-supremacist society. With her use of OCR technology and non-conventional poetics, Zolf is working within the tradition of (Canadian) feminist experimental or innovative poetics. Several contemporary feminist artists and critics identify, like Gail Scott, an "energetic fusion between feminism . . . and revolt in language and form" (38). Notably, Rae Armantrout critiques the association of women's writing with conventional, closed, and univocal lyrics that serve a stable poetic subject, which, she argues, cannot fully capture the fractured subjectivities of an oppressed group such as women. In fact, the univocal

voice often objectifies others and appropriates their voice, thus enacting the same kinds of violence towards others that the marginalized themselves face. In Zolf's collection, the OCR glitch works to break up the univocal, objectifying perspective of her white settler source texts, and instead fosters a clarity of social attention, which, according to Armantrout, is differentiated from, and even antithetical to, readability (290). Unlike readability, which can promote the oversimplification of complex interactions and the false certainty of a univocal perspective, the clarity that Armantrout proposes allows for a polyvocality that opens up, rather than shuts down, meaning and interpretation. Through such polyvocality, like that enabled by Zolf's glitch, an author can more adequately pay attention to the world's social interactions without imposing a totalizing perspective on it.

As an example of the poetics she proposes, Armantrout points to Lyn Hejinian's use of metonymy and its "connections," "adjacency," and "instability" (292). Unstable in its transfer of meaning, metonymy promotes a multiplicity of interpretations and works to develop new connections in many directions. I argue that Zolf's OCR glitch, while not strictly metonymy, works in similar ways. The glitch, which causes certain words to be misread as other words, creates new connections of meaning in the relationship between the word of the source text and its glitched complement. Furthermore, the glitches work as in a *metonymic*, or in this case, *glitchy constellation*, so that the glitching of a certain word in different ways throughout a passage or even the collection creates a web of interconnected meanings. Any reading of Zolf's collection is necessarily slippery, since the polyvocality of her glitches undermines a univocal perspective or reading.

Furthermore, Zolf hijacks the OCR software and puts it to the task of exposing (and overexposing) its own embedded hierarchy of value. Zolf repurposes the OCR's "errors of recognition" to "conjure other forms of mis- and non- and dis- and un-recognition" (*Janey's* 117). Zolf argues that "[t]his errancy can, perhaps, enact a process of thinking past (or through) the retinal struggle for recognition to a kind of disfluent listening (an attending that is also a waiting and conjoining) and always-already-complicit, glitched, queered witnessing" (117). This "disfluent listening" requires listening, and reading, both with and against the currents of the circulation of power in Zolf's source texts. It is a kind of listening that works against linear univocality and instead radiates and gleans meaning in many directions. It is hearing what these source texts hide by listening to what they do and do not voice. By stirring up and disrupting the circulation of power in the archive, Zolf's

OCR glitches enable a kind of polyvalent witnessing of the mis- and non-recognition in Canada of Indigenous peoples and people of colour. But this witnessing is also "always-already-complicit" (117): it requires its readers to examine their own perpetuation of practices of non-recognition, and how they may have benefited from the colonialism such non-recognition serves.

Colonial Non-Recognition

Through the OCR glitch, Zolf's collection illustrates the power of the archive to enshrine in the collective memory of the nation the mis- and non-recognition of racialized groups in service of capitalist and colonialist aims. The OCR glitches target Indigenous people in particular, who are consistently misread in the collection as "Indigns." This is a double misrecognition, in which the OCR glitch highlights, by adding to, the misidentification of Indigenous people as "Indians" according to an ignorant and outdated Western assumption. Furthermore, the use of the term "Indign" serves to lump all Indigenous peoples together and actively fails to recognize differences between various Indigenous groups. Other misreadings of Indigenous people as "Indignities" (29) and "worth-n%thing folk" (49) illustrate the psychological violence of the objectification, especially the degrading objectification, of others. The glitching of "Indignities" creates polyvalent possibilities of interpretation, so that the term could refer to the indignities that Indigenous people suffer at the hands of white settlers or to the white-supremacist treatment of Indigenous people as indignities themselves. In this latter example, the glitch manifests white settler perspectives towards Indigenous people in the very word that signifies them, thus exposing how the perspectives of the source texts influence the framing of their content. Perhaps most importantly, these interpretations, and any others, work together to create a glitchy constellation of possible meanings.

Elsewhere, the glitching of Indigenous people as "Israeli braves" (Zolf 63) and "Italian primitifs" (9) manifests an anxiety regarding assimilation lurking in the source texts. On the one hand, these source texts see assimilation as desirable and so the glitches misread Indigenous people as coming from the so-called Old World, and thus as less racially other. At the same time, these glitches register the white settler anxiety regarding the need to maintain a hierarchy of races, even within the system of assimilation, and so misread Indigenous people as belonging to groups considered subordinate to the imagined Anglo-Saxon race. At the core of these misreadings lies the colonial lust for land and the wealth it can provide, since the assimilation and

subordination of Indigenous people are key components in the appropriation of their lands. By misreading Indigenous people as "Israeli" and "Italian," the glitch exposes a colonialist desire to ignore the long inhabitancy of Indigenous people in the region, and thus nullify their claims to the land.

Zolf uses the glitch to highlight how the erasure of Indigenous knowledge is fundamental to the colonial projects of assimilation and settlement. This erasure is embedded in the subtitle of Zolf's collection, *Errant Ad^ent$res in Ultima Thule*. Meaning "a faraway unknown region," the Latin phrase *ultima Thule* is used to indicate the area of the Red River Colony where many of the poems are set, and thus demonstrates the displacement of Indigenous relationships with and naming of the land ("ultima Thule"). After all, according to whom is this region "faraway" or "unknown"? Furthermore, the glitching of "*Ad^ent$res*"—specifically the use of the dollar sign—suggests the ulterior motives of these innocent-sounding adventures. Indeed, the CPR immigration-recruitment pamphlet that Zolf uses as one of her source texts quite obviously intertwines the settler state's capitalist and colonialist projects: the state encourages white settlement to strengthen its own position and shore up its own white-supremacist interests, which it accomplishes by giving away land to white settlers that does not actually belong to the state, but to various Indigenous groups. In turn, the colonists look to the land as a source of capitalist wealth that they can (quite literally) grow, while the CPR benefits from selling the colonists train tickets, land, and later, consumer goods. Thus, the state and the CPR jointly sell the vision of pioneering "*Ad^ent$res*" to their target audience of white colonists, who happily consume the promise of adventure and wealth that such immigration-recruitment pamphlets imply.

This privileging of certain racialized groups is integral to the colonial project: in the opening lines of the collection's first poem, "Janey's Invocation," Zolf establishes whose knowledges are privileged, and whose are discarded, in the colonial archives. The presence of Indigenous peoples is obscured in the poem, whereas the first line indicates that "Infallible settlers say this is the latest season / they have known," thus setting up settler knowledge and the settlers themselves as "infallible" (9). Local Indigenous groups would of course have more extensive knowledge of the region's growing seasons, but this knowledge, even if it would prove useful to the region's settlers and their capitalist and colonialist endeavours, is dismissed. Later in the same poem, Zolf also sets up the dichotomy of white settlers and Indigenous people that will be critiqued and problematized throughout the collection: "Janey and the rest / of the people witnessed the Italian primitifs

/ in 'wild' societies" (9). Here "Janey and the rest / of the people" are the "witnesse[s]" whose derogatory judgment about Indigenous people seeps into the rest of the line (and the collection). In contrast, Indigenous people are misrecognized as "primitif" and "wild" (and "Italian"!), dehumanized in their distinction from "the rest / of the people," and made the object of the white settler gaze. Furthermore, Zolf's glitching of "Italian primitifs" appears to reference primitivism, a nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century artistic movement that was inspired by pre-Raphaelite Italian painting, and which cultivated a similar white gaze that reinforced racist stereotypes used to vindicate European colonial expansion. While Indigenous knowledge and presence are erased, the poem is noteworthy for its fetishization (in the manner of primitivism) of nature: if the poem indeed functions as an "invocation," as its title suggests, then it invokes a white settler utopia of virginal, productive land, from which Indigenous presence has been wiped.

The poem "Concentration" explores the role of residential schools in implementing this erasure of Indigenous knowledge. The policy specifically targeted Indigenous youth, and, correspondingly, the future of Indigenous communities. The speaker declares,

> The
> aboriginal
> youth
> community
> is a
> prime
> area
> for
>
>
> development. (22)

In a collection notable for its verbosity, the sparseness of this passage, and that of the three other sentences that accompany it on two facing pages, is striking. Here the vast blank spaces of the page make room for the "development" the speaker seeks by wiping away other knowledges. Perhaps most disturbingly, the "aboriginal / youth / community" is described in the same language that would be used for their land: like the page that has been clear-cut, they have been surveyed and selected for "development." The association of development with construction suggests the aim of residential schools to shape Indigenous youth so that white, colonialist values can take up residence. By developing the next generation of Indigenous people

according to white formulas, the colonialist state also frees up land for the construction of homes for white settlers. Thus, this passage betrays the ultimate goal of residential schools and their parent project of assimilation: by assimilating Indigenous people, the white settler aims to devalue and dismiss Indigenous rights to the land.

The violence of the policy of residential schools, which tore young children away from their families and their way of life, becomes particularly evident in Zolf's use of the glitch. Elsewhere in "Concentration," the speaker recalls taking a young boy to one of these schools, not before telling

> his fathom that I would be a paring
> to him, clothe him and feed him
> and tear him what I knew to be
> his harbinger. (30)

In this passage, the boy's father is misread as his "fathom," while the speaker declares he will be a "paring," or parent to the child. The "fathom" glitch suggests the process by which Indigenous parents are stripped of their fatherhood, or more generally their parental rights, through the colonial policy of residential schools. At the same time, the fathom, a unit of length used to measure depths, suggests the distance being created by the residential school between the boy and his father, and thus between future generations of Indigenous people and their ancestors. In place of the boy's father, now rendered as "fathom," the speaker appropriates the role of parent for himself. Yet the speaker is significantly a "paring," a removal or cutting away, and not a parent. Thus, the child is cut off from any form of parental support, which was a common, if not regular, occurrence in the residential school system.[7] Furthermore, the speaker also claims that he will "tear," or teach, the boy: this glitch is telling since it indicates the goal and result of the boy's so-called education—that is, to tear him away from his family, land, and traditions. The glitch also expresses the emotional pain of the separation of a boy and his father as a "tear" which may be shed.

Even the Cree language itself, as an embodiment of Indigenous knowledge, is subject to the violence of this non-recognition: embedded in "Concentration" and its examination of the rhetoric behind residential schools, "The Cree Syllabic Alphabet" is rendered in a mess of glitches (21). The OCR software completely fails to read the Cree syllabics, thus demonstrating the hierarchy of values embedded in the development of the software. At the same time, the author's note points out that the Cree syllabics are said to have been invented by the Reverend James Evans, while "others argue that they were

developed by the Cree people themselves—long before colonization" (118). In this context, the glitches can be seen to disrupt the appropriation of Indigenous knowledge, while also representing how that knowledge can be skewed and misread when it is filtered through the white settler perspective. Furthermore, Zolf makes a point of adding that "[t]he first book that Evans . . . translated into Cree Syllabics was the Bible" (118). Not only was the Cree language appropriated by the white settler, but it was also mobilized as a weapon of assimilation and assault on Indigenous spirituality.

As Zolf's collection demonstrates, the assaults that Indigenous people face because of colonial violence are physical and sexual as well as psychological and emotional. In Zolf's poetic rendering of "Who is this Jesus?," it is implied that Astumastao, an orphaned "Indign" girl, is sexually assaulted by the same Reverend James Evans credited with inventing Cree syllabics (74-77).[8] In direct contrast to the sparse passage in "Concentration," the words of "Who is this Jesus?" completely fill and even spill over the page. With words cut off on both sides of the page, gaps are introduced into the story; this is especially problematic since they serve to obscure the Reverend's horrific treatment of Astumastao. The moralizing tone of the narrative, which is presented as an "allegorical tale," further contributes to the dismissal of his actions since it diverts attention away from them (118). The narrative is introduced as a "sweet story" which "shows how a few lessons learned in early life about religious truth enabled [Astumastao] to be a great / …ssing to her stern old uncle, a great Indign hunter" (74). This summary of the narrative is a glaring misreading of the psychological, emotional, and sexual violence Astumastao experiences at the hands of her assaulter, as well as at the missionary school, where she is taught contempt for the traditions and spirituality of her family. The cutting off of "…ssing," presumably "blessing," works to undermine this white settler misreading of the narrative by literally pointing to the holes in such an interpretation. Furthermore, the eclipsing of the word "[ble]ssing" suggests that the "lessons" that Astumastao has learned have not been "blessings" at all, while the Christian connotation of the word implicates Christian authorities and their policy of forced religious conversion as the basis of her plight.

In the collection, the white settler rape of Indigenous people is intimately connected to the white settler rape of the land. After all, staking a claim to the land, regardless of whether a claim is warranted, is the point of colonialism, and the projects of assimilation, residential schools, forced religious conversion, and the erasure of Indigenous knowledge are all means to the end of

acquiring land. In "Janey's Hospitality," Zolf demonstrates how the mis- and non-recognition of Indigenous peoples is mobilized towards this end:

> 'Have you any Indigns round where you are?'
>
> asked the realtor.
>
> 'No,'
>
> replied the visitor.
>
> 'We have hardly any foreigners at all.' (89)

In this poem, reproduced here in its entirety, the irony of settler "hospitality" on stolen Indigenous land is heartbreaking. The presence and question of the realtor suggest that not only has the land been appropriated for white settler use, but the revenue from its sale will be pocketed by a white realtor. The visitor's reply illustrates a misrecognition of the "Indigns" as foreigners, which serves to bolster white claims to lands stolen from Indigenous people, while also lumping all "foreigners"—that is, visibly racialized groups—together. Furthermore, the realtor's question demonstrates a prevailing anxiety of Zolf's source texts regarding the presence of "Indigns" as possible threats to white settler claims to the land.

Zolf's collection demonstrates how this white settler anxiety corresponds with a similar one regarding the assumption of an "Indign" threat to the white woman. Land and white women are conflated as things that, in the white settler's mind, need to be protected from Indigenous people, and that should only be accessed by the white settler, sexually or otherwise. After all, both land and white women are seen as producing figures that ensure the continuity of settler Canada through producing food and wealth or children, and thus are essential to the continuing supremacy of the white settler. The parallel roles are perhaps most succinctly demonstrated by the cover image of Zolf's collection, in which a young white woman holding a blond child stands in a field surrounded by cows, chickens, a tidy little house and barn, and wheat ripe for harvest. This image comes from *Canada West – The New Homeland*, a 1930 immigration brochure commissioned by the Canadian Department of Immigration and Colonization and distributed in Europe (*Janey's* 136). In this vision of a white settler utopia, the victims of colonization are notably absent, not unlike the ways Indigenous peoples are mis- and non-recognized in the colonial archive. The figure of the white woman displaces Indigenous people from this tamed landscape and domesticizes the colonial project, making it seem wholesome and

productive, and not the violent and bloody reality that Zolf's collection reveals. As such, the cover image functions as a visual representation of nostalgia for an imagined past that corresponds with the white settler perspectives of Zolf's source texts.

Zolf's exploration of the supposed threat of Indigenous people to white women, and how these fears are used to fuel mis- and non-recognition, is most obvious in her poetic rendering of the CPR pamphlet "What Women Say of the Canadian North-West" (*Janey's* 102-13). Zolf sources her material from a section of the pamphlet that poses the question, "Do you experience any dread of the Indians?" ("What Women Say" 41). The women respondents answer no, with their responses filtered through various white settler perspectives. For many of these responses, the denial of "dread" is predicated on the fact that the responders simply have not seen any Indigenous people for some time: "Never seen any since I camo to the farm, now going on three years. Never thiuk of them," says one responder (*Janey's* 104). The glitching of "think" as "thiuk" underscores the complete non-recognition of the presence of Indigenous people and illustrates how not *thinking* of Indigenous people is intimately connected with not *seeing* them; these white settlers fail to see or adequately recognize Indigenous peoples because they are absorbed in their own selfish perspectives of the world.

The "Indian question" is posed to "women of the Canadian North-West," yet its underlying assumption that the default for woman is white completely disregards any perspective that does not conform to this supposed norm ("What Women Say" 40). Here, Zolf intervenes: alongside the glitched, non-recognizing responses of the white settler women, Zolf places the names of missing and murdered Indigenous women and details taken from the police reports related to their death or disappearance. These names come from the signatures hand-written by friends and family of the deceased, which are reproduced in the collection, interspersed with Zolf's poems, and titled "Justice to Come" (44-46, 68-70, 79-81, 124-34). Zolf's decision to include these signatures in their original handwriting suggests a desire to make space for the kinship they represent while still allowing them to speak in their own voice. "What Women Say" illustrates what happens when such voices are appropriated by settler texts: in this poem, the names of these Indigenous women are rendered in grey, crossed-out text, while the names of the white settler women are in black, easily readable text. This distinction illustrates how settler women who reinforce settler Canada's colonialist goals are legible by state institutions and are circulated in the archive, while

Indigenous women, especially those who assert their presence, even and maybe especially in death, are erased. Yet significantly, the handwritten signatures can be found even after the author's note (which typically signals the end of a collection): thus it is their affirmation of the presence and mutual recognition of Indigenous women that closes (or perhaps opens up?) the collection.

The Archive Glitching Forward

In her discussion of Canada's multicultural archives, Karina Vernon indicates that some members of racialized groups have opted to develop personal or community archives as an alternative to handing over their cultural material to the state (199). Thus perhaps we can think of the signatures as a kind of community-based archive of kinship that is predicated on the recognition of Indigenous women, and which counters the mis- and non-recognition so prevalent in the colonial archives. After all, the archive, and OCR software, can be incredibly useful tools, but their use in legitimizing colonial states must be interrogated. When we begin to question the archive and how it is constituted, we can ask important questions like, whose stories are repeated and circulated in the archive? And are we, as readers of the archive, complicit in what stories are told, and which are discarded? Are we complicit in who is recognized and who is not? Although Zolf's source texts date back several decades and even centuries, the issues her collection evokes are pressingly contemporary and urgent: this becomes especially apparent when Zolf's poems are placed alongside the signatures written for missing and murdered Indigenous women. Mis- and non-recognition are not just matters for the archives: those archives, and the ways in which they are stirred up, recirculated, or disrupted, have profound implications for our present and future. It is up to us to recognize the glitches and to enact the clarity of social attention they prompt.

NOTES

1 Indigenous people, for example, are frequently rendered as "Indigns," while African Canadians sometimes appear as "needgrow[s]" (29).

2 See also Shane Rhodes' short piece "Fracked-Up Settler Poetry: Rachel Zolf's *Janey's Arcadia*" in *Arc Poetry Magazine*.

3 See, for example, Milne, whose discussion of *Human Resources* within the context of North American feminist innovative poetics significantly influenced the framing of my own argument.

4 See Murphy's *The Impressions of Janey Canuck Abroad* (1901), *Janey Canuck in the West* (1910), *Open Trails* (1912), and *Seeds of Pine* (1914), written under the pen name "Janey Canuck"; and her *The Black Candle* (1922), written under the name "Judge Murphy." See Woodsworth's *Strangers Within Our Gates* (1909) and *My Neighbour* (1911). See also Zolf's author notes (116-20) for a complete list of sources.

5 See the section of this paper on "Colonial Non-Recognition" for a more detailed analysis of this passage. This section also explores at greater length how Zolf's OCR glitches of English text are dependent on who is being signified (or more specifically, mis-signified) by them.

6 Further discussed in the section "Colonial Non-Recognition." Zolf's poetic treatment of this text can be found on pages 102-13 of her collection.

7 See, for example, Chrisjohn, Young, and Maraun; Miller; and Milloy.

8 See Egerton R. Young's *Indian Life in the Great North-West* (1900).

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George Elliott Clarke

Samson II

1. "So, you thugs plan to arrest Israel and me?
Why? What's the big idea?

2. "The reason for this asinine, suicidal *Provocation* is,
we refuse to denounce the God of Israel,
our dark-complected *and* light-complected deity.

3. "But you racist rascals—trash—vermin
oppose Jews—Hebrews—Ethiopes,
and think—stupidly—that you can live!

4. "Well, I see through your half-smiles,
your equivocations that soften your oppressions.

5. "I see you and your affiliates, confederates, clearly!
I see you clearly—all of you.

6. "And I've proof of your financial frauds
and outright abuse of every market, every economy,
all these wrongs you commit non-stop.

7. "Moreover, every word of every Hebrew prophet
motivates your *Hatred*.
You can't stand being hated by the God we love.

8. "In conjunction—cahoots—with other jerks,
your army stole into my olive grove
and tried to steal Delilah,
hoping my Goliath powers were stymied.

9. "Well, did you really think you could get away with
your subterfuge, persiflage, shenanigans?

10. "Go ahead! Concoct a story—a lie—
about Israel and I:
it'll be only a lie—a goddamn lie!

11. "The real reason for your *Opprobrium*?
For 20 years I've frustrated your *Criminality*!

12. "Look, Philistines: I'm a-gonna exterminate y'all.

13. "Why not come with the *Truth*, then,
before it's too late?

14. "My reckless fucking of your treasonous countrywoman—
Delilah—
notwithstanding,
I'm a-gonna expel y'all from the planet.

15. "You'll no longer threaten me or my nation!
Racists, y'all thrive on *Racism*.

16. "I assure you, however:
My *vendetta* will end your *Vindictiveness*.

17. "I am already watching you die.

18. "Who starts the *War*,
will not end the *War*!"

[Dorval (Québec) 21 *mai* mmxvi]

James Hahn

"It should never have occurred"

Documentary Appropriation, Resistant Reading, and the Ethical Ambivalence of *McAlmon's Chinese Opera*

Despite winning the Governor General's Award for English-language poetry in 1980, Stephen Scobie's documentary long poem *McAlmon's Chinese Opera* has been all but overlooked by literary scholarship. The poem has been touched upon in criticism devoted to other works[1] and is given some attention in Smaro Kamboureli's study of the Canadian long poem, *On the Edge of Genre* (1991),[2] but to date the most comprehensive work on *Opera* has been produced by Scobie himself.[3] The dearth of critical attention paid to *Opera* seems an echo of the plight of its historical protagonist, Robert McAlmon, a writer and publisher who helped to launch the careers of high-profile modernists but struggled to keep his own work from slipping into obscurity. Like McAlmon, Scobie is better known for what might be termed his literary service; he has written books on prominent Canadian authors,[4] and has also worked to refine the definition of the documentary Canadian long poem put forth by Dorothy Livesay in 1969. Livesay framed the genre as one marked by didacticism and representative types, wherein "narratives are told not from the point of view of one protagonist, but rather to illustrate a precept" (269); she also contended that such poems "create a dialectic between the objective facts and the subjective feelings of the poet" (267). Scobie has looked to the documentary long poems published in the wake of Livesay's foundational essay (such as Michael Ondaatje's *The Collected Works of Billy the Kid* and Margaret Atwood's *The Journals of Susanna Moodie*) and noted that many take up "the persona" of a historical figure whose "biography . . . provides the structure of the book" and whose poetic reconstruction "invokes the authority of fact only to consign it to a systematic blurring of limits"

(*Signature* 121, 122). In doing so, he has situated the genre—and his own contributions to it—within the broader postmodern impulse (particularly prevalent in literature of the 1970s and 1980s) to reimagine and recontextualize historical figures and the materials by which we come to know them. As conceptualized by Scobie, the documentary long poem can be viewed as a poetic strand of what Linda Hutcheon calls "historiographic metafiction" (169), an intensely intertextual approach to postmodern writing that looks to the historical and alights upon "a tension . . . not only between the real and the textualized, but among a number of kinds of reference" (178). Many of *Opera*'s intertexts are themselves marked by this tension; the poem revisits a modernist literary milieu in which, as Scobie puts it, writers "appear as characters in each other's books" ("Biographical" 82). For the speaker of the poem, a fictionalized version of McAlmon, one such appearance represents an unforgivable transgression.

Central to *Opera* is the notion that turning another's life into art is ethically problematic, that an individual ought to retain some control over their own life stories. The poem unfolds as a series of dramatic monologues that zero in on two key events in the historical McAlmon's life: his sham marriage to a wealthy heiress, and the sense of betrayal and emotional turmoil he experienced when, against his wishes, William Carlos Williams (with whom McAlmon had founded *Contact* magazine) published some suggestive remarks about this marriage in his 1951 *Autobiography*. According to Scobie's McAlmon, Williams "took the old scars . . . / and with a scalpel's delicacy / cut them open" (79). The literary betrayal related by *Opera* pertains to an unwanted act of autobiographical disclosure, one that calls to mind a question posed by Nancy K. Miller in "The Ethics of Betrayal": "If . . . every account of the self includes relations with others, how can an autobiographer tell a story without betraying the other, without violating the other's privacy" while "nonetheless telling the story *from one's own perspective*, which by virtue of being a published text exerts a certain power?" (153, emphasis original). But *Opera*'s engagement with this problematic also calls to mind ethical concerns raised by the genre of the documentary long poem itself, which likewise entails appropriation and commodification of the lives and stories of others. In "Foam (Essay with Rhapsody)," Anne Carson contends that "[p]art of what you enjoy in a documentary technique is the sense of banditry" occasioned by "loot[ing] someone else's life" (45). Scobie employs a criminal metaphor in his discussion of long poems wherein the poet adopts the persona of their historical subject, a technique he calls the "forged

signature" (*Signature* 119). Like Carson, he notes documentary's transgressive allure: "the persona enables the author, and, vicariously, the reader, to assume the pleasures of the forged identity" (120). At stake in these metaphors of vicarious criminal enticement is a sense of the ethical ambivalence often at play in the genre's imaginative reconstruction of historical figures and events. The reader may, as Carson and Scobie suggest, take pleasure in the reconstruction, but they may also question the poet's right to undertake such a project, particularly when—as is the case in Scobie's *Opera*—the historical subject's aversion to certain disclosures is well documented.

This essay explores the ethical dimensions of documentary appropriation by looking to Scobie's poem and staging what Daniel R. Schwarz has termed a "resistant reading" of the text. In "A Humanistic Ethics of Reading," Schwarz figures resistant reading as an interrogative process impelled by works that "disturb our sense of fairness" (14). It entails the consideration of a given text's potential to do harm or cause offense, a potential that, to my mind, is exacerbated by works rooted in the utilization of another's voice and life stories. At first glance, *Opera* might seem unlikely to elicit the sort of resistance that Schwarz has in mind; it is not marked by the "sexist or racist or homophobic connotations" with which he is primarily concerned (6). In fact, Scobie's McAlmon treats queer contemporaries with more respect than did his historical namesake (as I go on to discuss). Yet in *Opera*, the ethics of autobiographical disclosure and documentary appropriation become intertwined. The resistant reading I advance hinges on the notion that, by dwelling on the historical McAlmon's marriage and his aversion to seeing it transformed into literary fodder, the poem effectively commits the very transgression it thematizes. *Opera* registers the damaging effects of Williams' betrayal by framing it as an act of character assassination, but it does so while prompting the reader to further scrutinize McAlmon's private life. My resistance to these aspects of the text, however, is not unmitigated; while keeping in mind *Opera*'s proliferation of transgressions, I contend that the poem's inscription of its speaker's reading act is perhaps just as significant, as Scobie's McAlmon is able to articulate his own resistance in a way that his historical counterpart was not. Furthermore, I consider the recuperative and corrective work done by the poem, and the ways in which its narrative is shaped by values that the historical McAlmon championed in his own writing. Though the reading I offer focuses on a specific documentary long poem, my hope is that it will facilitate a wider discussion of both the good and the potential harm that can result from the genre's engagement with historical figures and events.

Questions pertaining to appropriation, authenticity, and poetic licence abound, and these questions rarely (if ever) have stable or singular answers.

One difficulty posed by my reading of *Opera* is that it necessitates consideration of a historical figure whose place in the public imagination owes a considerable debt to various literary embellishments. Outside of Scobie's poem, McAlmon is best known for his appearances in the autobiographical writings of his contemporaries. Though he wrote a memoir—*Being Geniuses Together* (1938)—it was substantially revised after his death by Kay Boyle, who also added interstitial chapters of her own. Sanford J. Smoller's 1975 biography, *Adrift Among Geniuses*, draws on unpublished letters and archival evidence to tell the story of McAlmon's life, but it fills the many gaps in this life story by looking to the autobiographical works of others in which McAlmon appears, and by offering biographical readings of McAlmon's fiction and poetry. The McAlmon who emerges from this web of writings is, decidedly, something of a constructed character. He was among the first to publish works by Gertrude Stein and Ernest Hemingway,[5] but much of his own writing was quickly forgotten.[6] In his own time, he gained some notoriety for his acerbic personality and alcohol-fuelled antics, but more attention-grabbing was his controversial marriage to Winifred Ellerman, better known in literary circles by her pen name, Bryher, and in other circles as heir to Sir John Ellerman, an English shipping magnate. The settlement McAlmon received from his divorce would earn him the unfortunate nickname "McAlimony" (Smoller 188), but this was not the crux of the controversy; at the time that Bryher and McAlmon were married, she was the lover of Hilda Doolittle (H. D.), and her nuptial arrangement with McAlmon was merely that: an arrangement, one ostensibly intended to allow Bryher "to escape her father's domination and to be free to travel where, when, and with whom she desired" (Smoller 37-38).

Opera dwells on questions debated by McAlmon's biographer and contemporaries alike: did McAlmon have romantic feelings for Bryher, and did he—despite or perhaps because of such feelings—agree to marry her knowing that the union would be a fraud? Though publicly reticent about his motives, McAlmon did send a letter to Williams not long after the ceremony in which he confessed that the marriage was "legal only, unromantic, and strictly an agreement" (qtd. in Smoller 41), and asked that his friend refrain from discussing the matter with anyone but himself. That Williams disrespected this wish with the publication of *Autobiography* is another biographical detail on which *Opera* dwells. As early as the poem's

first dramatic monologue, Scobie's McAlmon makes plain his unabated bitterness regarding Williams' account of the marriage:

> . . . no doctor has to tell me
> of how a woman tore me up
> leaving me cold and rotten inside
> like frozen fruit. He doesn't need
> to write that shit for all his
> drooling public. It
> should never have occurred. (7)

A certain ambiguity attends this stanza's closing declaration, as "It" could pertain to McAlmon's marriage, the account of this marriage offered by Williams' *Autobiography*, or both. More pointed is the reference to "frozen fruit," which evokes Williams' "This Is Just to Say," a poem that details a relatively minor transgression—the theft of coveted, chilled plums. Though the speaker of "This Is Just to Say" asks to be forgiven, their sincerity is called into doubt by the closing lines: "they were delicious / so sweet / and so cold" (41). Williams' poem, then, can be read as an unsolicited exchange in which the text itself serves as recompense for the stolen fruit. By aligning "This Is Just to Say" with *Autobiography*'s unwanted account of McAlmon's marriage, *Opera*'s opening monologue figures Williams as a writer willing to violate the trust of his intimates in order to produce art that will appease "his drooling public." While this description amounts to a mockery of those enticed by literary transgressions, *Opera*'s narrative rests, to some extent, on the potential for such transgressions to capture the reader's interest.

Also significant is the placement of this monologue. Scobie's McAlmon is "60 years old" and "dying of pneumonia" (87) as he narrates the story of his life but, for the most part, that story unfolds chronologically. *Opera* is divided into three dated sections that trace, in order, McAlmon's youth in the American Midwest and early adulthood in New York (where he is introduced to, and marries, Bryher), his transition from early adulthood to middle age in Europe (during which time he and Bryher divorce), and his eventual convalescence in Desert Hot Springs, California (where he receives a copy of Williams' *Autobiography*). Though the opening monologue is not the only instance in which this chronology is disrupted, it is perhaps the most striking, as it establishes meaningful connections between the events detailed in each of the poem's sections. It frames the publication of *Autobiography* as the impetus for *Opera*'s dramatic monologues, while also making central to the life of Scobie's McAlmon a relationship that the historical McAlmon wished to remain private.

Opera not only follows Williams in violating the historical McAlmon's wishes, but also encourages the reader to join in examining his private life. Scobie contends that "the documentary poem is never an enclosed, self-sufficient creation; the reader is actively invited to repeat the poet's research and engagement with the facts" (*Signature* 123). This invitation is all but affirmed by *Opera*'s Afterword, which directs the reader to texts consulted during the poem's composition. The more one looks to these texts, the more it becomes apparent that—although he could be characterized as outspoken to a fault—the historical McAlmon was, as Scobie himself puts it, "exceptionally reticent" regarding any disclosure pertaining to his marriage (*Opera* 89). This reticence is explored at length in Smoller's biography, a text that Scobie acknowledges having "made extensive use of" while writing *Opera*. Scobie also deems the posthumously revised 1968 edition of McAlmon's own memoir "indispensable reading" (93), and this text provides a particularly compelling example of McAlmon's reluctance to publicly address the peculiar circumstances surrounding his marriage. In *Geniuses*, very little is said about the marriage, which is all the more curious when one considers that it is the subject of the book's first chapter. The narrative is set in motion by McAlmon's marriage to Bryher and their decision to spend six weeks visiting her family in London. Though she and her family are sketched in some detail, there is virtually no discussion of the relationship these two writers shared. The reader might well be excused for forgetting that McAlmon is married for much of the decade covered by this memoir, as Bryher makes few appearances after the opening pages. The fact that she is absent from so much of the text stands as persuasive evidence of the historical McAlmon's reluctance to see their relationship utilized as literary material, a reluctance that is key to my resistant reading of *Opera*.

Yet Bryher's part in *Geniuses*, however insubstantial, complicates my reading, as the memoir offers a version of the marriage to which other writers may respond; it can be viewed as having made public the writer's private life, a move which invites both scrutiny and (re)interpretation. But the ethical dimensions of such interpretations remain a salient concern. Though my interest lies in Scobie's treatment of the marriage, Williams' bears some consideration. In *Autobiography*, Bryher proposes to McAlmon during their second meeting, and then reveals herself to be "the daughter of Sir John Ellerman, the heaviest tax payer in England" (176). To this, Williams adds the damning conclusion: "Bob fell for it" (176). With just a few lines, Williams lends credence to the popular belief that McAlmon was something of an

opportunistic gold digger while also, oddly, suggesting that his friend was too naive to understand that he was being duped. I draw attention to these insinuations because Williams' literary transgression is not merely related by Scobie's poem; it is, effectively, reinscribed, given a new textual life. Frank Davey has observed that documentary works "give the old materials"—the sources on which they draw—"new focus" (133). Such an observation certainly applies to *Opera*. However, while the poem brings "new focus" to the historical McAlmon, the focus of its narrative is not exactly new; rather, *Opera* represents a rereading of McAlmon's life in which the most scandalous details are foregrounded and instrumentalized for the sake of their affective charge. This is not to say that McAlmon's importance as a writer and publisher is overlooked by the poem; Scobie's respect for McAlmon's literary output and patronage is apparent throughout. But *Opera*'s narrative places more emphasis on Williams' decision to transform into art, to scandalous effect, the marriage that McAlmon guarded like a secret. That it does so in the (forged) voice of the historical McAlmon signals a need to consider the broader ethical problematics generated by documentary appropriation.

Scobie addresses these problematics in an interview with Margery Fee as they discuss both *Opera* and the documentary conventions on which the poem draws. Though the term "resistant reading" is never used, he notes that *Opera* has already met with some resistance, as it "upset" Kay Boyle, friend to the historical McAlmon and co-author of the revised *Geniuses* ("Biographical" 84). While Scobie ultimately dismisses Boyle's reaction to the poem,[7] he nevertheless admits that

> it does raise a major and quite legitimate question: what *right* do authors have to *use* historical figures in this way? We are in a sense appropriating them for our own purposes, even for our own gain. It's a rather queasy moral point. All I can plead is that if we make something imaginatively genuine out of it, then that carries its own justification. But I can understand people who object, on principle, to the whole idea. (85)

As Boyle's resistance to *Opera* illustrates, the creation of something "imaginatively genuine" is not, for some, sufficient justification for the documentary poet's utilization of another's life stories. Some may specifically object to the poet's decision to take on the voice and identity of a historical figure. *Opera*'s voice is integral to my resistance, though not for the appropriation or "forgery" of identity that it represents. Scobie's McAlmon addresses the reader directly in his evocation of the emotional turmoil occasioned by having his private life reconstructed as literature and held up for public

scrutiny. I resist the poem's reconstruction and the scrutiny it invites, at least in part, because Scobie has fashioned a voice that compels me to do so.

Scobie's McAlmon appeals to the reader's sense of justice by figuring Williams' representation of the marriage as an unwarranted act of character assassination. Throughout *Opera*, this sort of figurative murder becomes a metaphor for the dangers posed by a literary scene wherein one's personal experiences are likely to be transformed into another's art. The poem is replete with references to, and images suggestive of, assassination, many of which pertain to Williams' *Autobiography* and the friendship that it "destroy[ed]" (*Opera* 90). The most arresting of these involves an allusion to Ondaatje's *The Collected Works of Billy the Kid*, in which the Kid's killer, the nineteenth-century lawman Pat Garrett, is described as both an "ideal assassin" (28) and "a sane assassin" (29). "William Carlos / Williams told me," says Scobie's McAlmon, "I should have been Billy / the Kid" (77). The speaker's remark is not without historical precedent; impressed with McAlmon's fast finger-work as a typist, Williams once compared his friend to the famed nineteenth-century outlaw.[8] In a nod to *The Collected Works*, *Opera* expands upon this comparison by having Scobie's McAlmon figure Williams as the Kid's killer and, by extension, as his own:

> Hot desert night
> Desert Hot Springs / Fort Sumner
> no gun in my hands.
> Come on in,
> Dr. Pat Garrett. (77)

The overlaying of these encounters highlights certain similarities—both involve men of some celebrity who were betrayed by a friend, died in the desert, and have since been reimagined via the documentary long poem's "forged signature"—but it also underscores some notable differences. In Ondaatje's poem, the Kid is caught unawares, but is not defenceless; he has his "guns" and is "Carrying a knife" when Garrett kills him on a "hot night" in Fort Sumner (Ondaatje 92). In Scobie's poem, McAlmon is extending an invitation while unarmed and in poor health. His death is foreshadowed in the previous monologue, where he first extends the invitation to "Come in" after noting that "The eye is narrowed down / to a small burnt hole" by the desert air (76). This image evokes the damage done by a bullet fired with expert aim, but Scobie's McAlmon meets a grislier end, albeit figuratively, when Williams' *Autobiography* is mailed to him "like a bomb in a brown paper parcel" and he is "left to die outside [Williams'] company" (79). Though

engaging with the trope of character assassination, *Opera* reminds the reader that the pain inflicted by this metaphoric assault can be all too real.

Throughout Scobie's poem, the emotional distress resulting from Williams' betrayal is thrown into sharp relief by repeated references to his status as a physician, an occupation conventionally associated with the ethical obligation to *do no harm*. *Opera* actually links Williams' dual roles as writer and physician; he spends "hours in his surgery writing / prescription blank poems" (47), which feature "images drawn with a doctor's precision" (21). Scobie's McAlmon also posits that Williams' interest in his marriage is not merely that of a concerned friend; when the two men reconnect in Paris after several years apart, Williams asks "questions about [McAlmon's] marriage / as a friend but also as a doctor / diagnosing some disease" (47). The conflicted relationship between Williams' personal and professional interests is underscored by the speaker's belief that *Autobiography* pathologizes him in its treatment of his unconventional marriage: "[Williams] saw things crooked, and saw me / cold as a case-book diagnosis" (79). By framing Williams' betrayal as an act informed by the conventions and parameters of medical research, *Opera* draws attention to the fact that, unlike most forms of life writing, such research is subject to ethical oversight. G. Thomas Couser notes that "physicians . . . must protect the confidentiality of their patients or clients in their case histories or case reports. In contrast, no such regulations constrain lay life writing" (xi). *Opera* depicts Williams as a writer who violates the ethical codes of his medical profession by making public the suffering and afflictions of an intimate who is, the poem suggests, also a patient of sorts. As the opening monologue attests, this is a transgression that "no doctor" should commit (7).

But what of the documentary poet? In a sense, Scobie has written himself into an ethical bind; he cannot illustrate the inappropriateness of writing that capitalizes on McAlmon's private affairs without referencing those affairs and, in doing so, inviting the charge of hypocrisy. *Opera* represents an iteration, however marked by different contexts, of the very transgression to which Scobie's McAlmon registers his resistance. This puts the reader compelled by the plight and perspective of Scobie's McAlmon in something of a bind as well; I cannot articulate my own resistance to the poem's proliferation of transgressions without also referencing the historical McAlmon's private life and effectively adding to the proliferation. At the same time, I must recognize that the poem represents a recuperative effort intended to bring McAlmon back from the brink of historical obscurity, and that the resistant reading it models is inextricably linked to this endeavour.

My own resistance, impelled as it is by that of Scobie's McAlmon, cannot be absolute; I cannot, in other words, separate the transgressions enacted and invited by *Opera* from the poem's efforts to do right by its historical subject. It is to these efforts that I now turn.

In his penultimate monologue, Scobie's McAlmon tells the reader: "You have heard me out" (86). At stake in this statement is not merely an acknowledgement of the monologue form's reliance on the presence of an audience, but also—to return to the criminal metaphors discussed at the outset of this essay—the fact that the poem provides the historical McAlmon with an imaginative "hearing" by which he may, through oral arguments, present his own version of events. Much like a legal hearing, *Opera* enters personal, subjective testimony into the public record; however, it differs significantly in the sense that it does so through the lens of literature. This is the kind of hearing that the historical McAlmon, who spent his final years in ill health and out of favour with the publishing world, never received. I would like to suggest that the McAlmon of this period is a "vulnerable subject." A "vulnerable subject," according to Couser, is one whose life story is related by another but who is "deprive[d] . . . of the capacity to take part in, examine, respond to, or resist that representation" (x). The historical McAlmon was not entirely lacking in the ability and opportunity to vent his frustration regarding *Autobiography*; he sent Williams "a long, coldly formal letter" in which he made note of *Autobiography*'s "errors, distortions, and misquotations" (Smoller 306), and "would rail against Williams, often viciously, to mutual friends" (307). But what was denied McAlmon was the opportunity to do so via literature, the medium through which he felt he was wronged, and for which he hoped to be remembered. In *Opera*, Scobie's McAlmon monologues his way clear of this vulnerability.

The hearing made possible by the "forged signature" of Scobie's *Opera* also entails confrontations with and alternative perspectives on other literary representations of the historical McAlmon. Kamboureli observes that the poem's speaker is marked by "the intertextuality of his voice, the extent to which it speaks from within a tradition that . . . dismissed" his historical namesake (92). Much of the poem's intertextuality pertains to this dismissal and the feuds (with other writers) that factored into it;[9] Scobie's McAlmon satirizes a printer's letter of rejection (38) and directs barbs at more successful rivals such as Hemingway (9) and T. S. Eliot (31). But more compelling is the emphasis he places on how he has been misrepresented by the writings of his contemporaries. Though *Opera*, as a documentary

long poem, represents an imaginative commingling of fact and fiction, Scobie's McAlmon is, at times, out to set the record straight. For example, he addresses a "lie" the historical McAlmon "told to Glassco"; namely, that he had "joined the Canadian Army / and then deserted" (68). McAlmon's service in a Canadian regiment goes unquestioned in both Glassco's *Memoirs of Montparnasse* (50-51) and in Williams' *Autobiography* (172), though in Williams' text no mention is made of McAlmon having deserted. By drawing attention to this lie and the fact that it went unquestioned by both Glassco and Williams, Scobie's McAlmon compels the reader to consider how the writings of the historical McAlmon's contemporaries have dubiously shaped our understanding of the man in question.

At times, the conflation of identities at play in the poem's "forged signature" makes it difficult to determine if the resistance on display ought to be credited to Scobie or to Scobie's McAlmon. Poems narrated by historical personae are, as Scobie has it, "*signed* by their characters" (*Signature* 120, emphasis original). Consider the impact this has on the resistance registered by the title of Scobie's poem, which may also be read as the title given to the collected monologues of the poem's persona *by* that persona. The title is derived from a scene in *Memoirs* in which a rather inebriated McAlmon is ejected from a saloon for performing his "Chinese opera," which Glassco describes as a "hideous, wordless, toneless screaming" (59). The scene is emblematic of how Glassco makes McAlmon appear both captivating and repulsive at the same time; he is introduced as "a minor legend . . . saddled with the nickname 'Robber McAlimony,'" a moniker he is said to have "gained by marrying a wealthy woman and then living alone and magnificently on an allowance from her multimillionaire father" (51). Glassco soon shifts from casting aspersions on McAlmon's character to ridiculing his writing and intelligence: "There were occasional flashes of observation and understanding, even moments of grace; but the style and syntax revealed the genuine illiterate" (80). Scobie—or perhaps it would be more appropriate to say Scobie's McAlmon—turns the "Chinese opera" of which Glassco wrote into the far from "wordless" *McAlmon's Chinese Opera*, while also framing it as a metaphor for the writer whose voice has been all but lost, who nevertheless persists in making noise to compel our attention:

> . . . somewhere in the darkness between stations
> a voice is screaming down
> the airwaves of the long dead years
>
> McAlmon's Chinese Opera. (73)

In a sense, however, *Opera* imbues the "Chinese opera" with new meaning by remaining true to the essence of its intertextual referent; in *Memoirs*, McAlmon's performance is depicted as something of an obnoxious party trick, but it also represents a critical disagreement and a refusal to be controlled, contained, or ignored. Perturbed by "The polite ripple of applause" (58) that greets a jazz performance, McAlmon proceeds to engage and antagonize the saloon's patrons. "Just listen for a moment," he says; "I'm part of the show" (58). It is only when his expulsion from the saloon is imminent that his speech gives way to a "hideous" song. *Opera* affects a similar disruption; it seeks to unsettle the conversation surrounding the historical McAlmon by interrogating the texts through which he is primarily known. It insists that he be heard—albeit via a "forged" persona—and rails against his absence from the modernist canon by outlining a personal and professional history that makes him very much "part of the show."

Opera also functions as a necessary corrective regarding some of the actions of its own historical subject. Though he appeared to be comfortable with his own bisexuality,[10] the historical McAlmon would sometimes slander others based on their perceived or actual deviations from heterosexual norms. That Hemingway and F. Scott Fitzgerald were subject to this sort of attack is perhaps unsurprising, as both men were professional rivals with whom McAlmon shared a contentious relationship.[11] But the fact that McAlmon is said to have rudely rebuffed the artist Marsden Hartley for offering a "spontaneous display of homosexual emotion" (Smoller 28) is perplexing, as the two were good friends. *Opera* does not address the rumors McAlmon spread regarding Fitzgerald and Hemingway, but it does revisit the Hartley incident in an effort to address its subject's insensitivity. While the historical McAlmon is credited with making a joke at Hartley's expense, Scobie's McAlmon expresses regret for this; he recognizes that Hartley was "torment[ed] for years" by desires at odds with the sexual mores of postwar America, and wishes he could have "brought some peace / to [Hartley's] restless soul" by reciprocating the affection the artist once offered him (18). This wish marks a striking break from *Opera*'s source material, but—like the text's reframing of the "Chinese opera"—it also evinces a certain faithfulness to that material. Scobie has cited the historical McAlmon's literary engagement with queer figures as something that elevates his writing beyond that of more successful contemporaries such as Hemingway, who, as Scobie puts it, "just took refuge in all these terribly phony macho ideals of the real man" ("Biographical" 88). What Scobie claims to admire in

McAlmon's writing is its ability to engage with marginalized individuals "nonjudgmentally . . . without posturing, without moralizing, without evading" (89). The amends that *Opera* attempts to make for McAlmon's treatment of Hartley is a fictional gesture, and doubly so; it locates in the values advanced by the historical McAlmon's writing a resistance to his uneven, and at times antagonistic, engagement with queer figures.

These values also inform *Opera*'s engagement with the sexuality of both McAlmon and Bryher. At one point, Scobie's McAlmon claims that he "cannot quite determine" the "sex" of "last night's lover" (41). More significantly, he does not seem terribly interested in the distinction; as he sees it, "The bitter mechanics of love / for a man or woman . . . / are never more than a night's pretence" (41). Though Scobie's McAlmon gestures towards Bryher's relationship with H. D., he stops short of addressing it directly; his claim that after "twelve days married" Bryher is "still virgin" is actually the closest he comes to identifying her as a lesbian (27). While this comment can be read as endorsing a heteronormative notion of copulation in which lesbian sex does not qualify, *Opera*'s matter-of-fact evocation of queer figures and relationships suggests otherwise. It suggests an ironic echoing of heteronormative discourse, and a resistance to the prurience that marks the poem's source material. The comment is adapted from a remark made by Smoller (46), who has in mind both romantic and physical affection when he calls Bryher an "unloving wife" (47). Though Smoller ultimately concludes that "it is doubtful that [McAlmon's] marriage in itself drove him to men," he nevertheless suggests "that the resultant disillusionment made lasting fulfillment with women impossible" (216). Scobie appears to support Smoller's suggestion when he claims that "there is a kind of emotional deadness in the later McAlmon which does seem to set in around the time of his marriage" ("Biographical" 86), but this is one issue on which the sometimes-hazy distinction between *Opera*'s poet and persona becomes remarkably clear. Scobie's McAlmon claims that whatever is "dead" in him was "perhaps stillborn in South Dakota" long before he met Bryher (55). In keeping with the fact that the historical McAlmon was offended by "Williams' insinuations [in *Autobiography*] that he had been browbeaten and emasculated by . . . Bryher and H. D." (Smoller 307), Scobie's McAlmon rejects a narrative in which Bryher's relationship with H. D. is to blame for his emotional frigidity.

Opera plays a complicated game with the reader; it engenders a respect for the historical McAlmon's wishes, yet it sometimes violates those wishes even as it marks its own respect for them. Nowhere is this ambivalence more apparent

than in the poem's treatment of McAlmon's marriage and his motives for being party to the ruse it represented. Scobie's McAlmon remarks of Bryher: "I will not say I did not love her; / I will not say I did: the truth / is long forgotten by us both" (26). With these lines, he asserts his unwillingness to satisfy the curiosity of the historical McAlmon's contemporaries and biographer alike, and suggests that he could not satisfy that curiosity even if he was inclined to do so. But the poem nevertheless tantalizes the reader with the possibility that McAlmon did indeed love Bryher. Does the opening monologue's reference to "how a woman tore [McAlmon] up" (7) signal an acknowledgement that romantic feelings motivated him to play the part of Bryher's husband, or is it merely an allusion to the picture painted by Williams' *Autobiography*? Does remembered desire inform the speaker's fixation, later in life, with "Bryher's thin body" and the fact that his own "body remembers / seeing her naked as lightning" (84)? *Opera* does not answer these questions, but rather, compels the reader to consider the historical possibilities at play in what the poem has teased as a "truth / . . . long forgotten." It is a documentary gesture that, as the poem and its Afterword make plain, is at odds with the wishes of both Scobie's McAlmon and his historical namesake.

Perhaps the most vexing question posed by *McAlmon's Chinese Opera* is: what consideration, if any, should documentary poets give to the wishes of their historical subjects? Scobie's poem underscores just how fraught and subjective this question can be. Through its reimagining of an unwanted act of autobiographical disclosure, *Opera* asks the reader to consider the ethics of turning another's life stories into art. In doing so, the poem draws attention to its own problematic engagement with this very issue. It cannot tell the story of how Williams betrayed the historical McAlmon without in some way reinscribing that betrayal and bringing renewed attention to the controversial marriage for which McAlmon did not want to be remembered. There is, to me, an ethical dissonance in *Opera*'s emphasis on the hurt occasioned by disclosures that the poem itself effectively reproduces. Not all will share my resistance to these aspects of the poem, but *Opera* insists on the importance of such resistance, as it thematizes an interrogative re-reading and recontextualization of much of its own source material. Yet it also insists that McAlmon be heard, however "forged" the voice may be, and that he deserves a place in the modernist canon that he, as a publisher, helped to create. With this in mind, *Opera* serves as a striking example of the ethical ambivalence that sometimes attends the documentary long poem's reconstruction of historical lives.

NOTES

1 The poem is discussed briefly in Laurie Ricou's "Prairie Poetry and Metaphors of Plain/s Space" (1983) and in Peter Jaeger's "Theoreographic Metawriting: *The Ballad of Isabel Gunn*" (1994).
2 See pp. 91-93.
3 Scobie addresses *Opera* in "Amelia, or: Who Do You Think You Are? Documentary and Identity in Canadian Literature" (1984), an article which resurfaces in a highly revised form—with little attention paid to *Opera*—as a chapter in his book *Signature Event Cantext* (1989). He offers a more thorough discussion of the poem in "Stephen Scobie: Biographical" (1987), an interview conducted by Margery Fee.
4 See *Leonard Cohen* (1978), *bpNichol: What History Teaches* (1984), and *Sheila Watson and Her Works* (1984).
5 McAlmon applied the Contact imprint to his book-publishing endeavours, among them Contact Editions, which published Hemingway's first book, *Three Stories and Ten Poems* (1923), and Contact Press, which published Stein's *The Making of Americans* (1925). In *Opera*'s Afterword, Scobie notes that following the publication of these books, McAlmon's relationship with Hemingway "dissolved into rivalry and bitter enmity" and his "initial friendship with Stein also came to grief" (90).
6 Smoller observes that, for the most part, "McAlmon has been ignored by critics and scholars, except for those who have used his memoir, at times extensively, to write about his famous contemporaries" (2).
7 Scobie claims that, in addition to his own "evident admiration for John Glassco," Boyle "was upset . . . by the book's departures from factual accuracy" ("Biographical" 84). This, he suggests, represents a misunderstanding of the documentary form, as he "wasn't writing history" ("Biographical" 84).
8 See Scobie ("Biographical" 86).
9 McAlmon's penchant for speaking ill of other authors alienated would-be publishers. Smoller says of one such incident: "The price extracted from McAlmon for a few foolish, albeit vicious, misconstructions and misrepresentations [regarding Hemingway] was heavy: virtual oblivion" (227).
10 Smoller details several incidents in which McAlmon addressed his sexuality, including a public exchange wherein McAlmon told Morley Callaghan: "I'm bisexual myself, like Michelangelo, and I don't give a damn who knows it" (212). Whether McAlmon was comfortable with his sexuality being addressed via literature is, however, up for debate. In "Textual Authority and Modern American Autobiography," Craig Monk—who mistakenly presumes that McAlmon was homosexual and that he "never pronounc[ed] his sexuality publicly"—speculates that in *Geniuses*, McAlmon is perhaps "careful to make frequent, if chaste, references to women encountered during his nights on the town" because he is "cagey about his preferences" (493). McAlmon may well have been concerned that a widely disseminated acknowledgement of his sexuality could be a hindrance to his professional ambitions; that said, if he is "cagey" about his sexual relationships in *Geniuses*, this caginess pertains to relations with both male and female partners—in other words, to the part of his life that (like his relationship with Bryher) he deemed private.
11 See Smoller (223-25).

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Tas Elizabeth Beck

Moonlight Trees

The September Moon births murex and abalone shells.
People search shallow tide pools for treasure.
Fistfuls of finger-nail-sized baby sand dollars cry.

People tumble inside moonlight, frail as plastic beach balls.
They are so cold with hypothermic heat that they strip,
into their million 'bacon' costumes.

The thunderbolt up Zeus' sleeve flat-lines.
His cygnet stage no longer entertains his naked audience.
Leda escaped, smiling softly and whispering, "my magic is stronger."

Boom! Everywhere Boom! Helios slams sunshine closed.
He knocks everything over, hurrying to his winter blinds.
He opens the wet, glossy, never-ending northern night.

People try to navigate, climbing from wobbly row boats,
stumbling into midnight black. Old confidence
forgets how to cart wheel in the dark.

Ancient cornucopias no longer mirror inner ears.
Babies suffer without tight hugs of swaddling lights.
They are like Noahs, launched into fierce, white water.

Years of silent, Charlie Chaplin acrobatics spin,
developing their first spoken black and white images,
emerging with a red filter, emphasizing contrasts.

White noise pours through people's memories.
For some, it is like a virgin's first glimpse of hourglass sand.
People can't distinguish the words of this rapid voice.

This hushed anthem twirls like a mountain lion preparing its bed.
It rises like a stadium, enraptured with standing ovations.
The cold stare of the cat turns to look behind him.

Suddenly, the old prizes start to tumble. Falling. Falling.
Alice in Wonderland morphs into a civ that everything must fall through.
These final moments will freeze like the empty silhouettes of trees.

Julie Cairnie

Truth and Reconciliation in Postcolonial Hockey Masculinities

Introduction

All of us have a relationship to sport, whether we like it or not; whether we are athletic or not; and even whether it is in the centre of our vision or more peripheral. In Canada, hockey culture is mostly inescapable, and it is well understood that hockey and Canada are frequently associated. It has become almost a truism to point to the links between hockey culture and nationalism, whether we think of Roch Carrier's *The Hockey Sweater*, Tim Hortons commercials, Don Cherry's "Coach's Corner," the *Hockey Night in Canada* theme song, the music of the Tragically Hip or Stompin' Tom, the 1972 Canada-Soviet Summit Series, or figures such as Bobby Orr, Rocket Richard, or Foster Hewett. When I teach "sport," I ask students to articulate their own sport history narratives, and these often pivot on gender. I have my own narrative. I spent the first twenty years of my book-saturated life avoiding sport, but also immersed in it as a spectator. My older brothers were on travel hockey teams until the end of high school. I saw most of their games, but never imagined myself on the ice; hockey was for boys, and it was violent. As Gamal Abdel-Shehid and Nathan Kalman-Lamb note, men "play the starring role in professional sport as athletes," and women "are consigned to the role of cheerleaders or dancers" (4). Of course, it is more complicated than this: some men assert their sport-masculinity through the accumulation of facts and statistics, and some women skirt the edges of sport culture, with book in hand and a good sightline, and still others are athletes themselves. In my early twenties I was an apprentice teacher in southern Africa, and had to choose an activity for Wednesday afternoon sports, a common practice in

many African countries. Naturally, I chose the least sporty option: ballroom dancing. It took me a few decades to begin to unpack the significance of weekly sports days. Like other postcolonialists, I was far more intrigued by Wednesday afternoon church, another colonial legacy.

It is assumed that hockey is unifying, "common mythology" (Blake 33) in Canada, but it is also a "contact zone" (Pratt) where "players" present competing narratives about the meaning of hockey, "our game," in a post-TRC (Truth and Reconciliation Commission) Canada. Here I stage a contact zone reading of two books about hockey, Stephen Harper's *A Great Game* (2013) and Richard Wagamese's *Indian Horse* (2012), that pays attention to the ways in which these divergent texts grapple with one another as they assert their own positions. The two books were published a year apart and each has national significance: Harper's history was published when he was the sitting prime minister, and Wagamese's novel was a strong contender in CBC's "Canada Reads" in 2013 and has since been adapted as an award-winning film. Both Harper and Wagamese are hockey fans, but the commonalities stop there: Harper is a statistics and facts aficionado, whereas Wagamese is more concerned with human relationships and the ineffable in hockey. Harper presents a neat progress narrative (from amateur to professional hockey), while Wagamese refuses the conventional narrative of hockey development and progress, and tracks the movement away from professional to community-based hockey. In *Indian Horse* both hockey and masculinities undergo a process of truth and reconciliation, and hockey is provided a far more nuanced narrative than Harper's text allows.[1] Before staging this exchange between Harper's *A Great Game* and Wagamese's *Indian Horse*, I offer some background on "Postcolonial Sport."

Postcolonial Sport

In *Sport and Postcolonialism*, John Bale and Mike Cronin complain about the neglect of sport in postcolonial studies. They decry that books, not the body, provide the narrow lens through which "the postcolonial" is comprehended: postcolonial studies "overlooks bodily practices such as sport" (2). Jason Blake makes a similar claim about the twentieth-century Canadian literary scene: "while the literati chased distinctively Canadian themes to validate a new literature, they ignored hockey. They ignored the body in favour of the strictly cerebral" (23). In Wagamese's novel *Indian Horse*, the protagonist, Saul, asks the priest who introduces him to hockey, "Are there books about it?" (56). Unusually, Saul is intellectual, creative, *and* athletic. Postcolonial

literature and theory's neglect of sport may be attributed to the focus on books and education as a way out of poverty and towards decolonization; for instance, Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o has closely scrutinized colonial education, but has never examined the culture of sport in Kenya—curious given the decades-long emphasis on running as a route out of poverty.[2] It is imperative and necessary to perform a critical analysis of sport and sport books—a point that Saul understands, as does Raymond Williams. In *The Long Revolution*, Williams explains that "sport and entertainment are as real as the need for art" (33). Both sport performances *and* sport narratives contribute to our understanding of colonialism and postcolonialism; and in the case of Harper's and Wagamese's texts, hockey reveals the ways in which Canada is a site of contestation.

The regulation of the body through sport and other disciplinary regimes was an integral part of imperial projects. John Hoberman identifies this complexity in *Mortal Engines* when he examines the tension between white and Black men's bodies in European imperial projects in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries; white men felt both superior and inferior. There was a profound "ambivalence toward the physically impressive savage" (36-7). White men were scorned for their physically unimpressive bodies and lauded for their superior intellect and civility. In *Stickhandling through the Margins*, Michael Robidoux argues for the need for critical sport studies (22) in examining Indigenous people's subjection to racism (23-24) and their resistance (25). Sport was deployed as a means of control of recalcitrant populations across the globe, beginning in the nineteenth century and evident in the present moment in international governing bodies of sports (Bale and Cronin 3). This process is apparent in the management of Indigenous populations and bodies, but also in the regulation of white, normative bodies. For example, the Rhodes Scholarship (established in 1902) required that its recipients, "young [white] colonists" (Rhodes 23), were intelligent, but not "bookworms"; as well, they had to demonstrate "manliness" (36), mostly in the form of athleticism. While there were no Indigenous recipients of the original scholarship, there was emphasis throughout the colonial world on sport regimes: gymnastic displays at residential schools in Canada (see Forsyth) and track and field events in British-controlled Africa (see Bale and Sang), for example.

There is some excellent work on race, masculinity, and sport—and, in particular, the perceived deleterious effects of the Black male athlete on white men's mental and physical well-being, and the related concern that

Black men's apparent athletic superiority might expose the inferiority of white men. As Frantz Fanon points out, the Black male athlete is biological essence: "There is one expression that through time has become singularly eroticized: the black athlete" (158). Sports theorists, including John Hoberman and Ben Carrington, trace white masculine anxiety about the perceived athletic superiority of Black or Indigenous men. In *Mortal Engines*, Hoberman argues that the still-present white masculine anxiety is rooted in nineteenth-century paradigms; the contemporary response to that threat is the modern white athlete (61). In "Fear of a Black Athlete," Carrington focuses on representations of the Black male athletic body in contemporary media, and argues that this body's threat is managed through its representations as animalistic, eroticized; it has no agency or voice: "the *athletic black body* [is] a key repository for contemporary white male desires and fears about blackness" (93, emphasis original). Black male bodies, in particular, are described through "constant use of animalistic similes" (94), and are "sexualized and transformed into an object of desire and envy" (97). Canadian hockey *seems* to depart from this colonial pattern; after all, there is no obvious threat as the sport continues to be dominated by white players, *but* at the same time is seen to be increasingly inclusive and heterogeneous. These contradictions are evident in Canada's hockey icon, the CBC commentator Don Cherry, notorious for his anti-immigration, homophobic, and racist rants—and his celebration of Canadian hockey masculinity.[3] In *Who Da Man?*, Abdel-Shehid argues that more non-white "players" threaten "the game" (54). The threat from outsiders is evident in media representations of non-white players.[4]

Blake points out the historical snobbery towards hockey in English departments and argues that we need to "read" hockey: "sports in general and hockey in particular were long neglected as subjects for serious academics" (Blake 5). Jamie Dopp and Richard Harrison echo Blake's sentiments. Canada is often represented as the "motherland" of hockey (Bidini 219); further, hockey *and* Canada are viewed as postcolonial and inclusive, but Wagamese and others complicate this favoured narrative. While Blake argues that hockey is unifying and that *participants* (broadly understood) share a common currency (27) and language (26), Dopp and Harrison point out that hockey is synonymous with Canada but is less unifying than many assume (8). In *Indian Horse*, Saul understands this latter point well: "The white people thought it was their game. They thought it was their world" (136). That hockey is "our game" is a refrain in everyday Canadian parlance, and it simultaneously posits possession and sharing.

While Blake argues that the CBC's weekly broadcast *Hockey Night in Canada* unifies the country (33), a key character in Wagamese's *Indian Horse* refers to it as "Honky Night in Canada" (137), a formulation that undermines Canada's and hockey's claims to inclusivity. It is telling that one of Saul's first memories with the priest, who is later revealed to be abusive, is watching *Hockey Night in Canada* in his room. It is far more menacing than its surface seems to suggest. At first, watching the game is "the personification of magic" (57), but later it becomes "the horror" (199).

Much of the academic and literary disdain for hockey is rooted in class differences, but hockey's class and race tensions are increasingly complicated. It requires more and more money and privilege to participate in high-level boys' hockey.[5] (This is much different from when my brothers played, and my working-class parents scraped together money for the modest fees, hockey sticks, and other expenses.) Regardless, it is still considered a crass sport, preferred by rough working-class men and even women.[6] A different kind of disdain exists on the side of hockey fans; at Toronto Maple Leafs home games, keen fans are frustrated by the exorbitant price of tickets and by attendees in suits occupying corporate seats who fail to return from concessions after intermission.[7] A few scholars/writers have found themselves face-to-face with hockey's unfamiliar spatial and ideological terrain. There is a range of responses, some of them negative and others more celebratory. In 1955, William Faulkner was paid by *Sports Illustrated* to write a feature article on his experience of watching a hockey game at Madison Square Garden in Manhattan; the result was the poetic "An Innocent at Rinkside." More recently, Michele Landsberg and Kelly Hewson describe their respective exposures to sport frenzy through a gendered/feminist lens. Landsberg dismisses hockey as brute, while Hewson prefers to highlight her complex relationship to it as a feminist academic and Calgary resident (during the Flames' 1989 competition for the Stanley Cup). Hewson's location as a feminist scholar who is also an enthusiastic fan does not compromise her ability to understand that "inequality in the realm of sport . . . must be understood in relation to the histories of colonialism and capitalism that have come to shape the world as it is today" (Abdel-Shehid and Kalman-Lamb 3). Rather than argue, as Bale and Cronin do, that sports studies scholars need to wrest control of "the postcolonial" from "literature" folks and read sport itself, postcolonial critics need to read literary and cultural texts' vast and complex configurations of sport.

Hockey is a troubling symbol (or "fetish fascination," as Anne McClintock [27] would describe it) for Canada, and it needs to be understood as rooted in

gender and colonial paradigms. It is imperative to read hockey through a postcolonial lens. Like running and other sports, hockey involves the regulation of space (through lines, its geography) and time (through twenty-minute periods, penalty minutes); it is highly regulated, ordered, and policed. Allen Guttmann asserts "the undeniable role of modern sports as a means of social control and imperial rule" (182), whereas Robidoux argues that hockey is a "vehicle of resistance against British and American hegemony" (*Men at Play* 221). Canada is central to hockey's regulation and control: "Toronto" (the NHL's video review headquarters) is often consulted during an NHL game (played in Canada or the US) to make a final decision about an uncertain goal or penalty, and this reinforces Canada's status as the "homeland of hockey" (Blake 7). However, the NHL headquarters are in New York City and eighty percent of NHL teams are located in the US. Landsberg reminds readers that "[t]eam sports . . . were seen as a glorious tool of the British Empire, to impose the 'rules of civilization' on inferior peoples" (10); but some of the evidence might lead us to conclude that hockey is postcolonial, that it is challenging its white, imperial roots: the increase in multicultural rosters; the popularity of *Hockey Night in Canada: Punjabi Edition*; and perhaps even the relative softening of Don Cherry. This softening includes his famous on-air kiss of Nazem Kadri, the Leafs' first Muslim player, as well as his changed position on Black player P. K. Subban's "inappropriate" celebration of goals.[8]

Because there is no coherent or unanimous answer to the meaning of hockey, it makes sense to situate hockey as a "contact zone" where disparate narratives collide. My reading of hockey is as a site of conflict and tension, just like the game itself. In *Imperial Eyes*, Mary Louise Pratt explains that

> "contact" foregrounds the interactive, improvisational dimensions of imperial encounters so easily ignored or suppressed by accounts of conquest and domination told from the invader's perspective. A "contact" perspective emphasizes how subjects get constituted in and by their relations to each other . . . and often within radically asymmetrical relations of power. (8)

Contact encounters are in part dialectical. Readings of hockey are disparate and conflictual—ranging from Landsberg's dismissal of the sport as uncouth and "the route to male indoctrination" (6), to Faulkner's celebration of its civility and beauty, to Al Purdy's characterization of it as "this combination of ballet and murder" (26). The *arena* for the encounter between the *players*—Harper's and Wagamese's texts—in my reading is the TRC on the Indian Residential Schools.[9] The *periods* might begin with Harper's anemic

apology for the residential schools in 2008 and end with the presentation of the commission's final report in 2015, but we are now in *overtime*. Hockey is organized into three twenty-minute periods, and in the case of a tie, there is an overtime period ("sudden death"). Overtime is full of unpredictability, and during playoffs can run indefinitely. This is relevant to reading hockey texts and the TRC: a clear structure with a great deal of uncertainty and no possibility of predicting the outcome. Although disparate, both Harper's *A Great Game* and Wagamese's *Indian Horse* are hockey books that were conceived, written, and published during the TRC proceedings, and they both look back in order to understand something about the present. Harper looks back at the rise of professional hockey, while Wagamese's Saul looks back at the problem of professional hockey and instead opts for amateur and communally reconciled forms of both hockey and masculinity. The books' "contact" reveals a Canada that is dissonant, not yet reconciled.

Contact Hockey

Harper's text provides a comprehensive history of the Toronto Maple Leafs' "rise" to professional status, while Wagamese's text offers an eleven-page account of Saul Indian Horse's demoralizing experience as an Indigenous member of the Toronto Marlboros, the Leafs' farm team, and the colonial-racist politics of professional hockey in the 1970s. Professional hockey is a subordinate concern in *Indian Horse.* These Canadian hockey books are in tension with one another; they are grappling, as Pratt would put it, with the meaning and significance of hockey in historical and colonial contexts. Hockey is often represented as unifying ("our game") and metonymic of Canada, and on the surface it is tempting to read this unity through the two texts: both writers are national figures who adore hockey and choose to highlight it in their books. Harper, a white settler with deep familial roots in Canada, was born in Toronto in 1959; and Wagamese, an Ojibwe man from a family deeply troubled by residential school experiences, was born in northwestern Ontario in 1955 (he died in March, 2017). Harper completed two degrees in Economics at the University of Calgary, and Wagamese dropped out of high school to escape an abusive foster home, and then spent years enduring homelessness and battling addiction before finding his place as a writer and storyteller in the early 1990s. Moreover, their perspectives on Canada's colonial history and its effects are markedly different. Here I put their two texts into "contact" to demonstrate that hockey is a contentious game in which *players* disagree about its *truth*.

Hockey is neither homogeneous nor unifying, but a site of conflict and tension over its colonial-racist roots and reverberations.

Harper's *A Great Game* traces the shift from amateur to professional hockey in the early decades of the twentieth century. It is well researched and devoted to facts and statistics. Harper explains that he was "unusually interested in hockey history as a youngster growing up in Toronto" (287). Further, "[a]s a studious and rather unathletic boy, this pastime helped to compensate for [his] conspicuous inability on the ice" (287). Harper acknowledges the "project's researcher, Greg Stoicoiu," whose "contribution is significant" (287), and the publisher's blurb describes the book as "a scholarly triumph." As Robidoux argues in his analysis of hockey and imperialism, reason is "privileged as the only real basis for knowledge" (*Stickhandling* 17). Five years after his historic public apology for the Indian Residential Schools, Harper suggests that empire spreads civil values and is a program of rational development. The epigraph, from which he draws his un-ironic title, is attributed to a former president of the OHA (Ontario Hockey Association): "We have a great game, a great country, and a great empire." And chapter 1 is littered with untheorized imperial language: "As the song from the Disney musical *Mary Poppins* would so perfectly put it, it was considered a 'grand' time to be alive if you were part of the English realm" (2). There is repeated emphasis on the "change and growth" and "good times" that characterized the period. Essentially, it is idealized as fomenting the conditions necessary for hockey's progress and professionalization. There are sporadic and undeveloped references to Indigenous people and sports, and "deep social divisions" (18), but instances of hockey and racism are left unexamined. Janice Forsyth explains that in residential schools, having children play "the patriotic sport of hockey" helped to achieve "Native assimilation" (27). And Andreas Krebs points out that sport was "a means of civilizing the so-called 'savage,'" and "Canada's most high-profile sport, hockey, continues to play a role in reproducing colonialism" (82). Harper's text is an instantiation of what Pratt calls "anti-conquest," which she explains involves "strategies of innocence" on the part of the "seeing man" (9); the colonizer is represented as innocent of malfeasance.

As Sam McKegney explains in his analysis of media representations of Cree player Jonathan Cheechoo, "sports writing that is often perceived as politically benign can be racially inflected" (120). In *A Great Game*, white sport masculinity is coded civil and gentlemanly; it is white men who institute and obey the codes of hockey conduct. White sport masculinity is

presented as rational, peaceable, and good-natured. At one point, Harper uses the phrase, "[t]he proverbial stuff hit the fan" (14), presumably to avoid offending tender readers' sensibilities. There is also coldness, a privileging of factual description, in the tone of Harper's text—it wears its research heavily. A similar coldness is identified by Virgil, Saul's teammate in *Indian Horse*, as more disturbing than passion and emotion: "I never knew people could be that cold" (136). Saul makes an analogous observation when he plays for the Marlboros: "These guys weren't mean. They weren't vicious. They were just indifferent, and that hurt a whole lot more" (163). In his article on *Indian Horse*, Jack Robinson links this coldness to rationality (95). Harper values reason in hockey, as he offers a record of the emergence of clear and now-familiar rules, and this is reminiscent of such imperial stalwarts as Cecil Rhodes: an example is that the four requirements for recipients of Rhodes' eponymous scholarship (36) are pleasant and unobjectionable, but also in mathematical proportions (38).[10] Harper's text—like Rhodes'—underscores the veneer of imperialism's goodness and rationality. Moreover, whiteness is assumed and privileged, rather than highlighted and interrogated.

In *Who Da Man?*, Abdel-Shehid argues that whiteness is often innocent in hockey narratives, and also under threat of death through usurpation from outsiders: "The perpetual deaths of Canada . . . whether in the areas of history, literature, or sports, are a cultural territorialization necessary within the logic of Canadian nationalism" (55). Further, "if Canada is dying, someone must save it, and that someone must really know what Canada is like, i.e. they must know the traditions" (55). And while white masculinity may be threatened with disappearance, there are strategies to ensure that it remains intact, including mythical hockey narratives of progress and endurance such as Harper's *A Great Game*, along with other narratives that purport to be inclusive but are white dominant. These often take the form of media representations, including a popular Tim Hortons commercial that features an Asian Canadian father and his adult son at the grandson's hockey game[11]—racialized men are disciplined to conform to hockey's white masculine norms (early morning practices, coffee cup in hand, admixture of stoicism and sentimentalism). Whiteness is always there—in Harper's hockey narrative and elsewhere—even if it goes unacknowledged. Harper's text is just one version of the game—but dominant and impactful; another is Wagamese's *Indian Horse*, which tells a remarkably different but also contiguous story about postcolonial hockey and the communal reconciliation of masculinities.

When Wagamese first approached his editor with an idea for a novel about hockey, he was advised to place the story of hockey within a residential school context. Some critics, including Jack Robinson, have expressed concern about reading *Indian Horse* as simply a "hockey" book, instead of attending to its oral storytelling techniques (88-89). Fair enough, but Canadian literature needs beautiful, thoughtful, and nuanced stories about hockey, and not only fact-based and statistical analyses or ghostwritten accounts of hockey stars. A brief synopsis of *Indian Horse* reveals that it is about hockey, but also about more than hockey. The text opens with Saul in treatment for addiction at the "New Dawn Centre," where a counsellor tasks him with writing his life story. He begins with origins and family, moves on to his abduction by authorities and experiences at residential school (where he is introduced to hockey); there is an account of his hockey career (from amateur to professional), but placed within the context of colonial racism; he records his collapse into addiction, the resurfacing of his memory of sexual abuse at school, and his return home to a re-visioned community, Indigenous masculinity, and a more equitable and pleasurable game of hockey. *Indian Horse* has a circular structure, and can be read as a quest narrative: the hero returns home after a series of adventures and is poised to make a valuable contribution to his community. Robinson chooses to ignore hockey for more important concerns—family, history of alcoholism, reconnection with land and ancestors—but hockey is imbricated with Saul's quest for healing and reconciliation. It is not a factual account, and certainly not a neat progress narrative—which distinguishes the novel from Harper's text and from more conventional first-person hockey narratives.[12]

The question is whether *Indian Horse* is a hockey book or if hockey is marginal to its main concerns. Hockey may not be the consistent focus, as it is in Harper's text, but it is key to understanding Saul's story of recovery. Here we need to read "what happens when hockey happens," in Dopp and Harrison's helpful formulation (14). In *Indian Horse*, hockey is both complex and contradictory; some other writers articulate a similar ambivalence. Dave Bidini, in *Tropic of Hockey*, expresses mixed feelings about hockey and violent masculinities, and includes himself as an example (118-23, 200-05). Krebs also positions himself as an example of the ways in which "hockey continues to produce colonial relationships in Canada by maintaining the hegemony of a White masculine subjectivity to which all other subject positions must refer" (81), and "even those (such as myself) who attempt to maintain a critical distance are susceptible to its allure" (100). This

ambivalence means that hockey is open to re-visioning; reconciliation can be instigated in this moment of transition. In her chapter in *Aboriginal Peoples and Sport in Canada*, Forsyth explains that for some residential schools survivors, sport was the only positive experience in the schools, but they are reluctant to share this for fear that it diminishes the brutality of the school experience (16-17). Significantly, "Sports and Reconciliation" is a key section in the TRC's "Calls to Action," and this was integral to the mounting of the North American Indigenous Games in Toronto in July 2017: "We call upon all levels of government to take action to ensure long-term Aboriginal athlete development and growth, and continued support for the North American Indigenous Games, including funding to host the games and for provincial and territorial team preparation and travel" (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada). Sport and hockey, in *Indian Horse* and well beyond, are integral components of the truth and reconciliation process.

Wagamese and other Indigenous writers reveal that sport and the arts complicate narratives about the residential school experience. One notable example is Tomson Highway's account of learning to play piano (Eigenbrod 291), as well as his more recent and shocking praise of the residential school experience:

> All we hear is the negative stuff, nobody's interested in the positive, the joy in that school. Nine of the happiest years of my life I spent at that school. I learned your language, for God's sake. Have you learned my language? No, so who's the privileged one and who is underprivileged? (Ostroff)

Saul's account of his residential school experience is mixed, but not apologetic like Highway's contentious remarks. Initially, he offers an account of the abuse of other children, while he is loved and mentored by a young priest who introduces him to hockey: "His warm hand made me think of my grandmother's touch" (59). Later, he revises that narrative when he realizes that he was a victim of sexual abuse by the priest: "I thought of my grandmother" (198) and played hockey to cope with "the horror" (199). The priest and hockey are synonymous—both are part beauty and part violence, although the latter dominates by the end of the novel. Even the fundamentals of the game itself are paradoxical. Bale and Sang explain that Western-colonial sport—with its focus on geometric lines, timers, and rigid rules—transformed Indigenous knowledge systems and bodily practices (98-99), but for Saul there is beauty in hockey's order and discipline. In fact, he describes his ability to understand that whoever "control[s] a measure of space . . . control[s] the game" as a "vision" (58), a gift he inherits from his great-grandfather. For Saul, the

game's lines and rules are not violent and colonial, but commensurate with his own Indigenous history and location. Other lines, such as the invisible racial lines in arenas, are far more pernicious: "I started to see a line in every arena we played in. It showed itself as a stretch of empty seats that separated the Indian fans from the white ones" (137).

Those segregation lines increase as Saul moves away from the "salvation" (62) offered by the game and towards the professionalization that Harper argues is inevitable and rational; Saul experiences a reversal of Harper's progress trajectory. Saul plays happily at school, until he is recruited by the town team and begins to learn that white players think hockey is "their game" (92). This is a refrain throughout the text, a riff on the usually positive "our game." When he joins an Indigenous team, the Moose, Saul witnesses the older players beaten and humiliated by white players at a diner who are clearly threatened by the superior skills of the young Indigenous men. Significantly, Saul's recruitment is a kind of rescue operation on the part of the team manager, Virgil; it is a strategy to remove him from residential school. Saul is later scouted and recruited by the Toronto Marlboros. The Toronto press labels him the "Rampaging Redskin" (165), and he eventually conforms to the label's attendant expectations: "the press would not let me be" (163). This is a clear demonstration of Carrington's point that racialized athletes are "either *sub*-human or *super*-human" (108), and also demonstrates McKegney's description, in *Masculindians*, of "the settler North American appetite for depictions of Indigenous men that rehearse hypermasculine stereotypes of the noble savage and the bloodthirsty warrior" (1). When Saul plays hockey he is seen as "taking scalps," "the stoic Indian," and "a painted warrior" (163). Exhausted from the effort of battling and succumbing to stereotypes, Saul leaves professional hockey, a moment in the narrative that is immediately followed by a short chapter on two girls who are abused at the school. It is a significant, but in some ways inscrutable chapter, at least until the end of the novel when Saul's own story of abuse emerges. After a circuitous journey, Saul returns "home" to the Moose and the town of Manitouwadge. Saul's hockey story interrogates the narrative of progress and development.[13] As well, it underscores McKegney's argument in *Masculinidians* for complexity over simplicity in representations of Indigenous men (7).

Saul returns home to Manitouwadge and hockey, but not to a static past. He is at the end of his quest, but the progress achieved is not conventional in the terms that Harper outlines for hockey's narrative: Saul moves away

from professional status and riches, and humbly towards a renewed sense of community. People have aged, and the town has a brand-new expensive arena. This is a community that cannot be located in a static past of outdoor arenas with rough ice, a bracing wind, and chicken wire as puck barriers—the hockey of Saul's youth. Unlike Faulkner's spectator view, something is not lost when hockey moves indoors. On the last page Saul enters the ice to play a game of hockey that includes at least eighteen players, many of them "young girls and older women." Like shinny, there are only two rules: "Gotta hit the post to call it a goal. No raising the puck" (221). This arena is the site of the reconfiguration of hockey, as Robidoux points out: "It is critical to move beyond notions of resistance or accommodation and begin articulating how First Nations expressions of hockey destabilize existing knowledge systems shaped by modernity" (*Stickhandling* 27). This new arena is the site for a redemptive narrative for hockey. And hockey is a healing metaphor, as Fred Kelly, Saul's coach and foster father, explains to him:

> "But our healing—that's up to us. That's what saved me. Knowing it was my game."
> "Could be a long game," I said.
> "So what if it is?" he said. "Just keep your stick on the ice and your feet moving." (210)

They are set to play a re-visioned game. Bale and Cronin caution that the manipulation of sport conventions risks defeat (5, 6), but this isn't a concern here; this is an informal game beyond the scope of the NHL. The game at the end of the novel is a demonstration of what Pratt calls autoethnography, "instances in which colonized subjects undertake to represent themselves in ways that engage with the colonizer's terms" (9). In *Indian Horse* professionalization is not the goal, but inclusion and community. When Saul asks Virgil, "How are we gonna play the game?", Virgil responds, "Together . . . like we shoulda all along" (221).

Unlike Stephen Harper's *A Great Game*, which fails to recognize the depths of hockey's (and Canada's) violent socio-political history, Richard Wagamese's *Indian Horse* exposes that history, but reconstitutes hockey in the present moment—as Canada reckons with the TRC and tensions over the celebration of its sesquicentennial—as a game that can be meaningful and restorative when played outside of national concerns and in the community of Manitouwadge with Indigenous players only. It is a game of pleasure and interdependence, and everyone is on the ice—men and boys, women and girls, old and young. Here the spectators enter the ice. Reading these two divergent and contrary texts in the contact zone of hockey and Canada is

critical and necessary if we are to reckon with the imprint of the past on the present, and negotiate a more just future and thus fulfil some of the core recommendations of the TRC on the Indian Residential Schools.

NOTES

1 Wagamese was highly critical of Harper's post-apology approach to Indigenous issues and reconciliation. See Wagamese, "Aboriginal reconciliation: An open letter to Stephen Harper and "Harper takes us for fools."
2 See Bale and Sang; Burke.
3 See Aykroyd.
4 Sam McKegney explores a similar contradiction in a study of Jonathan Cheechoo: "Cheechoo's story [is] one that hockey reporters, and Canadians more generally, love to tell and retell, yet they feel the need to place Cheechoo in a subordinate role in that tale" ("The Aboriginal" 114).
5 See Mirtle and also Gruneau.
6 See Landsberg.
7 See Seglins et al.
8 See also Sheema Khan's *Of Hockey and Hijab: Reflections of a Canadian Muslim Woman*.
9 There has been extensive criticism of the process (which is beyond the scope of this article), but the focus was on reckoning with a violent colonial history and moving towards "reconciliation" with disparate groups, namely settlers and Indigenous peoples.
10 Rhodes' four requirements included the following: (i) "literary and scholastic attainments"; (ii) "fondness of and success in manly outdoor sports such as cricket football and the like"; (iii) "qualities of manhood, truth, courage, devotion to duty, sympathy for the protection of the weak, kindliness, unselfishness, and fellowship"; and (iv) "moral force of character and of instincts to lead" (36).
11 See TimHortons, "Jump the Boards with Sidney Crosby and Tim Hortons" and "Tim Hortons True Stories: Proud Fathers".
12 There are numerous examples of first-person hockey narratives (Ken Dryden, Gordie Howe, Bobby Orr), and increasingly, narratives that offer more intimate retellings of a life in and outside of hockey (Theo Fleury, Jordin Tootoo).
13 Fred Saskamoose, the first Indigenous player in the NHL, tells a similar story of refusal. See "Fred Sasakamoose."

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Jessica Brown

Cairn Street

Ripe with rot, the swollen smell of the compost heap
splits open the yard like an axe in dried wood. The clipped
flight of leaves, egg shells, grapefruit peels, the seeping
gold of the thing mixed. Behind the brick house, drafts

Run colder, beat the grass harder, swell with after-
noon drizzle. This corner of land holds cold
to its lips like a flute, breathing into a thin sound
until it grows too high to be heard. This land is keeled

Upwards to the sheen of stripped branches, blue mountains,
the petal-tailed first frost on the window panes
And fence-posts. The last corner to melt and warm.
The frost vanishes, the smell heats heavy, the remaining

Moments open up, keeps to itself the smell of daylight.
The raw division, the swollen joints of cradle, of clay.

Dawn Macdonald

Compression

First I folded you along the midline, creased
and confined, blastula, I clamped you
down so you could not divide. Sent you
back to blood, and the blood
is mine.

High on the mountain face the wind
rattled our jackets and flung a bee
right across the five flowers that grew there
and we wondered at its contingent life
more moved than moving
just now and then by happenstance blown against
the bloom that satisfies
to wriggle about the stamens then
off, oh ho, you're lovely, buttercup, but I cannot
stop nor still.

We tromped along the narrow path and tried
to avoid stepping anywhere that wasn't
already dead.

Here where the plates strive
to escape plane geometry, to push
together toward another realm.

Poets Young, Old, Mild, Bold

Michael Harris
The Gamekeeper: Selected Poems 1976-2011.
Porcupine's Quill $19.95

Robin Richardson
Sit How You Want. Signal $17.95

Laura Ritland
East and West. Signal $17.95

Dorothy Roberts; Brian Bartlett, ed.
The Essential Dorothy Roberts.
Porcupine's Quill $14.95

Richard Sanger
Dark Woods. Biblioasis $18.95

Reviewed by Nicholas Bradley

There are so many poets in Canada, and so many poets writing well, and writing well in so many ways, that to make generalizations about the state of the art is almost certainly to miss the mark. Nonetheless I'll venture the opinion that youngish poets today—under forty, say—generally have an astounding technical facility and a surprising polish that suggests the beneficial effect of the creative writing workshop. In *The Next Wave: An Anthology of 21st Century Canadian Poetry* (2018), the editor Jim Johnstone (b. 1978) presents the writing of forty poets who have announced themselves in the last decade and a half. Forty! The century's barely old enough to drive. And yet I can think of two dozen poets more who might have made the cut. Johnstone's book ranges alphabetically from Jordan Abel (b. 1985) to Catriona Wright (b. 1985); some of the poets, such as Billy-Ray Belcourt (b. 1994) and Michael Prior (b. 1990), are young indeed, although others are older than the fortyish anthologist (who is a poet too). Maybe what I'm noticing is not the province of youth alone, but rather a general renewal of interest in poetry's formal properties and possibilities. In their first books (and second, and third . . .), the poets I have in mind are at minimum remarkably competent; often they are truly excellent. Sometimes, however, a surfeit of technique is accompanied by a tone or mood of hesitation, or a fuzziness of conception, such that poems may use language precisely and memorably, yet still seem unsure about what they seek to say, or reluctant to identify clearly the subject at hand. For whatever reason, there is caginess in the air, as two of the books under review here suggest. The other three books are not by young authors—and one poet is no longer with us—but in their own fashion they attest the liveliness and variety of Canadian poetry.

In *East and West*, Laura Ritland (b. 1990) demonstrates technical sophistication and a fascination with the anxiety and disenchantment of young adulthood. Ritland has a gift for description, and because she writes so assuredly, her poems are compelling even when they are wistful and melancholy in a not uncommon way. Her poetry owes something to that of Karen Solie, whose tone (glib, deadpan), posture (world-weary), humour (dry), and habits (abrupt shifts in register and lexicon, a conciseness of phrase that verges on solecism) may be detected in *East and West*.[1] Ritland's "Norway" concerns the impossibility of being at home, whether in the family house, which is "not what it was,"

or in a country as a whole (19). In sentiment and turn of phrase, the poem's final statement—"land disowns us, not we it" (19)—is distinctly reminiscent of Solie, but I take such echoes as evidence of affinity rather than unoriginality. On the contrary, in "Norway" as in other poems, Ritland sounds like herself. She frequently explores both uncanniness and familiarity, which now and then breeds affection. In "East and West," a veiled portrait of Vancouver, she concludes with an equivocal proposition: "Stay anywhere long enough, / the contradictions resemble love" (69). "Summer Parties," the first poem in *East and West*, expresses a longing for contact and communication. "If you've been looking for a song // strong enough to guide you, / prop open the window" (11): the lines invite readers into the book, and suggest that in subsequent poems Ritland will proceed by overhearing, by eavesdropping, by standing at a slight remove from the action, poised between conviviality and loneliness.

In several poems, Ritland depicts youthful incidents and rites of passage, but she is less concerned with decisive moments than with the quality of perceptiveness, which changes over time. In "Introduction to Mystery," she describes a childish state of wide-eyedness, but in the next poem, "Arrival at the New College," the speaker, now on the verge of adulthood, is aware of a world passing her by like an uncaught train: "I heard the future singing above me on steel rails. / I knew then I'd missed it by two minutes" (18). My favourite poem in *East and West* is "Sea Spider," a work of compressed evocation that gets the marine arachnid right in only six lines, and in suitably spidery style: "At two thousand fathoms, / a living kernel, scrabbling, / tiny, set. Eyeless, it persists" (64). Ritland indulges the temptation to read such poems as statements about poetry. Her "scrabbling" is perilously close to *scribbling*, and the spider, we presume, leaves faint marks on the seabed's page. Why would Ritland imagine the poet as a sightless creature? Possibly because she distrusts poetry. "How you hate poetry," she writes in "April" (77), with a hint of Marianne Moore, whose notorious hat is the topic of another poem. *East and West* suggests that Ritland is chronically unsure of where to go and uncertain of what to say. She is perpetually on the verge of something, and in moments of indecision she persists, observing, noticing. Ritland is, to resort to a cliché that she would forbear, a poet to watch. No—a poet to watch watching.

The title of *Sit How You Want*, the third book by Robin Richardson (b. 1985), implies disregard for decorum, permission to do as one likes. In the title poem, "Sit How You Want, Dear; No One's Looking," Richardson proclaims that now is the hour of independence and bravura: "It's time to hang out / naked in your kitchen, cook the landlord / his beloved dog. You're free, baby" (67). Her poems are rambunctious but bleak in outlook. Hints of danger are everywhere. In "Disembodied at the Botanical Gardens," the speaker suggests the reckless poet's powers of invention: "Please let me be a blaze. I will destroy, / I mean create again this place" (66). Richardson's principal theme is that relationships (primarily but not exclusively romantic) are virtually by definition occasions for abuses of power. "Go by Contraries" takes its title from Robert Frost's "West-Running Brook," and Richardson confirms the allusion partway through: "All the brooks run west as if they knew we'd stop / to quarrel" (70). While Frost's poem is a conjugal dialogue between husband and wife, Richardson's poem concerns the "plane crash" of the speaker's relationship (70). The last lines turn from personal disaster to existential matters: "Being / is our birthright, sure, but being piggybacks us / seriously sadly to its edge and shrugs" (70). The patently colloquial "sure" and the ambiguous "seriously" give an ironic edge to the seemingly earnest philosophizing.

Does the adverb mean "gravely," "alarmingly," or just, you know, *really*?

Despite Richardson's wit and flair for language, it can be difficult to discern her poems' meanings. They start and end in the middle of things; they eschew context. The first poem in *Sit How You Want*, "Ars Poetica," is equally exciting and frustrating:

> Spent a year trying to write poems that
> weren't about me
> came up with carbon monoxide and the
> sitcom banter
> of paramedics which was about me made
> puns like my ex
> who translates translations into double
> entendres whom
> everyone adored then didn't tried to write
> like those
> who died especially Franz Wright which
> was really about me . . . (11)

The first-person pronoun is omitted for the sake of nonchalance, I suppose, but the absence of punctuation is perplexing. Is the allusion to Wright particularly significant or merely an autobiographical detail? Is the reference to "carbon monoxide" grim "banter," or is it a personal admission meant to unnerve? Poems should never give away all their secrets, and Richardson's writing, stylishly elliptical, makes a virtue of elusiveness. At times it hints at a world *hors texte*, suggesting in one breath that poetry could be a form of coded autobiography, and in the next refusing the pretence of transparency that characterized the confessional poetry of the late 1950s and after. Friends, relations, events, and intuitions are introduced in detail, and then whisked away as the poems move on to their next subjects, creating an aesthetics of restlessness and perseverance. "Can't get dead if you keep going," Richardson writes in "This Year's Going to Be Different," "so I'll go until there's nothing left to go to" (15).

Allusions, illusions. The nod to Dante's *Inferno* in the title of Richard Sanger's *Dark Woods*—"*Nel mezzo del cammin di nostra vita / mi ritrovai per una selva oscura*" (4)—suggests a preoccupation with middle age, and with the desire for clear-sightedness that comes with advancing years.[2] Sanger (b. 1960) is not nearly so young as Ritland and Richardson, but *Dark Woods*, his first book of poetry since *Calling Home* (2002), gives the appealing impression of being both old and new. In the fourth poem, "Dark Woods," he brings the theme of reckoning into the light: "Halfway through my life, I find myself / in the dark" (15). Family holidays, a teeming mailbox, shopping for pears: his topics are unpretentious. (Bourgeois? Sure.) His language, however, veers toward the musical. "The Family Car" begins with a singsong epigraph from Thomas Hardy's "During Wind and Rain": "*Ah, no, the years, oh!*" (61). Sanger's poem dwells on mortality, but its style borders on the genial chime and patter of nursery rhymes. "Down their carved names the rain-drop ploughs," Hardy wrote to conclude his poem (132). Sanger likewise understands that death awaits us all, and after death, oblivion, but his poems are tender and often funny. Sometimes arch, sometimes bemused, he is a humane observer of daily life. Knowing that death can at best be postponed, he writes in the mode of *carpe diem*. "The Inbox" is a brilliant sequence of eight sonnets. The first is composed of threadbare phrases and images—"worker bees," "downtown hives," "early bird," "face the music"—but Sanger embeds in the poem details and ironies that redeem hackneyed phrases and "shrill homilies" (43). After thirteen clever but maundering lines, the lustful last one, monosyllabic except for the startling adjective, gets to the point of putting off the day's work: "Yes, and this paw on your vacillating hip" (43). As a lyric type, the aubade is eminently conventional, but Sanger makes dawn's beeping and clunking arrival newly memorable. Throughout *Dark Woods*, his cleverness and verbal mischief enliven traditional forms.

Michael Harris (b. 1944) is a poet of tremendous exactitude. A selection of poems from five books published in four decades, *The Gamekeeper* replaces (or supplements) his *New and Selected Poems* (1992). The simple titles of Harris' first volumes, *Sparks* (1976) and *Grace* (1977), suggest flashes of illumination, a search for elegance and beauty, and a spiritual impulse. That of his third volume, *In Transit* (1985), suggests movement and change, the theme of *sic transit gloria mundi*. The title of *The Gamekeeper* comes from the poem of that name in *Grace*, which describes the utter onset of winter and the disappearance of the gamekeeper, a figure of benevolence and order. But Harris also has an agreeable sense of humour. In *Circus* (2011), he gave voice to such performers as "The Bearded Lady," "Weary Willy," and "Mephisto, the Human Pincushion." A sloth-like creature, Willy is spectacularly dull: "My act is: I walk across the big tent / floor slowly. This takes three hours, / same as the show" (132). Yet this anti-acrobat is also wise, and engaged in a search for calm: "I am just trying to slow things down / so it's the circus going round, / not me" (132). In "The View from the Kitchen," from *In Transit*, Harris captures a two-year-old's inquisitiveness and misprision: "'Dawg!' he shouts, pointing. 'Truck,' I tell him— / 'Truck!' He hesitates. 'Fuct!' he yells. / We are both delighted with the lesson" (78). If Harris had emphasized the child's unwitting obscenity, then the poem might have become sentimental or obvious: *out of the mouth of babes*, etc. But he skilfully makes the amusing mistake only part of an extended domestic scene that generously portrays the indiscriminate curiosity of children, and their difference from us. The final poem in *The Gamekeeper*, "Work" (from *Circus*), sketches another parental moment. The son fishes "for the first time, in the murk," as the proud father watches and watches over (157). Here, Harris *is* sentimental, the poem a delightful lesson that sometimes the real artistic risk is to say things plainly.

In *The Essential Dorothy Roberts*, a svelte volume designed to champion "[t]his undervalued poet," Brian Bartlett collects forty-eight of Roberts' poems (7). The niece of Charles G. D. Roberts, Dorothy Roberts (1906-1993) was born, as Bartlett notes in his foreword, after Earle Birney and F. R. Scott, but before Irving Layton, P. K. Page, Margaret Avison, and Al Purdy (7). "Her style wasn't as recognizably contemporary as theirs," he observes, "in terms of vernacular language, Modernist density, political directness or colourful personae" (8). But if she stands apart from familiar modernist figures, she remains noteworthy as an Atlantic regionalist and as "a poet of subjectivity, memory and mind" (9). *The Essential Dorothy Roberts* has convinced me to add two or three of her poems to the reading list when I teach modern Canadian poetry—"Dazzle," perhaps, and "Outburst of May," with its vivid representation of spring and seasonal change: "May is the truth. To dampen down explosion / Autumn will have to come, the chilling fall / Of spent particulars before another tension" (12).

To conclude, two observations. First: as always, Canadian poetry requires more commentary. Let us have a biography of Roberts and articles exploring *The Gamekeeper*. Second: the readership for poetry must always be cultivated. Excellent books, including those I have summarized here, lend themselves to enthusiastic teaching, and serve as reminders that those who can should invite poets, and young writers in particular, into the classroom—and encourage students to go from the classroom to wherever local readings take place.

NOTES

1 Solie is thanked in the book's acknowledgements.
2 In Robert Pinsky's translation from the Italian: "Midway on our life's journey, I found myself / In dark woods, the right road lost" (5).

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Unmasking Colour Lines

Kamal Al-Solaylee
Brown: What Being Brown in the World Today Means (to Everyone).
HarperCollins Canada $32.99

Frances Henry, Enakshi Dua, Carl E. James, Audrey Kobayashi, Peter Li, Howard Ramos, and Malinda S. Smith
The Equity Myth: Racialization and Indigeneity at Canadian Universities.
U of British Columbia P $34.95

Reviewed by Sylvie Vranckx

In the First World and beyond, the term "white privilege" tends to trigger hostile reactions in its bearers. However, Frances Henry et al.'s *The Equity Myth* and Kamal Al-Solaylee's *Brown* demonstrate that Western societies continue to function as if "races" existed, with the result that (social) race remains tragically relevant. Moreover, both books underline its intersections with nationality, class, and gender as they foreground the lived experience of people of colour—respectively, racialized and Indigenous scholars in English-speaking Canadian universities and brown-skinned people in a range of countries.

Written by seven leading anti-racist scholars, *The Equity Myth* addresses the scarcity of data on racialized and Indigenous faculty in Canada through the interdisciplinary lens of critical race theory. It argues that while Canadian universities see themselves as "bastion[s] of liberal democracy," they are plagued by these scholars' under-representation (especially the under-representation of women), particularly in the humanities and social and political sciences, where they would be able to challenge dominant research. The authors blame neoliberalism, which individualizes social issues, fosters the defunding of social justice programs, and emphasizes meritocracy. For the authors, this explains why the inclusion of racialized and Indigenous faculty has paradoxically decreased at the same time as mechanisms to address inequity in Canadian universities have been created. Underneath a veneer of diversity, the institutional culture of covert racism isolates, discredits, and silences scholars of colour. They face lower wages; obstacles in hiring, tenure, and promotion; erasure from curricula; discrimination in everyday interactions, reference letters, and student evaluations; and so on. *The Equity Myth* paints a bleak picture in which the hegemonic whiteness and patriarchy of the institution show remarkable resilience through lip service and tokenism. On the other hand, it recommends possible concrete solutions. Its publication is timely since gender and social justice studies are increasingly being challenged in Canadian universities. Moreover, the denunciation of systemic racism by these well-established researchers may lend credibility to the arguments of racialized faculty.

In *Brown*, journalism professor Kamal Al-Solaylee tackles the experiences of brown-skinned people from the perspective of colourism, "a close relative, but not a replica, of racism," which operates not only between groups but also within them. In his journeys to nine countries ranging from Trinidad to Hong Kong to the US, he documents the ways in which differences in skin tone often mean differences in status and even class. Al-Solaylee makes "a case for what sociologists call 'lumping' —identifying groups by a wider set of signifiers": he describes brownness as a "buffer" and "continuum" between whiteness and blackness, and as a metaphor for

the millions of displaced people who may be framed as a problem in their host countries. (I was skeptical of his choice to leave out Indigenous peoples, but I agree that the reality of colonialism would make their lumping with immigrants problematic.) He chronicles "universal brown experience[s]" such as avoiding the sun, but also conveys the specificity of each context and situation through interviews supported by existing sociological research. He shows an almost uncanny talent for absorbing the atmosphere and dynamics of a place in relatively little time. Living in Brussels and following the activities of several French activist groups, I am struck by the accuracy of his observations on Islamophobia in Paris, which resonate with my country: on the day I finished reading *Brown*, two men in Belgium ripped off a Muslim woman's clothes and mutilated her face and body.

Al-Solaylee grounds his research in his complex position as a Toronto professor from Yemen who has lived in Egypt and England and is openly gay. He discusses his own assumptions and reflects on his childhood realization that he was brown, on his class privilege, and on his struggles with the "Arab" and "Muslim" labels. Although his heart sinks many times, he ends on a hopeful note, describing himself as a "Pollyanna." Accordingly, this is a profoundly generous book which pays respect to the everyday heroism and resilience of the exploited.

All in all, both works are must-reads for anyone interested in the social sciences, in discrimination, or simply in being decent and well-informed human beings. In this era of growing conservatism and denial of racism, the urgency of heeding their warnings and building on the body of research unmasking colour and gender lines cannot be overstated.

Rock of Ages

Margaret Atwood
The Burgess Shale: The Canadian Writing Landscape of the 1960s. U of Alberta P $10.95

Reviewed by Shoshannah Ganz

This thin book of forty-three pages is the print version of a talk delivered by Margaret Atwood at the University of Alberta's Canadian Literature Centre as part of the annual Kreisel Lecture series. In *The Burgess Shale: The Canadian Writing Landscape of the 1960s*, Atwood discusses the era in which she came of age as a Canadian writer, scholar, and public intellectual. Marie Carrière, director of the Centre, provides a short foreword and introduction, giving a brief history of the lecture series and of Atwood's life and works.

Atwood's long fascination with geology informs the title and central metaphor of *The Burgess Shale*, which is defined as

> a geological formation discovered in the Canadian Rocky Mountains that contains the fossils of many weird and strange early life forms, different from but not unrelated to later and existing forms.

Extending this metaphor in a variety of directions, Atwood uses it as a launching point for her discussion of the cultural climate of the 1950s through the 1970s, likewise drawing attention to the "blank spaces" of the times under discussion. Employing her trademark irony, Atwood takes the reader from undergarments and private comments made to her by professors, and back to the major historical events and literary works of the time. Take the following, for example: "In 1960, 50s undergarments were still de rigueur: the steel-plated bra, the impermeable rubber panty girdle that made it appear as if you had a unitary bum." Later Atwood writes of the same time in a more serious and literary vein:

> The Canadian obscenity trial of D. H. Laurence's [*sic*] *Lady Chatterley's Lover* was yet to take place: that would happen

in 1962, argued before the Supreme Court by poet-lawyer F. R. Scott, who later wrote a comic poem beginning, 'I went to bat for the Lady Chat,' and even later was instrumental in forming the League of Canadian Poets.

While seasoned Atwood readers will hardly be surprised at her ability to subtly comment on literary culture alongside the hilariously mundane, she also manages to insert surprising nuggets of information that will delight even the most well-versed scholar of Canadian literature. Covering amazing geographical, literary, and temporal sweeps in single witty comments, this work allows the reader a brief glimpse into the mind of a great writer and her perspective and experience living through what would now seem to many the Stone Age of the Canadian writing scene.

All this and more make *The Burgess Shale* an enjoyable read. For any Canadian literature professor attempting to quickly move through a summary of the literary and historical culture of the period, this could be an invaluable and very readable assignment for students. I equally recommend this short work for a person looking for a light literary frolic through times past in Canada. I look forward to returning to this work as a literary refresher and to reading it alongside my students in future Canadian literature courses.

Poetry Museums

Douglas Barbour
Listen. If. U of Alberta P $19.95

Susan Elmslie
Museum of Kindness. Brick $20.00

Arleen Paré
The Girls with Stone Faces. Brick $20.00

Reviewed by Jan Lermitte

When I was a child, museums seemed dreary places, with their dim lighting and long descriptions of objects on display. However, I have come to love them as storehouses or treasuries of creativity, which tell the stories of other times and people. The three collections of poetry reviewed here share a common reference to museums and, through intersections of trauma and transcendence, inspire readers with words, images, and stories.

Susan Elmslie, in an interview with rob mclennan, states, "In *Museum of Kindness*, I explore 'genres' familiar and hard to fathom: the school shooting, PTSD, parenting a child with a disability, awaiting a diagnosis." Familiar? Perhaps. Hard to fathom? Absolutely. Elmslie uses mainly traditional forms, dramatic monologues, and lyric verse to examine and depict human experiences, both common and unusual, with expert description. In the titular poem, images of kindness (carefully peeling her son's orange, feeling welcome at a neighbourhood party) remind us that, in spite of common associations of museums with instruments of torture, a museum of kindness with a "wing devoted to good intentions" would be worth visiting. Yet Elmslie also forces us to examine our culture and the violence inherent in human interaction—the lack of kindness. In that vein, the most powerful poems in the collection, such as "Trigger Warning," are about the shooting that occurred in her own university workplace and the trauma that resulted. In the current culture of debate about gun control and school shootings, these poems are timely, relevant, and worthy of classroom discussion.

Douglas Barbour's *Listen. If* is noticeably more experimental and playful than Elmslie's work. Barbour describes his poetry as "rhythmically intense open form"; it resists the conventional use of punctuation by employing ampersands, single units of a pair of parentheses, and open spaces. If we described Barbour's work as a museum, we might say that he also has many rooms and themes, connected through colour, wordplay ("If no ones present presence presents a

vertical / movement . . ."), and allusions to art, the Bible, history, music, and politics, as well as images that mirror human experiences such as love, death, and the natural world. In my view, the most intriguing poems are those that pay "homage" to the work of artists found in museums—Impressionists such as Cézanne and Monet, and Canadian greats like Tom Thomson. These poems need to be read aloud, and although the collection leaves a strong impression, the resistance to syntax and clear meaning sometimes left me unsatisfied.

The Girls with Stone Faces was inspired by Arleen Paré's visit to the National Gallery in Ottawa. Paré describes her initial surprise as she encounters works by two Canadian women sculptors, Frances Loring and Florence Wyle: "I was / struck stuck pinned to the air suspended . . ." and "I knew only distillate awe . . ." Paré combines traditional and innovative techniques with a compelling narrative that memorializes the two women, known as "The Girls" in the Toronto artistic community of the early 1900s, whose lives became entwined through their love of art, clay, and one another. The poems, separated into sections defined by "rooms," connect to one another through repetition of phrases and descriptions of colour found in nature (grey, brown, black, white, blue, green): clay, birds, rural landscapes, and city streets. Paré also eloquently describes the abject poverty and familial rejection that Loring and Wyle experienced, and hints at reasons for their lack of recognition. Loring and Wyle have been largely ignored in the twentieth century, despite their significant artistic contributions and works displayed in public spaces. This reality hit home for me on a recent visit to the National Gallery when I found, to my disappointment, that only two sculptures by Loring were on display. Only one was marked with her name. Why only two? What about Wyle? Paré reminds us that "The Girls" deserve recognition. For me, questions that arise from this collection relate to what makes a piece of art "important" or popular. How do politics, gender, sexuality, and history define what is valued? Paré writes in "Heart's Arrow," "you don't change art / it changes you." These poems have changed my impressions of the value of the work of Canadian women artists. We must celebrate them by exhibiting and championing their work. Perhaps a "museum of kindness" could include the work of those who might be elided because of their gender, politics, or sexuality. I like to believe, as Elmslie claims, that "if it existed, we'd go."

Personal Politics, Political Persons

David Bergen
Stranger. HarperCollins Canada $29.99

Jocelyn Parr
Uncertain Weights and Measures.
Goose Lane $22.95

Reviewed by James Gifford

"I am not the person to read these books; this is not the time to read them," or so I thought . . . I read David Bergen's *Stranger*, a novel about an adopted and stolen child, during the horror show of the Trump administration's incarceration of infants and children in "tender care" prisons. I'm adopted and know my birth mother well. No unbiased reading is possible. *Stranger*'s mother-child centre is rife with missing and dead children, some treated casually and some with pathos.

Something like Lawrence Durrell's pithy aphorism "one always falls in love with the love-choice of the person one loves" is afoot in *Stranger*'s tangled extramarital relations. The protagonist's lover's wife only orgasms with her husband's lover. The novel paints its opening scenes around a fertility clinic in Ixchel, Guatemala, named for the Mayan goddess of midwifery, and after enough love to produce the child, love vanishes.

The lover kills a Mexican child, although this boy seems an afterthought. Another boy dies for the protagonist's journey to reclaim her child, and finally a detective is murdered while searching for the child. It's a feast of death for one life. With border crossings, kidnappings, poverty, squats, gated communities, and class/race conflict bordering on the revolutionary, *Stranger* is a book for today even if its characters remain strangers to the reader.

Jocelyn Parr's *Uncertain Weights and Measures* is a very different novel stylistically, but like Bergen's, the book is driven by a conscience worrying over the unfolding of historical conflicts. Parr's first-person narrative, set during the years after Lenin's death, sees rising Soviet totalitarianism as Stalin consolidates power. Fittingly, the neuroscientist at the heart of the narrative, Tatiana, is reflected in a stream-of-consciousness form, so the novel stylistically mirrors its contents. It begins with an explosion and inexorably moves from conflict to conflict via dialectical thought. Unlike Bergen's characters, Parr's live and breathe, and the reader falls into the narrative quickly. The gripping plot is framed by political and philosophical inquiry with keen care for historical accuracy. For readers, the challenge is to unify the problems of scientific and social progress while both are subverted. Paired with a love story, the question seems to be how Stalinism finds a counterpart in science and the heart, with a will to domination and possession growing in both. Despite the dialectical concepts that generate so much of the novel's movement, the characters are compelling as personalities caught in history, and less so as historical processes generating personalities. This sustained tension between plot and thought is the novel's greatest success. The reader is pressed to ask challenging questions of history, science, and private life without ever shifting out of the gripping narrative. *Uncertain Weights and Measures* is clearly a novel of ideas, but it never reads like a treatise or thought experiment, though in a sense it is. Parr was nominated for the Governor General's Award, and her first book declares the opening of an exciting career. Her voice is to be listened for in Canadian literature's future.

Form, Faith, and Death

E. D. Blodgett
Songs for Dead Children. U of Alberta P $19.95

Amanda Jernigan
Years, Months, and Days. Biblioasis $18.95

Sarah Tolmie
The Art of Dying. McGill-Queen's UP $16.95

Reviewed by Matthew Zantingh

Amid the continuing dominance of free verse, it can sometimes seem like formal poetry is a thing of the past. However, recent collections by two young poets, Amanda Jernigan and Sarah Tolmie, and the late E. D. Blodgett's penultimate volume demonstrate the continuing relevance and importance of form and structure. (Another book by Blodgett will appear posthumously in 2019.) While each of these books has a distinct approach, together they draw from the store of poetry's formal craft to enrich their own work. This approach is matched with weighty subject matter as Blodgett uses Gustav Mahler's *Kindertotenlieder* to meditate on childhood and death, Jernigan translates Mennonite hymns into a kind of post-secular spirituality, and Tolmie's entire book reflects on the art of dying.

Years, Months, and Days is Jernigan's third collection of poetry and marks a significant departure from her earlier work. It is a slim volume of translations that she calls "meditations on the possibility of translation." Her source text is an 1836 Mennonite hymnal titled *Die Gemeinschaftliche Liedersammlung*, and her poems take select phrases from the Plautdietsch and

transplant them into contemporary English. The result is an elegant little book of fragments and pieces that draws on the rhythms and images of Christian liturgy. Despite growing up in the "briar patch of secular skepticism," Jernigan is remarkably generous and reverent in her approach. The final poem in the prologue reads:

alone
I ask
who shrives
the heart

—and it is clear that the whole collection is Jernigan's process of digging through spiritual traditions rooted in the Waterloo region where she grew up. In its best moments, Jernigan crafts pithy yet piercing poems that echo in the mind—with the three closing hymns particularly poignant. Intriguingly, at the Inter Arts Matrix writer's residency that gave birth to this project, contemporary classical composer Colin Labadie used Jernigan's words as the basis for his own musical piece, returning these translated words to music in a fitting circle.

Blodgett's volume, divided into three sections of twenty poems with no poem longer than a single page, is the most intricately structured of the three collections. The poems are typically structured in triplets, though couplets occasionally show up. Like Jernigan, Blodgett uses a musical source in Mahler's song cycle, itself based on the works of German poet Friedrich Rückert. *Songs for Dead Children* builds slowly and intricately, using several key images—children running and playing, the stars, the moon, and flying, among others—to contemplate loss and absence, especially the death of children. The opening poem works to capture a child's mentality:

their only thought
to be green
to be the green pastures
to be
the clean innocence of green[.]

This vitality contrasts sharply with the silences that abound throughout the collection, with later poems featuring "the ghosts of children" or memories of children that now sting the speaker. The collection seems at times insubstantial or transient, but this fits the way memory hovers at the edge of our perception so that the small moments of remembering can invoke utter loss.

Tolmie's collection stands apart from the other two by nature of her frequently irreverent tone. This wry tone is not necessarily new: *Trio*, her first collection, features 120 interlinked sonnets that often take a playful and wry approach to the sonnet form. However, in this volume, Tolmie turns her attention to the medieval genre of *ars moriendi*, translating it into the twenty-first century. Perhaps fittingly, several poems bemoan the impotence or failing health of poetry only to reverse this position later and claim that "Art never dies, it just annoys from time to time." The eighty-nine poems of *The Art of Dying* are mostly written in triplets, providing a formal base to further ground these ruminations. The insistent focus on the many aspects of death produces a kaleidoscopic portrait of the many insufficient ways contemporary North American culture engages with death. Tolmie critiques the ways we talk about death in phrases like "passing on," and how social media offer a false kind of "care" for distant tragedies; she riffs on Sylvia Plath's poetry and Oliver Sacks' death; and she pens a touching if winking ode to Conrad, the raccoon found dead in Toronto's streets in 2015. Tolmie's levity and conversational voice occasionally put her poems at odds with Jernigan's and Blodgett's, yet the effect of the collection is to move readers to think more deeply and honestly about death.

These volumes are worth reading as Tolmie and Jernigan demonstrate that they are vital emerging voices while Blodgett reaffirms his status as a unique voice in Canadian poetry. His recent death is a great loss for the community of Canadian poetry.

Hoarding Time

Shannon Bramer
Precious Energy. BookThug $18.00

Carolyne Van Der Meer
Journeywoman. Inanna $18.95

Reviewed by Evangeline Holtz

The figure of the mother is being reignited and reimagined in Canadian letters: 2018 marks the publication of Sheila Heti's long-awaited philosophical work of autofiction, *Motherhood*. While Heti debates whether to have or not to have children, Shannon Bramer and Carolyne Van Der Meer write from the other side of this decision, grappling with the multiplicity of roles motherhood necessitates, especially when these mothers are writers. In her review in *The New Yorker* of Heti's latest work, Alexandra Schwartz writes, "[p]lenty of writers are mothers, of course. But writing depends on hoarding time, on putting up a boundary . . . between oneself and the immediate world in order to visit a separate one in the mind." Bramer's *Precious Energy* and Van Der Meer's *Journeywoman* are collections of poetry which take up the particular challenges posed by motherhood for the writer. How to focus and allocate one's time in spite of the kaleidoscope of tasks requiring attention? How to be present enough to witness the moments of your life but also find time to hoard in order to process these moments and create language out of them? And how does one cope when illness—in both of these texts, cancer—begins to compromise one's time and roles? Bramer and Van Der Meer tackle these questions bravely and honestly.

In Van Der Meer's "I Will Long for This," the speaker elucidates a singular moment between mother and son with the foreknowledge that it will become an emotional talisman: "the moulding of your scrawny body into mine" presents the tactile and static aspect of the memory, while the child's escape—"you squirm / then scurry to watch cartoons"—becomes indicative of the temporal tensions of parenting, and of life. Van Der Meer performs extensive etymology on the titular word "journey," deconstructing the term's accrued meanings, which hover between forms of labour, travel, and the gleaning of experience, often as they pertain to the period of an earthly day. Her poems excavate the chronological pressure which imposes itself upon the everyday—the attempt to commit oneself fully to a moment, all the while knowing it is liable to squirm away into an unknown future.

Known for her humorous and wry lyricism, Bramer succeeds in her exacting separation of sentiment from emotion. In "A Woman's Open Mouth," the speaker educates her daughter on female decorum, widening the spectres of truth and love. "It's okay to hate me . . . you can love me and you can hate me again," the speaker states plainly. It is also okay, according to Bramer's speaker, if love and hate are non-binary and unformulated: "You can have a thought that is a lie / It feels true in your throat." Bramer's direct delivery demonstrates her speaker's capacity for multiple ways of being, behaving, and processing in spite of the seemingly singular roles one is superficially burdened with.

École et colonisation

Brieg Capitaine et Karine Vanthuyne, dirs.
Power through Testimony: Reframing Residential Schools in the Age of Reconciliation.
U of British Columbia P 79,00 $

Janet Neigh
Recalling Recitation in the Americas. Borderless Curriculum, Performance Poetry, and Reading.
U of Toronto P 60,00 $

Compte rendu par Marie-Eve Bradette

Power through Testimony, dirigé par Brieg Capitaine et Karine Vanthuyne, et *Recalling Recitation in the Americas* de Janet Neigh

ont en commun un propos central : l'étude de récits scolaires dans des contextes de marginalisation culturelle. Dans le premier texte, le système des pensionnats autochtones au Canada est replacé dans l'histoire coloniale plus large. Dans le second, la récitation est envisagée comme intériorisation d'une langue et d'un récit colonial, puis d'une subversion des discours hégémoniques.

L'objectif du premier ouvrage est énoncé en introduction : revisiter les témoignages des survivants de pensionnats à l'aube de la Convention de Règlement. Puis, un premier chapitre trace l'évolution des représentations historiques des écoles résidentielles canadiennes depuis leur fondation jusqu'à la réémergence des témoignages dans la sphère publique. Pour Wood, ces représentations déclenchent un « théâtre traumatique » dans lequel le gouvernement éprouve de la difficulté à reconnaître les pensionnats comme partie prenante d'une politique assimilatoire. Capitaine propose ensuite une analyse discursive de la Commission de Vérité et de Réconciliation (CVR) et fait ressortir le trauma historique constitué en un théâtre performatif passant rapidement du traumatisme individuel au collectif. Le chapitre de Green et celui de Gaudet et Martin entament un dialogue cohérent à travers la mobilisation d'un champ conceptuel positif. Green fait intervenir la notion d'amour comme levier d'autodétermination lié aux revendications territoriales. Gaudet et Martin mettent en scène la conversation à la fois comme problématique et méthodologie. De l'amour à la conversation, les relations intersubjectives et leurs potentialités agentives apparaissent centrales dans ces deux textes.

Étudiant le cas du pensionnat Shubenacadie en Nouvelle-Écosse, Polliandri illustre, dans le cinquième chapitre, les conséquences de la rupture des liens familiaux dans l'instauration d'un cycle de violence, mais aussi d'une identité collective et partagée : celle du survivant. Par l'observation du contexte inuit du Labrador exclu de la Convention, Molena critique directement la CVR en abordant le rôle des pensionnats dans ce qu'elle nomme le « triple fardeau » inuit. Dans le chapitre sept, traçant un lien entre les conséquences des écoles résidentielles et la Convention de la Baie-James, Vanthuyne articule les divergences narratives entre deux témoignages. Ceux-ci participent ainsi d'une identité crie commune à travers un sentiment de réciprocité. Hughes analyse, quant à elle, des articles de journaux religieux et les documents de la CVR qui contribuent à positionner le « perpétrateur » en victime au même titre que le survivant. L'auteure qualifie ainsi la (ré) conciliation d'externalisation de la culpabilité coloniale. Enfin, Gaver pose une question centrale quant à la difficulté des Canadiens à comprendre les impacts des pensionnats. Au terme de son argumentation, elle conclut que la confrontation de plusieurs épistémologies entérine la possibilité d'une compréhension et consolide la volonté de faire valoir une vérité unique.

Dans *Recalling Recitation*, Janet Neigh s'intéresse également aux formes hégémoniques des systèmes éducationnels depuis une perspective transaméricaine. L'auteure soutient que la pratique de la récitation a une influence majeure sur le développement de la poésie performative au vingtième siècle. Le livre présente une introduction suivie de trois chapitres consacrés à des écrivains pour ensuite tisser les liens, dans une ultime section, entre les poésies « Dub » et autochtones. Un premier chapitre est consacré au travail de la poète Mohawk E. Pauline Johnson. Neigh y mobilise la théorie postcoloniale du mimétisme (*mimicry*). Ce concept permet d'aborder la subversion des binarismes identitaires à travers des actes artistiques et la reprise d'un texte classique de la littérature américaine, un poème de Longfellow. Ce dernier a mondialisé la récitation à l'école et a souvent été analysé,

dans sa reprise chez Johnson, comme assimilation à l'identité Euro-Canadienne. Neigh propose une autre lecture du travail de Johnson qu'elle considère plutôt comme un acte d'ébranlement. Toujours dans le sillage des théories postcoloniales, l'auteure aborde les textes de Hughes et Bennett. Elle fait appel à la poésie de l'auteur caribéen et ses liens à la récitation pour fonder une pédagogie critique qui dépasse la récitation en devenant un lieu d'agentivité et de lecture communautaire basée sur la différence et le rythme propre à chacun. Enfin, la microlecture des textes de Louise Bennett permet à Neigh de discuter de la subversion poétique des politiques éducationnelles coloniales et notamment d'une conception hégémonique de la langue anglaise acquise à l'école.

Ainsi, les deux ouvrages présentés condensent une critique des institutions et, par l'entremise des témoignages dans *Power through Testimony* et de la littérature dans *Recalling Recitation*, offrent des outils d'analyse qui mettent de l'avant la résistance, la survivance et la subversion des lois coloniales.

Learning to Memory Right

David Chariandy
Brother. McClelland & Stewart $19.95

Reviewed by Paul Barrett

In the year before his death, Austin Clarke gave a commencement speech at York University where he reminded his young audience that "summer time," for Black people in Canada, "used to be called . . . killing time." Clarke's phrase evokes the summer police killings of men like Lester Donaldson, Wade Lawson, Albert Johnson, and others whose names have largely been stricken from the Canadian historical record. In the rare instances where these boys and men are present in Canadian consciousness, it is too often in stereotypical newspaper depictions of Black male criminality and deviance. David Chariandy's *Brother* (dedicated to Clarke) cuts through such stereotypes and delves into the story behind one such killing season by narrating the lives of young Black men in the Toronto suburb of Rouge Valley. The book follows two brothers, Francis and Michael, alternating between their childhood and teenage years and the present day as Michael struggles to put his life back together in the wake of Francis' killing by the Toronto police.

Brother opens with a striking image of the two brothers climbing a hydro pole to access, even fleetingly, "[a]ll that free air and seeing. The streets below suddenly patterns you could read." Older brother Francis explains the danger of such a climb and the necessary trick of remembering your footing on the way down: "'if you can't memory right . . . you lose.'" The novel asks, therefore, how does one "memory right" after personal disaster, and how can memory enable diasporic people to make sense of their experience? Will Michael continue to live in the shadow of his brother's death or can he come through that disaster and learn to breathe that "free air" again?

The narrative rarely returns to the free space of its opening but instead depicts the brothers and their mother in the fray of everyday existence. While Mother works long hours to provide for her children, the boys are left to explore their community. A dual sense of danger and possibility pervades the novel and Chariandy beautifully captures the violence, fear, and thrill of Black teenage masculinity. Michael has a "nervous smile," hair "forever caught in that no man's zone between Afro and hockey mullet" (emphasis on "no man"), and a nerdy predilection for Rush and *Dungeons & Dragons*. Francis, meanwhile, is the cooler older brother who understands the expected masculine performance of Scarborough streets, and who aligns himself with a crew that "spoke and gestured in

ways that asserted connections . . . to scenes in New York and L.A. and Kingston."

In the shifts between the narrative present, in which Michael and his mother contend with their "complicated grief," and Michael's recollection of the past, Michael's reliability as a narrator comes into question. It soon becomes clear that he depends on his mother and her grief in order to avoid contending with his own difficult mourning. This dynamic is altered, however, by the return of Michael's childhood friend, Aisha, who forces him to confront the trauma of the past.

Brother depicts the forms of cultural transformation and creolization that occur in suburban locations but are often ignored in Canadian literature. Dionne Brand, for instance, has long depicted the suburbs as the places immigrants go to isolate themselves from other immigrants and forget their past. Chariandy debunks this naive portrayal, demonstrating the exciting forms of mixing that happen in these spaces. At the barbershop where Francis and his crew hang out, "different styles and kinships were possible. You found new language, you caught the gestures, you kept the meanings close as skin." Chariandy knows his territory and he comfortably depicts the brutality of such places—being threatened by other young men, huddling for warmth at bus stops on the edge of highways, and the constant threat of police violence—alongside the sustaining joy of community.

Music provides one of the novel's sustaining tropes of joy, intergenerational connection, and the dual experience of corroding racial violence and the necessity of hope in bleak times. Francis clings to music as his one possibility for a break; a failed musical audition eventually leads to his death. Music also transforms Francis' best friend, Jelly, into DJ Djeli: "*Djeli* . . . As in a griot. A storyteller with memory." Chariandy delights in depicting the arrival of hip hop in 1980s Toronto and its capacity to provide a vocabulary of Black selfhood and style.

Yet for a novel interested in the power of creolization and remix, *Brother* is a decidedly monological and traditional narrative. Hip hop's combinatory aesthetics of electrifying disco break, obscure sample, and contemporary vocal finds no formal analogue here. Rather, the temporalities of past and present, and geographies of Canada and diaspora, remain isolated. Indeed, the forms of cultural creolization and blending that the novel describes always feel at a remove from the narrative itself. Where works such as Tessa McWatt's *Out of My Skin* or Rohinton Mistry's *Tales from Firozsha Baag* employ a palimpsestic form that overlays the "here" and "there" of diasporic experience, *Brother* keeps the components of diasporic experience carefully separate.

Brother is a short, elliptical novel in which slight gestures towards affects, sensations, and postures hint at unknown histories and embodied memories. Michael's discovery of his mother's *Standard A* classroom notebook and Aisha's learning about a Spiritual Baptist church in Trinidad suggest the repressed histories and complexities of their immigrant parents' lives. Michael explains, "Our mother, like others, wasn't just bare endurance and sacrifice. There was always more to her, pleasures and thoughts we could only glimpse." He observes his mother clutching "a small bunch of the blue flowers in her hand, a bright blue, an unnameable pretty colour. Singular." Against the logic of "moving past" or "getting over" trauma and grief, *Brother* instead offers such moments of transcendence and grace in the form of music, style, and community as instances of how one might live with grief without forever living in its shadow.

(Inter)dependencies

David Clerson; Katia Grubisic, trans.
Brothers. QC Fiction $19.95

Virginia Pésémapéo Bordeleau; Susan Ouriou and Christelle Morelli, trans.
Winter Child. Freehand $21.95

Reviewed by Alexandra Bournelis

In human relationships, interdependence is a concept of symmetrizing scope. An attachment figure may either nurture or hinder a dependent's sense of self and independence. An excess of care, or an excess of dependency, may lead to an unsettling overflux, with a reinstitution of balance being the point that can resolve the negative effects of both. The theme of relational balance figures in Virginia Pésémapéo Bordeleau's (Cree-Métis) *Winter Child*, and is also centred, albeit uncannily, in David Clerson's *Brothers*. Bordeleau's novella is a meditation on mortality and grief. A mother struggles to process the loss of her son who, even while in hospice, "fought his caregivers" for his independence and freedom. Clerson's protagonist's mother is conversely wary of unhealthy detachment: "the world is a cruel place, too cruel to be faced alone." As her son loses his connection to his kin, the result is a chaotic trajectory of violence. Moreover, each book features protagonists for whom human connection is a way to "share the unbearable" dimensions of loss, in Bordeleau's phrase.

Bordeleau's semi-autobiographical, poetic depiction of a grieving Métis mother is at all times a reflective work. From the first pages, she recalls how her son was born unbreathing. Those "interminable minutes of intimate terror" elicit an enduring cycle of anxiety and postpartum distress. It is revealed early on that "death will take the child it had stalked since birth," and Bordeleau foregrounds this inevitability in her prose. When he suffers from fever, she recognizes the stakes of their relationship: "that he would be her wound," and that "she would have to battle to keep him with her." After his death, she finds peace in a dream conversation where he provides liminal last words of reassurance and closure: "All will be well, you'll see." His mother concludes: "I was the ship my son boarded for his journey through life"—although their interdependence is transient, their bond endures. At times, Bordeleau's shifting viewpoints and non-linear plot make for a disorienting read, particularly when it is not clear who is the subject of certain sentences. While some sentences seem unwieldy, these meanderings maintain a flowing lyricism, with passages steered by effective punctuation and diction. The task of translating the lush craftings of a grieving mother is difficult, and Susan Ouriou and Christelle Morelli's graceful work is praiseworthy.

Brothers, also translated from the French, is a kind of odyssey and *Bildungsroman* told from the perspective of a nameless older brother. He is born to an estranged, cyanthropic father and a human mother who grows increasingly blind. She is a protective figure who tells cautionary tales about "worlds of darkness and brutality." Fearing for her son's loneliness, she severs his arm and from it moulds a younger brother—a secondary attachment figure of interdependence wrought from his own carnal detachment. They dwell in their seaside home until the boys, yearning for adventure, decide to depart to search for their "dog of a father." When the brothers are separated at sea, the novel takes a violent turn. Driven by distemperate grief, the older brother transforms into a dog and, in this pseudo-depersonalized state, forms an intimate relationship with a female dog. Her captivity fuels his blood lust. In time, the older brother retreats to his mother's homestead, where he is electrified by the "touching delirium" of childhood memories. The absence of his sea-swept brother registers poignantly—a panging akin to

phantom limb pain. The novel ends with the older brother contemplating "an atrocious act of self-mutilation"—an attempt to "rebirth" his brother through the dismemberment of his only arm. Yet he is unable to execute this action. Like a lonely embodiment of driftwood, or perhaps a pre-Geppetto Pinocchio, the brother detachedly endures. Though linear, each vignette in this narrative is advanced through a dream-like logic. *Brothers* is a flawlessly translated, riveting work. In her translation, award-winning poet Katia Grubisic gives texture to certain moments of violence through crude diction and a tone that registers a hint of nonchalance. Although this novel was published in English in 2016, it was originally published in French in 2013 and won the 2014 Archambault literary prize in recognition of new Québécois talent.

These short works by Bordeleau and Clerson are recommended for university courses in contemporary Canadian literature, and to readers interested in poetic prose. The relational tethers, overfluxes, and allying interpersonal tensions are among the compelling aspects of the two books.

Trembling Men

Rienzi Crusz
How to Dance in This Rarefied Air. Mawenzi $19.95

Shane Rhodes
Dead White Men. Coach House $18.95

Reviewed by Melanie Dennis Unrau

How to Dance in This Rarefied Air gathers collected and new poems from Sri Lankan Canadian poet Rienzi Crusz. A veteran at ninety-one years old and with twelve poetry collections, Crusz writes carefully crafted lyrics that mix jarring and joyful images from Sri Lanka and Waterloo, as in these lines:

> I broke all the rules—
> The sun chattering in my teeth,
> my hair on fire
> the smell of elephant
> body and brain listening all the while
> to the mad and searing order of words.

Crusz's metaphors repeat and collect meaning—ravens and elephants; ice, snow, and parkas; bone and blood; and the "undivided ground" where the immigrant is both "here" and "there." The ultimate metaphor in the book, however, is the poem itself. In Crusz's expansive poetics, the poem is not only "the heart raw and public" or a "new way / of looking at the world," but also the song of "the flushing toilet, the garbage / grumbling in the can," an elephant rolling over, a wasp egg hatching, "the mangled poem of my body," and the flawed poem of a life.

The poetics and politics of the "Sun-Man" writing in the "landscape of ice" are compelling, yet I am also bothered by these poems that converse with a long list of all-male authors and too easily cast women as Madonna or muse. Crusz's men are inflected with difference—they are "shaking," "nowhere," "naked," "opposite," "faltering," and "immigrant" men. He writes that words do not have "weathervane meanings" but instead shift and "tremble" in their contexts, and in the end, I am uncertain about how to comment on the trembling masculinism of this startling and memorable collection.

Masculinism is evoked and critiqued differently in Shane Rhodes' *Dead White Men*, in which he crafts poems from historical texts written by European explorers and scientists on colonial expeditions to what is now the Canadian North (and also to Australia, Tahiti, Norway, Hawaii, and elsewhere). The poem "Dead White Men" functions as a kind of introduction, where, incorporating as many words as possible that contain *man* or *men*, Rhodes lays out both a critique ("This is men, dormant in their element") and a poetics ("I shell poems from prose and give them home"). Yet when Rhodes' speaker describes his sources as "all white, all men," but not all

dead, he recalls that he is also a white man. Subtitles to the poems that follow—"*after Alexander Mackenzie*"—speak to sources but also inheritances of white supremacist, colonial power. The men whose writing Rhodes samples range from familiar (Martin Frobisher, James Cook) to famous (Jacques Cartier, Galileo), and Rhodes' procedural, combinatory, and erasure poetics are smart and heartbreaking, especially in the white men's encounters with "savages" and the poems about Indigenous people transported back to Europe as curiosities and slaves. With its manipulated images of statues, innovative poetics, and tête-bêche format that confuses front and back, beginning and end, past and present, the book turns power on its head, like an upside-down elephant.

Responding to the Digital

Rocco de Giacomo
Brace Yourselves. Quattro $20.00

Stevie Howell
I left nothing inside on purpose.
McClelland & Stewart $19.95

Jeff Latosik
Dreampad. McClelland & Stewart $19.95

Reviewed by Eric Schmaltz

Though it is unfair to reduce any book of poetry to a single theme, the three books under review ask and approach crucial questions about twenty-first-century living and what it means to write, speak, feel, and remember in an increasingly digital and virtual world.

Rocco de Giacomo's *Brace Yourselves* intersects with these issues most directly. De Giacomo blends a variety of poetic forms, borrowing from the well-used tactics of erasure and found poetries and situating spam, comment threads, Tweet-streams, and dating profiles as the base of his poems. He blends these more contemporary forms with the longer-standing traditions of the visual poem and prose poem, reaching even farther back to the cento. *Brace Yourselves* is visually compelling since each poem is composed as a variation of a poetic strategy. "Baltimore: Two Voices," for example, utilizes two distinct fonts to distinguish the two voices in dialogue. Meanwhile, "Ferguson" is an erasure poem that strikes through the original source texts—"various deplorable sources from www.twitter.com"—leaving the single word "sorry" unmarked in the centre of the page. As indicated by these poems, *Brace Yourselves* emerges from a feeling of responsibility and a need to speak out in the face of injustice. As the author confesses at the beginning of the book, the subject matter is sensitive and, at times, offensive. De Giacomo has culled vitriolic language from the Web, but not to intentionally offend. Instead, he seeks to call back and condemn hateful language—though at the risk of sometimes oversimplifying complex social and political issues—to try to be a righteous voice amid waves of injustice.

In *Dreampad*, Jeff Latosik similarly engages issues of digital technology but without de Giacomo's experimental flair. Instead, *Dreampad* exemplifies Latosik's steady and concise lyric voice that considers contemporary life as it becomes more deeply enmeshed with technology and virtuality. For example, his poem "The Internet" reflects on a first encounter with the idea of the Internet. The speaker first feels bewildered by "its aim," which "seemed as elusive as the stock ticker," but later concludes by remarking on the prevalence of the Internet: "At night, blinds down, but windows open, flags of light / were quietly raised from main floors up into our rooms." The book is self-described as both a "protest" and "salvo" to contemporary life, and these qualities come through most clearly in the poem's reassertion of the human in a world that seems increasingly disembodied. These poems carefully linger on the

past, revelling in nostalgia for old friends at school and old jobs in a "warehouse unpacking chic decor," and for innocent and foolish days as kids. On the surface, *Dreampad* takes stock of twenty-first-century living, tracing the ways it has settled into everyday life, but these poems are hesitant to celebrate an ever-shifting world that risks eschewing the human.

Stevie Howell obliquely approaches similar issues in *I left nothing inside on purpose*, a book that expertly enfolds a plethora of discourses, including allusions to classical antiquity, existential philosophy, geology, and neuropsychology. These seemingly disparate topics are held together by Howell's powerful and contemplative voice, which speaks in a language inflected by digital communication. It is speckled with truncations, ampersands, and occasional alternative spellings that are indicative of the prevalence of a Twitter-ready text-byte. Howell more directly engages the digital in one of the book's two epigraphs, a quote from M. F. K. Fisher: "Probably one of the most private things in the world is an egg before it is broken." It seems only fitting to read the public/private dichotomy described by Fisher in the context of contemporary poetics when so much writing, thinking, and feeling is done aloud and online. The title of Howell's book seems to correspond to this idea and invokes notions of emptying, of purging, of speaking out loud. Howell's poem "Talking w / humans is my only way to learn" considers the complexity of this quality of online culture. The poem is written from the perspective of Tay, an AI Twitter-bot that was shut down after it became racist and sexist as a result of what it learned from public interactions. The poem questions whether humans know what to do with the expanse of information on the Web: "There's no horizon any longer," says Tay. "Artificial intelligence," says Tay further, is a "non-material / mirror" and reveals how frightening humans can really be. In their poem for Tay, Howell reveals the larger project of their book, which focuses on how we see ourselves and see others through language.

Our Mortal Neighbours

Christopher Doda
Glutton for Punishment. Mansfield $17.00

Dan MacIsaac
Cries from the Ark. Brick $20.00

Eleonore Schönmaier
Dust Blown Side of the Journey.
McGill-Queen's UP $16.95

Reviewed by Monica Sousa

In *Glutton for Punishment*, Toronto-based poet Christopher Doda modernizes the glosa, a fifteenth-century Spanish form where new poems are created using four lines borrowed from another poet. Four ten-line stanzas are built, each concluding with one of the borrowed lines; typically, lines six and nine rhyme with line ten. At times pushing his poems to their limits and at times choosing when the rules will be slightly broken, Doda is still consistently loyal to the atmospheric tone of the hard rock and heavy metal bands whose lyrics he selects from to create his poems. The bands that he engages with are widespread in national origin, ranging from North America to Europe to Asia, and he selects from a broad range of bands, from classics such as Guns N' Roses, Velvet Revolver, Metallica, and Iron Maiden to a more recent twenty-first-century act, the Iraqi trash metal band Acrassicauda. Doda's collection is embedded with nuanced musical and cultural references, and he also includes a thoughtful "More Than You Need to Know" appendix that provides a little explanation for each poem. Doda uses engaging wordplay in his musical references, such as in the title "(Don't Fear) the Reader," a poem that alludes to Blue Oyster Cult in title but strays from the predictable by forming the glosa

with lyrics from Anthrax. His reoccurring use of anaphoric "I am" statements is at times jarring, philosophical, and thought-provoking: in "Downward Spiral," he writes "I am a shot glass hurled in disgust . . . I am an electric chair gathering dust"; in "Portrait of the Poet as a Psychopath," he claims "I am a child lost at the mall . . . I am an extra begging for lines. I am a disappointed mother who wishes." Doda ponders many ideas, from modernity, politics, and the stresses on individuality, to the dragging pull of mortality.

While Doda's work reads as more of an internal reflection, Dan MacIsaac's debut poetry collection *Cries from the Ark* focuses almost exclusively on the external by giving considerable attention to the history and inhabitants of the earth. MacIsaac's work is categorized into six parts: "The First Bestiary," "That Bloody Pool of Trouble," "Raucous on the Wing," "Printmakers," "A Brambled Kingdom," and "Deluge." The collection is crowded with many non-human and human characters, from sloths, bison, tigers, and owls, to Biblical figures, such as the brothers Cain and Abel, and Malchus, a servant who participated in the arrest of Jesus. His work also engages with the paleontological, such as in "Archaeopteryx," and with the tragic and catastrophic, such as in "Chernobyl." The first-person voice is limited in MacIsaac's collection, for he instead wishes to capture the emotions and daily lives of his earthly characters through an extensive catalogue of our mortal neighbours. Filled with rich and eloquent language, MacIsaac's poetry is empathic and reads as a cry to action in reassessing human connections with the environment, animals, and their ancient stories. His work at times considers the affairs of the heart, such as in "David," with the opening lines: "I throw myself into the perfumed sea / Of Saul's harem but cannot drown you"; at others it critiques the accepted morality in Biblical tales, such as in "Cain," which describes Abel as "more sloth than shepherd" and presents a visceral image of his slaughtering of a baby goat. In "Jellyfish," MacIsaac gives attention to the materiality of bodies and establishes connections with the environment, as he writes that jellyfish

> shall inherit
> the irradiated sea
> placenta pumped
> with clear ichor
> eternal as
> everclear plastics.

While carnal and primitive, MacIsaac's collection is also exuberant and refreshing, and begs you to stop and consider the world around you.

Eleonore Schönmaier's *Dust Blown Side of the Journey* similarly takes an ecological approach with its rich selection of nature poetry, but her collection is also intimate and self-reflective, offering snapshots of many characters and reminisces of a childhood in Northern Canada. Her poems range in national settings, from the Canadian boreal forest, to the Balinese jungle, to the Greek islands, to the "remote mountains of Ecuador." Schönmaier demolishes the nature/culture argument in her collection by capturing the beauty found in the differences between moments in nature and wilderness and moments in big and buzzing city settings. Depictions of bicycles and riding reoccur throughout her collection, and it is in these moments where she captures the experiences of daily life, such as in "Vertebrae of Humans and Art Animals," where she writes of cycling, witnessing an old man hanging a bird feeder, and seeing

> a sculpture
> of Mandela and the real
> Desmond Tutu stepping
> down from the podium.

Schönmaier also joins nature with the human-driven feeling of sentimentality. In "Love Letters," she writes:

in her beehives
she hides
her husband's prison letters

while an ant
drags a white
rose petal over
the rubble.

Schönmaier finds appreciation in the sidelines as she captures the neglected musicality of nature and urban settings: in "Music," she writes of "treble clefs" seen "in the nature reserve / as she cycles past / her silver graffiti." In "How Not to Hate a Pigeon," when a woman asks how to kill a pigeon, a man responds with "I thought you were a pacifist?" to which she replies: "Does / that have to include unmusical birds?" Schönmaier thus eloquently captures the sadness of only appreciating the non-human realm for the immediately noticeable beauty it offers to humans. Capturing moments of human greed and human kindness, of striving for community, and of unapologetic joy, Schönmaier's work is rejuvenating, and offers both a sense of peace and a time for introspection.

Icons of Vision

Stan Dragland
Gerald Squires. Pedlar $80.00

Tony Miller
Daddy Hall: A Biography in 80 Linocuts. Porcupine's Quill $22.95

Reviewed by Joel Deshaye

These 2017 biographical art books commemorate occasions: what George Elliott Clarke observes to be "117 years since [John 'Daddy' Hall's] death at age 117" and eighty years since the birth of Gerald Squires. Tony Miller's *Daddy Hall* and Stan Dragland's *Gerald Squires* are both beautiful, and often stunning, but very different materially: Miller's book is a heavy, almost corrugated, black and white paperback, and Dragland's is a large-format, full-colour hardback. Both are graced with appreciations from notable authors: novelist Michael Crummey writes a touching "triptych" about his friendship with the painter Squires; former parliamentary poet laureate Clarke writes the introduction to the legendary Hall; and art critic and professor George A. Walker introduces Miller and the development of his linocuts. These are books about culturally and historically significant people who speak from their communities to the world.

Daddy Hall is a worlds-spanning history dressed as a short biography; Hall is not born until page 103, appearing to float at the bosoms of his proud, tired parents—an escaped slave of African descent and a Mohawk man—and the preceding pages are devoted to the African history of the slave trade and the revolutionary battles involving Britain, the US, Canada, and the Indigenous peoples whose lands underlie the borders. The first half of the book is a visual lament drawn in part from an armoury of restraining and disfiguring devices: chains, bars, brands, whips, hooks, muzzles. One series of three linocuts shows a man framed by bars in the hold of the ship that transferred him from Africa to North America; then there is a grieving face obscured by hands, with a dashed line below implying chains or rope; and then a circle, likely a porthole, showing a vision of freedom: the ocean and birds above. All of Miller's images are similarly stark, intense, and suggestive. The consequences of colonization and slavery include a tree in a forest cut straight through the trunk, but this is also when a woman escapes. Hall's birth is soon followed by his career as a scout, his capture into slavery, and his escape on the Underground Railroad to what is now Ontario. There, as an older man, he became town crier, which Miller memorably depicts with radiant lines analogous to those that surrounded Hall when he was a Christ-like babe in his mother's arms.

The religious theme is also apparent, even explicit, in *Gerald Squires*. Dragland admits it: "I think [Saint] Thomas *is* Squires: drawn to Christ the man and teacher." Disclaiming biography but apparently not hagiography, Dragland produces a ruminant essay and sensitively researched biographical envelope for the many excellent reproductions of Squires' paintings and drawings (and some sculptures). It helps that Pedlar Press has spared no expense with the glowing, satiny images of his mossy, heathered, rocky scenes.

As with Miller's depiction of Hall as a visual reflection of his own "African roots," Dragland's book reaches out to his friend Gerry Squires with many of their similarities in hand, including their fascination with roots and uprootedness, wandering, and poetry. A brilliant but underestimated landscape painter, Squires also recited poetry and wrote creatively, as Dragland discovers. One section of the book is thematized after the Spanish poet Federico García Lorca's conceptualization of *duende*. Closer to home, Squires worked through at least one of his paintings while reciting Gregory J. Power's "Bogwood," a necessary poem in the Newfoundland canon. Somewhat like *P*ower but at quite a remove from *p*ower, Squires articulates a nationalist position and a lament for the treatment of Newfoundland by Canada at large: *The Last Supper* depicts a who's who of Newfoundland, with Jesus in the centre symbolizing a nation betrayed and condemned, as in *The Crucifixion*. Squires had open-hearted empathy for his fellow people, shown in the polychrome ceramic plaque that depicts his own face in his *Hands of Compassion*—a startling parallel to Miller's face of the slave. Although the parallel between African slaves and Newfoundlanders must not be stressed, a similarity of felt experience should not be strongly denied. For these artists, perhaps especially for Miller with his curiosity about the African-Indigenous exchange of cultures, art is an opening. In Squires' *Wetland*, the bent trunk of a snow-crushed but surviving tree lifts above the maw of a green mastodon, opening a portal to a world of light—"holes as eyes," holes as mouths to speak from.

L'aller pour le retour

Pierre-Louis Gagnon
Le rendez-vous de Damas. Lévesque 28,00 $

Compte rendu par Véronique Trottier

Se présentant comme un roman d'aventure ou un roman historique, *Le rendez-vous de Damas* a peut-être aussi, et même davantage, valeur de roman d'émancipation. Certes, la plongée au cœur du Montréal de la fin des années 1930, l'évocation de la visite de George VI et de la reine Elizabeth, des nazis canadiens, du banditisme montréalais, tout autant que les épisodes ou les personnages marquants de l'époque de la Seconde Guerre mondiale qui servent de cadre à l'histoire, sont d'un intérêt certain. Il semble toutefois que le propos principal du livre se trouve au-delà des aventures avortées auxquelles prend part le personnage principal, Serge Régnier.

Après avoir fui deux ans auparavant l'atmosphère cléricale de la ville de Québec, lieu où habitent un père avec qui les relations sont tendues et une mère internée en institut psychiatrique, Serge est maintenant journaliste au quotidien *Le Canada* à Montréal. Le roman s'ouvre sur le retour momentané de Serge à Québec, à l'occasion des funérailles de sa mère, et révèle la culpabilité du héros de ne pas s'être assez occupé de celle-ci, hospitalisée à l'initiative de son père. Le schéma est classique, la cassure évidente, et les aventures de Serge le ramèneront inexorablement chez lui, au terme de ses expériences à Montréal et à l'étranger.

Trentenaire homosexuel, Serge ne trouve pas plus qu'à Québec le lieu d'un réel épanouissement dans la métropole. Rongé par une mélancolie née de l'isolement et

de la marginalité auxquels le confinent ses préférences sexuelles, il aspire à un bonheur conjugal illusoire pour l'époque. La première partie du roman traite en parallèle l'activité journalistique de Serge, entre couverture de l'actualité internationale et l'important mandat de débusquer les secrets du monde interlope de Montréal, et sa vie sentimentale. L'arrivée de Richard Mailloux, un Témiscouatain venu en ville pour trouver du travail, marquera un tournant positif pour Serge, jusqu'alors plutôt malheureux en amour. L'intrigue policière autour de la mafia new-yorkaise sera sèchement abandonnée, cédant toute la place au conflit mondial naissant et aux amours du héros, qui s'engage dans l'armée comme artilleur pour suivre son amant.

Postés en Angleterre, Serge et Richard vivent ce qui s'approche d'une vraie vie de couple. Ils partagent la même chambre, sortent dans les bars ; leur situation, connue de leur régiment, est tolérée. Les deux amants côtoieront même la débauche londonienne pour un soir. Tout semble ensuite devoir évoluer radicalement. Devenu employé des services secrets britanniques, Serge est envoyé en Syrie pour la mission « Le rendez-vous de Damas », dont il est finalement évincé et qui ne lui permet d'accomplir aucun geste héroïque. Au lendemain de cet épisode, sur les plans professionnel, sentimental et familial, des changements importants s'opèrent et dirigent le protagoniste vers ce qui pourrait bien être son véritable « rendez-vous », une voie à réparer, hypothétiquement une sorte de chemin de Damas à trouver. Pourra-t-il, héros plus émancipé, fort de ses aventures, racheter ses manques envers sa mère, renouer avec sa ville natale et régler ses comptes avec son père?

Women, Asia, and Canadian Identity

Shoshannah Ganz

Eastern Encounters: Canadian Women's Writing about the East, 1867-1929.

National Taiwan UP 430元, US $22.00

Reviewed by Chuan Xu

Shoshannah Ganz looks into a variety of genres of writing by Canadian women in early Canadian history. These include travel writing by women who were travelling for adventure, trade, or missionary activity; racist writing which echoed some of the mainstream politics and popular racist mentality of the day; fiction set in China, Japan, and India; and the philosophical writing of a Buddhist convert. To bring these texts into dialogue with the contemporary reader, Ganz examines these women's writings through the lens of postcolonial theory.

The book has five chapters. The first two explore travel writing from the perspectives of Canadian women travelling to Japan, China, and India. The third chapter examines Nellie McClung's 1921 autobiographical fiction *Purple Springs*, which exhibits xenophobia and a racist attitude toward the East. Ganz attributes McClung's racist outlook to the general attitude and praxis in political realms, racist accounts of the East and "Eastern philosophy," and racist ideas about the East circulating in Canadian popular fiction in the early twentieth century. The fourth chapter examines the influence of the medieval Japanese *Tale of Genji* on Winnifred Eaton's novels while looking into the complicated socio-cultural issues underlying the adoption of a Japanese pseudonym by Eaton, who was a woman of mixed British and Chinese ancestry. The fifth chapter explores the influence of the Buddhist practice of pilgrimage—and particularly the sixteenth-century Chinese Buddhist pilgrimage tale *A Journey to the West*—on the Eastern writings of L. Adams Beck.

Ganz's study brings to light the historical presence of Asian Canadians and the Asian influence on the making of Canadian nationhood while recovering women's voices in early Canadian literary discourse. Aiming to provide "a clear articulation of the stories of nationhood that includes Asian presence from and before confederation," the book attempts to render a critical postcolonial re-examination and thus reinterpretation of the history and stories that were omitted by founding Canadian scholars. The reason behind this omission was the White-settler culture and nationalism which excluded Asian presence. Ganz's ambitious project is nothing short of "a rewriting of the story of nation to include Asian stories and origins as part of the emergence of Canada as a nation." Ganz's work is part of the recent attempt by writers and scholars to address the "acts of omission and commission" concerning Asian Canadians in early nation-building narratives. As articulated by Arun Mukherjee, "Canadian nationalism, for us non-whites, is a racist ideology that has branded us un-Canadian by acts of omission and commission." Ganz's study highlights the fact that "the influence of Asia on the formation of Canadian identity, culture, and literature has been a part of the story from the very beginnings of the nation."

As far as the travel writing is concerned, Ganz points out that the works were not only popular in their own right; they also exerted a profound influence as sources for later writers who set their works in Asia. Ganz's meticulous research centres around questions such as whether the texts represented a genuine encounter with Asian cultures, which would involve dialogue or personal change, or whether they were merely seeing the other through the colonial gaze. Did these women's reading and writing about the cultures that they had experienced in their travels have any impact on their lives? Did the authors experience any personal change or transformation? Did the writing reflect the colonial position of the dominant culture?

Ganz's study succeeds in establishing the presence of a meaningful but heretofore overlooked discourse in early Canadian literature. As she points out, the discussions of Asian culture, literature, religion, philosophy, and travel, as well as the representations of Japan, China, and India in Canadian women's writing, contributed to the spread of Eastern ideas in the broader Canadian culture. Therefore, these women writers, though not considered persons in Canada until 1929, had a significant impact on Canadian culture and letters. The book has laid down solid groundwork for further research on the subject.

Repetitions of the Past

Greg Rhyno
To Me You Seem Giant. NeWest $19.95

Kara Stanley
Ghost Warning. Caitlin $22.95

Reviewed by Will Best

Greg Rhyno's *To Me You Seem Giant* is an homage to the 1990s-2000s Canadian "indie" music scene. The novel is split into alternating "Side A" (1994-1995) and "Side B" (2004-2005) chapters, each titled after a song from a Canadian indie band of that respective time period—from The Tragically Hip, Hayden, and Sloan to Arcade Fire, Feist, and . . . well, Sloan—with transitions that blend the mood and tenor across breaks like a carefully curated mixtape. Even the cover art is an homage, near identical to the cover of Sloan's album *One Chord to Another*, and the title is a line from the song "Penpals" by (guess who?) Sloan. This remixing of the past and nigh-indistinguishable transitioning from past to present is precisely the issue which plagues the narrator, Pete Curtis: in Side A, he is in high school in Thunder Bay, hating

both and looking forward to leaving with his band. In Side B, he is back at that high school in Thunder Bay (now as a teacher), still hating both, with a mixture of resentful hopelessness for the future and retrospection toward the period (Side A) when their guitarist abandoned them to become a successful musician on his own. Despite the banality of this "idealistic-teenager-turns-disillusioned-adult" trope, Rhyno mixes in enough wit and self-deprecation with the troubles of youth and ennui of adulthood to make the story freshly entertaining, and the encyclopedic list of 1990s-era cultural artefacts provides a warm nostalgia for anyone who grew up in that unique historical moment.

In contrast to Pete's objectively depicted scenes and conversational musings, Louise's first-person narration in Kara Stanley's *Ghost Warning* is deeply immersive in her subjectivity. Heady mixtures of sensory detail—occasionally incorporating visual, auditory, olfactory, and tactile seamlessly in a single paragraph—vivify Stanley's settings in west-central Toronto; and her blending of description and thought (particularly early in the novel) renders the objectivity of narrated space and action indistinguishable from subjective experience.

But, ironically, while the reader is continually drawn into Lou's present surroundings, she herself is traumatically trapped in the past, unable to make sense of her father's sudden death from an indeterminate cardiac failure moments before the opening of the novel. Backdropping the common coming-of-age motifs—self-reliance, sexual awakening, moral development, etc.—Lou takes up her father's final unfinished investigation of immolations and disappearances in her neighbourhood, trying to solve the case *in memoriam patris*. In her various emotionally intense experiences—ranging from ebulliently frivolous to viscerally disturbing—she continually seeks his "ghostly" advice, often using his stack of "interesting fact or quote" notecards like a Tarot deck or speaking to him in dreams, and contextualizes nearly every action through correlated memories of him.

Both novels come to a neat, pat close in similar scenes of faux-Zen self-actualization, of living in the present moment. Pete finds himself at a point of simultaneous past-repetition and future-uncertainty; but rather than brooding anxiously, he gets up onstage for a (possibly) final show to "live in the unmitigated present." Perilously entangled in her investigation, Lou flees to Vancouver Island only to discover that she can't "outrun violence"; and while driving leisurely back east through the Rockies, she stops at a mountain lake for a nonchalant swim, imagining a Zen koan from one of her father's cards: a monk fires an arrow into the sea, and when it lands somewhere in the uniform surface, he says, "Bullseye."

Neither of these plots is particularly novel, following the standard *Bildungsroman* format of a teenager (bleeding into late-twenties for Rhyno) struggling against the harsh realities of society and adulthood (tongue firmly in cheek) and achieving a sort of self-actualization thereby. But each book does have a certain redeeming novelty within that framework. The psychological complexity and emotional intensity of Stanley's writing beautifully depict, and enwrap the reader in, her protagonist's negotiations with trauma; and the 1990s nostalgia stirred up through Rhyno's writing implicates the reader in the very past-fetishizing retrospection his protagonist is guilty of—provided the reader also feels a fondness for the era of radio-recorded mix tapes, artsy movie rental stores, and the inextricable tether of the landline. Both novels thus serve as experimentations with the *Bildungsroman* form, largely following the standard formal constraints but containing enough idiosyncrasy in style and structure to pique critical interest and avoid becoming, themselves, mere repetitions of the past.

Whether You Win or Lose

Spencer Gordon
Cruise Missile Liberals. Nightwood $18.95

Aaron Tucker
Irresponsible Mediums: The Chess Games of Marcel Duchamp. BookThug $18.00

Reviewed by Tim Conley

Spencer Gordon remarks on "the way flat and tepid coke can slake thirst." That line, with its wild variation of vowels banging against the steady alliteration of *t*s and *k*s, is indicative of how good his ear can be in *Cruise Missile Liberals*. But it might be even more indicative of the book's aesthetics of low expectations. As you might guess from the title, there's anger in the book, but as the title perhaps also suggests, that anger is not going to get in the way of harmless fun. Readers may find it difficult to decide whether the book is more fun than it is harmless.

Flat Coke aside, the house cocktail here is bored Epicureanism with at least a shot of suburban self-loathing, sour competing with sweet. On the menu are three kinds of memes: ironic nostalgia (nods to Vincent Price, *Romper Room*, Sega Genesis, Macaulay Culkin), ironic hipness (Shopify, Lena Dunham, MacBook Pro, LinkedIn), and ironic highbrow (Cy Twombly, Mizoguchi, Charlie Parker). There are devotional prayers to Avril Lavigne and Taylor Swift: the former swears "there has been no artifice" and the latter advises, "Put some clothes on, honey— / The bathtub's full of ice." It can't be patronizing if it's not serious, right? Right?

"You're putting in time," begins "Wandering, Returning," one of several of Gordon's poems that meditates on doing nothing in particular and wondering whether it's worth it. The poem ends:

> This
> vision fades: the clock, the seconds, the impossibly
> fat universe, indifferent to the garbage you find
> sad. Mornings. Paint chips. Lamps. Batteries. Your
>
> aging, sorrowful face. There: you should burn down your life.

Rilke, thou shouldst be living at this hour! No, living is not recommended. Gordon's slyly enjambed poems are pretty assured about that. As another one declares, "If you are crying, you are not winning. There is no good living." Play seems to have become disconnected from life.

Marcel Duchamp never thought so. His fascination with chess was as aesthetic an experience as any other he had. *Irresponsible Mediums* is a translation of Duchamp's chess games. Enter the chess notation for any given game into an app called ChessBard, the creation of Aaron Tucker and Jody Miller, and the movement of the pieces determines which words are, well, brought into play. So a 1930 game between Duchamp and Brian Patrick Reilly yields this:

> each sand, the flavour
> and sketch or staged resistance (resistance, resistance)
>
> promotion! machine! basket rebelliously observes basket
>
> single decimal or melody, instrument onto temptation around perfect riverbed
>
> powdered game or instant ancient[.]

The punctuation comes directly from the notation, but the words are of less certain origin. And though "promotion!" and "machine!" are wonderfully improbable ejaculations, a word like "game" seems not just unimaginative but also incongruously appropriate, as do such words (from elsewhere in the book) as "king," "moves," "knight," and "diagonal."

Larger and more varied vocabularies are in evidence in the book's interesting introduction by chess champion and performer Jennifer Shahade, the acknowledgements, and a note on the text. "The poems," this

note explains, "are based on 12 source poems Aaron Tucker wrote," which are evidently not included. The reasons for this omission are likewise withheld, but I can't help thinking of Garry Kasparov's complaint that whereas the computer Deep Blue, his opponent in an infamous 1997 match, was able to study all of his past games, its win-hungry programmers denied Kasparov any access to Deep Blue's playing history. In this game, then, the reader is disadvantaged—so much so, in fact, that I'm not even sure that there's a game for the reader to play.

For Duchamp, a key part of the appeal of chess was the perfect ephemerality, the non-reproducibility of it—as opposed to, say, multiple Mona Lisa postcards or urinals called "fountains." *Irresponsible Mediums* may live up to its title (and isn't the plural of "medium". . . ? Oh, never mind) by redoing what was never meant to be redone. Vladimir Nabokov, who once himself published a book of poems alongside chess problems, noted that such problems demand "the same virtues that characterize all worthwhile art: originality, invention, conciseness, harmony, complexity, and splendid insincerity." The meaning today of the first five probably must be debated, but both of these books can boast the last.

Protect What You Love

Daniel Griffin
Two Roads Home. Freehand $21.95

Karen Hofmann
What is Going to Happen Next. NeWest $19.95

Reviewed by Brenda Johnston

New works by Daniel Griffin and Karen Hofmann, both set in British Columbia, follow characters who desire to protect the things they love, whether old-growth forests or disconnected family members.

Two Roads Home is the first novel by Kingston-born Griffin, who now calls Victoria home, and who previously published a collection of short stories, *Stopping for Strangers*. The novel reimagines the peaceful anti-logging protests of the 1990s, posing the question, "What if the protests weren't peaceful?" Inspired by both the non-violent actions of the Clayoquot Sound protesters and the violent acts against mining operations and the nuclear industry by the Squamish Five/Direct Action in the early 1980s, Griffin presents Earth Action Now, five urban guerrillas who set off a bomb in a logging company compound on Vancouver Island. A problem with the timing mechanism leaves a security guard seriously injured, and a chain of events with far-reaching consequences is set in motion. Sympathetically portrayed, Pete Osborne is idealistic and only twenty-four. He deals with the guilt of having set the bomb as he evades a police manhunt by joining a group of coastal off-the-grid squatters, themselves about to be displaced by clear-cutting. The other activists struggle to decide their next course of action, not knowing what has happened to Pete; alongside them, readers reflect deeply on the line between resistance and terrorism. Concerned only with finding and supporting her son, Pete's protective mother in Ontario also tries to track him down.

There are no easy answers to the knotty questions raised by the threat of greed and

development and society's guilt over its complicity. When Pete puts his arms around a nearby cedar and hears "the wood, the deep groan of it, the tree's voice" while thinking of the battleground the wilderness had become, many readers will likewise yearn for the "peaceful quiet wonder" of the woods. The language is descriptive yet direct and well edited to keep the pace moving and to build the tension in this eco-thriller despite the eventual clichéd arrival of a spirit animal. Will Pete find a way to redeem himself or will he continue to run? Protests and eco-terrorism are not only in the past; Kinder Morgan's Trans Mountain Expansion project and BC Hydro's Site C megaproject threaten lands, rivers, and the Salish Sea that many people do not want to see harmed or altered. *Two Roads Home* is a timely novel.

Butterfly Lake, near Squamish, BC, was logged, but by the end of the 1990s, the forest began to grow back and the salmon and other wildlife returned. *What Is Going to Happen Next* begins twenty years earlier when the five Lund siblings are forced to scatter after their father's death and their mother's hospitalization in a psychiatric facility. The prologue, "Before," is told from the point of view of precocious twelve-year-old Cleo, who futilely tries to demonstrate that the siblings can take care of themselves and continue their half-wild existence in their isolated community. As in Hofmann's first novel, *After Alice*, set in the Okanagan Valley, memory and family life are themes, and *What Is Going to Happen Next* will particularly appeal to readers who enjoy fiction about family relationships.

Twenty years on, the siblings are in their twenties and thirties and living in Metro Vancouver. Raised in foster care, a group home, and an adoptive family, the siblings take steps to reunite, but their pasts are filtered through unreliable memories. Cleo is a suburban mother with two young children who tries her best at parenting despite the dysfunctional model provided by her family in the past. Her older sister, Mandalay, has a place in the city and a career as the co-manager of a café, but she wonders if she would rather be an artist and have children of her own. Younger brother Cliff is a hard-working labourer for a landscaping company, but trouble finds him because he is guileless and trusting. The perspectives of the three siblings, who have lives of disparate circumstances, dominate the first half of the novel as the fates of the two younger brothers and their mother wait to be revealed. That is, what happened next.

The novel's title also looks forward to a time of reconciliation and healing from separation. Readers piece together the siblings' past traumas and the present challenges to find out who has been lost and who will "come back miraculously." However, as for the salmon returning after decades to the streams of the logged land "that have the right flow, the right kind of gravel bed," Butterfly Lake will never be the place it once was for the family. Such moments of lovely description pepper the narrative of these complex characters' lives. As a family saga, the novel is empathetic, compassionate, and expertly paced. The epilogue, "After," suitably looks to the youngest generation.

Both novels are about finding a way home, even if home is different than it once was. Readers are left to ponder what they would be willing to fight to protect.

Contrasting New Worlds

Kate Hennig
The Virgin Trial. Playwrights Canada $17.95

Adam Lazarus and Guillermo Verdecchia
The Art of Building a Bunker. Talonbooks $16.95

Reviewed by Denyse Lynde

Agreeing to review leads one to a previously closed door. Working and living on the east coast of this large country can mean not having the opportunity to see new work produced elsewhere. Reading plays may not

be as rich as seeing them produced, but it is certainly better than not knowing about them. I received in the mail two plays, *The Art of Building a Bunker* by Adam Lazarus and Guillermo Verdecchia, and *The Virgin Trial* by Kate Hennig, the former a one-man play and the latter "an imagining of history." In some ways, the two plays could not be more different from each other.

The Virgin Trial centres on a young Elizabeth I, here "Bess," when she was under investigation for treason. It focuses on three years, 1547 to 1549, but Hennig chooses to move the play forward with a series of flashbacks. We begin with Interview One—January 19, 1549—which is followed by a scene two years earlier with Bess and Thomas ("Tom") Seymour, where he "helps" her with her paper and leaves her a book and a letter. The letter will be one of the many things Lord Protector Edward ("Ted") Seymour will use to prove or disprove her guilt. *The Virgin Trial*, which is played in modern dress, focuses on how Bess must shift and reposition herself as past events are presented to her. Eleanor, a lady of the court, is the chief prosecutor, who has clearly already assumed the princess' guilt. With or without Ted, she tries to implicate her, and it is also Eleanor who stands over the waterboarding of other prisoners.

The Art of Building a Bunker, meanwhile, tells the tale of a "sensitivity training" course that Elvis Goldstein must pass or he will lose his job. He is joined by five others who are instructed by Cam, who leads them through a series of exercises. After each day, Elvis retreats to his bunker. Cam, who seems to want everyone to paddle canoes into lakes, is the one truly comic character. He is surrounded by the other misfits who, like Elvis, are seen as unfit. Elvis has his own obvious problems but his classmates have more.

Each play has its own strengths. In the end, *The Virgin Trial* sustains its momentum, maintaining a strong and focused narration. The reader, despite knowing the history of this period, remains engaged to the end. I can't really say the same for *The Art of Building a Bunker*. While it does have some comic moments, particularly with the sensitivity training exercises, finally one wearies of the often obvious examples. Perhaps the biggest challenge is the main character, Elvis. Why is he in this class and why does he retreat to his bunker? These questions are not really answered in the end, which leaves the reader not confused but annoyed.

The Loosening Universe

Benjamin Hertwig
Slow War. McGill-Queen's UP $16.95

Jim Johnstone
The Chemical Life. Véhicule $17.95

E Martin Nolan
Still Point. Invisible $16.95

Darryl Whetter
Search Box Bed. Palimpsest $18.95

Reviewed by Alex Assaly

In the early 1950s, Marshall McLuhan made his first attempt at assessing the technologies and mass media that characterized "the Electric Age." McLuhan found that the violent and disorienting stimuli of modern life not only turned individuals helpless and exploitable, but also manipulated, shifted, and extended their natural psychic and sensory makeup. As "the Electric Age" has evolved into "the Digital Age," McLuhan's concern for modern life has become increasingly significant. These four collections of poetry look at the ways mind, body, creativity, and spirit function in response to the extremes of modernity. While some of their poems reveal a sensibility more willing to engage, others do their best to find equanimity amid the commotion of technology, hyperstimulation, and violence.

Jim Johnstone's fifth collection of poetry, *The Chemical Life*, is an uncomfortable study of personal struggle and escapism. The opening poem sets the tone. The

speaker, preparing to engage in sexual fantasy before the LCD screen of his computer, opens himself up to further fantasy as he imagines a drug-filled limousine ride that ends in a hedonistic underworld. Drugs, prescription and recreational, provide Johnstone with the most direct way "to feel less." In "Alprazolam," Xanax reduces the poem's speaker to "an aggregate of instinct and force," stifled by "pressure native / to a bomb." Johnstone describes the Xanax trip in short and powerful lines, which, in spite of their clarity, force the reader into a disorienting speed-read. Inevitably, these moments of escape come at a price. In "The Chemical Life," the women "uploaded on touch"—those who "pixelate" on the screen before him—become "bodies dumped / roadside before // they become women again." The reader remains understanding, nevertheless, for Johnstone depicts a world that is dark and unwelcoming. While the speaker of "Venlafaxine" asks, "Are / we not more than the first word / or the last?" the speaker in "Vesica Piscis" suffers from the violence of a cruel and bullying father.

Darryl Whetter's *Search Box Bed* is far less hesitant about embracing the extremes of modern stimulation. Although Whetter's poetry shifts and slides in form, guided more by breath than by tradition, its topic remains focused. He rarely strays from exploring the relationship between poetry and a form of "love" warped by the rampant pornography of "the Digital Age." In his hands, pornography is so totalizing that the Venus of Willendorf becomes Belladonna, Shakespeare the "all holes bard," and yoga "sexercise." Whetter's poems are bearable only when they avoid the self-aggrandizing tone of someone convinced they have single-handedly unveiled the inner workings of the modern mind. In "Loves Kids and Animals," for example, the speaker declares himself a "hacktivist of honesty," apparently exposing the person behind a Facebook profile featuring photos of animals, kids, and outdoor activities to be a lover of "a slow munch and a naked cock / thicker than a drain pipe." Still, Whetter describes the prurient sides of modern life with such heavy-handedness that poems about butt plugs, strap-ons, nipple clamps, and the other accoutrements of fetish sex are barely salvaged by an underlying sense that the pornographic contains a sort of radical politics. In "Take It like a Man.com," the speaker encourages female readers to "peg him," to use "tech," to "turn the tables" on traditional sex roles.

Benjamin Hertwig's debut collection, *Slow War*, represents the psychological, emotional, and sensory experiences of a modern soldier at various stages in his life and service. In the series of poems that opens the collection, a number of violent experiences—an altercation between two boys, an animal that must be killed after it is hit by a car, a hunting trip that ends with the speaker falling through the ice—are figured as moments of origination leading to the speaker's decision to join the Canadian Armed Forces. When he reaches the theatre of war, the speaker analyzes his surroundings with intense and wide-eyed attention: "fireflare in the distance. full moon traces a slow parabola across the roof like running a finger through tabletop salt." The clarity and naturalness of his lines, however, do not always stand up to the most extreme experiences of war. In "First Shot," for example, lines disintegrate into fragments:

> a yellow taxi follows so
> close you can see eyewhite
> as he talks
> on the phone.
> hands wave, bites into an apple,
> not looking like
> a killer,
> your order is to shoot.

The speaker's return to Canada does little to put an end to the trauma. The heavy "baggage of war"—memories and a preoccupation with mortality—shrouds not

only his mind, but also his relationships and his search for healing. At every stage of the soldier-speaker's experience, Hertwig treats his subject with incredible sensitivity and nuance, making *Slow War* one of those rare debuts that reads as though it issued from the maturest of poetic minds.

E Martin Nolan's *Still Point* is another debut of remarkable talent. Over the course of five sections, Nolan takes his readers to New Orleans, Detroit, and Toronto, as each city suffers from a different form of crisis. Whereas Johnstone's, Whetter's, and Hertwig's speakers are noticeably shaped by their contact with violent stimuli, Nolan's speaker is more detached and *flâneur*-like. In New Orleans, his speaker notices the scars that both Hurricane Katrina and the BP oil spill have left on the city's landscape. In Detroit, urban decay spans "a ripped poster" that adorns a "window's plywood patch," bark beetles destroying the city's elm trees, and the inner city being pushed into the suburbs. One of the most memorable poems in *Still Point* is set in Toronto, where urban sprawl marks the landscape enough to entirely shift humanity's relationship to nature:

> I've seen more sunsets looking east
> than I have looking west.
>
> Both horizons are blocked from me
> in my second-floor apartment.
>
> Eastward, glass towers reflect
> just one shade of western sky.

Behind the speaker's near-objective observations seems to be a desire to establish a "still point" in the rapidly turning world that is modern life. For Nolan, such still points are rare, but not non-existent. Music periodically appears as such a point of stability, possessing a spirit opposed to modernity and the "oil tankers" that are nothing more than "riverboats without brass bands, / their drums filled with rhythmless crude." Where "rhythm" provides respite for the speaker of the collection, it is in the rhythmic lines of Nolan's verse that readers may find their own still points in this ever-loosening universe.

Mountain Community, Mountain Adventure

Sean Arthur Joyce
Mountain Blues. NeWest $19.95

Gisèle Villeneuve
Rising Abruptly: Stories. U of Alberta P $24.95

Reviewed by Angie Abdou

Sean Arthur Joyce's *Mountain Blues* and Gisèle Villeneuve's *Rising Abruptly* bring to life a region under-represented in Canadian literature: the mountainous terrain and small communities of southern Alberta and the southern Interior of BC. The similarity of the two offerings ends there. Where Villeneuve's work leans toward the poetic and abstract, Joyce's narrative remains firmly planted in social realism. *Rising Abruptly* examines intimate relationships, where *Mountain Blues* seems more interested in civic responsibilities. Villeneuve focuses on adventure and Joyce on politics. Together, the two books deliver a well-rounded portrait of life in the Canadian mountains.

Mountain Blues is a first-person narrative from the perspective of Roy Breen, a Vancouver journalist who moves to the West Kootenay in the midst of a controversy over hospital cutbacks. The novel follows a strictly chronological timeline and a traditional narrative arc. The conflict hinges on whether the townsfolk can save their emergency room. All the key players of a typical Kootenay community make an appearance: the loggers, the hippies, the miners, and the draft dodgers (they prefer "draft resisters"). Joyce's fictional Eldorado is a believable—even lovable—town that manages to be "backwoods but not backwards." *Mountain Blues* captures the Kootenay sensibility well, sometimes too well. Readers who have sat

through interminable save-the-hospital meetings in their own mountain communities might not be keen to relive those meetings on the page.

Despite Breen's occasionally sexist commentary and his awkward reflections on his "old pocket rocket," the author clearly intends him as one of the good guys. Breen aligns himself with the underdog, fighting for the hospital. Readers who identify with this altruistic quest will be rewarded. *Mountain Blues* feels written for the screen, arriving at the emotionally satisfying ending moviegoers have come to expect: "It's a party, dude. We saved our emergency ward!"

The sensibilities of *Rising Abruptly* are more literary, the stories less prone to firm conclusions and more likely to engage in philosophical exploration of unresolvable issues. The main issue that these seven stories explore is: why do people climb? What responsibility do daredevils have to the loved ones they leave behind? Despite the emphasis on extreme sport, the stories tend toward the cerebral rather than the physical, sometimes even becoming surprisingly static as characters contemplate the reasons for adventure rather than engaging in it. The brother in the first story is one reader-surrogate, attempting to decode his (dead) sister's attraction to the mountain. Content to get his adventure from a book, he remains curious about the mindset of a hard-core climber—particularly that of his sister, who viewed a climb as a one-night stand with the mountain. His reflection on passion and fear establishes the thematic preoccupations of the collection. The first story's lens—a narrator trying to understand an absent relative's mountain obsession—also plays itself out with variation in the stories that follow. Villeneuve's distinctive voice, poetic style, and intimate narration make *Rising Abruptly* an important addition to the bookshelves of readers who love the mountains.

Indigenous Words Matter

Daniel Heath Justice
Why Indigenous Literatures Matter.
Wilfrid Laurier UP $19.99

Gregory Younging
Elements of Indigenous Style: A Guide for Writing by and about Indigenous Peoples.
Brush Education $19.95

Reviewed by Aubrey Jean Hanson

The field of Indigenous literary studies has received two key contributions this year from two prominent authors. Both of these texts offer timely and essential considerations for writers, scholars, publishers, community members, educators, and all those who want to engage well with Indigenous literary work. These two titles were launched to an audience attending the inaugural Indigenous Voices Awards Gala in Regina this past spring, and are both being widely received within Indigenous literary communities.

Gregory Younging's *Elements of Indigenous Style* offers practical and nuanced considerations for writers, publishers, and educators across disciplines. I have already referred colleagues to this book for its careful discussion of language and explanations of terminology. By outlining nearly two dozen guiding principles for Indigenous style, this book offers clear suggestions for engaging respectfully with Indigenous people, concepts, and texts. These principles could be a strong foundation for those beginning to learn about Indigenous writing as well as a valuable go-to resource for those working regularly in Indigenous topics. Principles range in scope from the necessity of capitalization (which indeed warrants much discussion) to the complexity of Indigenous identities. I was impressed by the inclusion of "Principle 9: The Role of Relationship and Trust," which "recognizes the essential role of relationship and trust in producing

works with authentic Indigenous content, and the source of relationship and trust in truthfulness, honesty, mindfulness about community impacts, and continuity with history and heritage." While Younging's guide offers clarity, it does not do so at the expense of complexity.

Particularly effective are the case studies of publishing projects, which are interspersed with Younging's guiding principles. These real-world scenarios embed the principles within meaningful contexts, demonstrating the significance of stylistic choices and editorial approaches. Readers can gain greater understanding by attending to the care and consideration in these stories. The guide presents its principles in depth in a handful of well-organized chapters, but also sums up key information in a useful set of appendices. Among them is a sample academic paper: it might have been beneficial to provide a more detailed explanation of this paper's inclusion, if only so that readers might benefit more deeply from the stylistic and scholarly example it sets out. Younging points to the potential for *Elements of Indigenous Style* to be developed further or refined across subsequent editions: it is easy to imagine this book taking on that kind of sustained role within the field.

With a very different focus, Daniel Heath Justice's *Why Indigenous Literatures Matter* tackles the significant task of illuminating the heart of Indigenous literary engagement, articulating the significance of the literary arts to Indigenous peoples. While politically impactful and theoretically cogent, Justice's book is simultaneously tender and personal. Within the first few pages and amid an introductory discussion of key terms, Justice lays out family histories that nuance difficult Indigenous-settler relationships, and describes his own grappling with histories and positionality: "Indigeneity," he writes, "doesn't free me from being implicated in the violent histories of colonialism." The book speaks truth to colonial relationships while respecting complexity: for instance, while "profound and lasting alliances of kinship, love, and fierce friendship" may have emerged between settler and Indigenous people, it is necessary to recognize that "Indigenous peoples lost lives, lands, and livelihoods as a result of non-Indigenous appropriations of lands and territories." Justice addresses issues with sensitivity but also with an urgent sense of responsibility to Indigenous peoples.

Why Indigenous Literatures Matter is organized around four guiding questions: "How do we learn to be human?"; "How do we behave as good relatives?"; "How do we become good ancestors?"; and "How do we learn to live together?" Having set out essential context and starting points in his introduction, Justice pursues these questions through four beautifully composed chapters. Each consists of smoothly interwoven personal reflections, critical considerations, and textual analyses. In selecting literary works to examine, Justice makes a particular effort to attend to underrepresented or underappreciated texts and authors. For instance, he foregrounds texts by queer writers and by women, and, even when responding to better-known authors, he speaks to their lesser-known texts. I learned a great deal from reading this book. Along those lines, it includes as an appendix Justice's 2016 Twitter project #HonouringIndigenousWriters, which highlights the abundance of global Indigenous writings. While reading this book cover to cover, I particularly noted its remarkable bibliographic essay (already recommended to students for rethinking the conventional literature review), which incites "mindful and ethical consideration of our citational practices in academia" and constitutes "not . . . merely a list of sources, but a conversation about the embraided influences of words, ideas, and voices on the topics at hand." Even the index is remarkable: my favourite entry is that for

Dolly Parton, catalogued as "the true and rightful Queen."

I found the book's style as remarkable as its content. Justice writes in a compelling voice that is simultaneously gentle, smooth, personable, powerful, and hard-hitting. This stylistic choice resonates effectively with the focus of the book and its core questions: "This is a book about stories, and some of the ways they matter. It's about the many kinds of stories Indigenous peoples tell, and the stories others tell about us. It's about how these diverse stories can strengthen, wound, or utterly erase our humanity and connections." The use of a personal yet critical voice connects to the choice of material for examination: for instance, refusing to take shelter behind abstract issues, Justice illuminates stories of rupture by laying bare deeply personal family and tribal histories. Nor does he shy away from confronting difficult truths, such as anti-Blackness in Indigenous scholarship, experiences of ruptured kinship, personal affinities felt with distorted representations of Indigeneity, and so on.

While owning his feelings and experiences, Justice comes out swinging against the systems that exacerbate and perpetuate the misrepresentation and erasure of Indigenous stories—but not by positing himself as a pure critical voice above the messiness of mutually complex relationships. Through this fertile approach to his questions, Justice opens up space for collective engagement around the significance of Indigenous literatures to Indigenous peoples. Indigenous literatures

> reflect the truths of our survival and our own special beauty in the world to which we belong. They don't hide the traumas or the shadows; they don't make everything neat and tidy . . . They remind us that we're the inheritors of heavy, painful legacies, but also of hope and possibility, of a responsibility to make the world better for those yet to come.

By his conclusion, Justice has powerfully drawn out his contention that "Indigenous literatures matter because *Indigenous peoples matter*." If I want something more from these two books, it is simply that: more of these critical, essential considerations.

Navigating Disconnection

Claire Kelly
Maunder. Palimpsest $18.95

Lisa Martin
Believing is not the same as Being Saved.
U of Alberta P $19.95

W. H. New
Neighbours. Oolichan $17.95

David Zieroth
the bridge from day to night. Harbour $18.95

Reviewed by Emily Wall

In new books from Claire Kelly, David Zieroth, Lisa Martin, and W. H. New, poems offer us maps that are packed, border to border, with objects. All four poets use object listing as a way of trying to describe this chaotic country of life: living in the city, finding a neighbourhood, and searching for our stories. Throughout each book, we see a dislocation of self, and a longing to be located on firm ground.

In *Maunder*, Claire Kelly's speaker gives us a landscape of disparate images, and then tries to find footing in the chaos. As we move through this landscape of disconnection, we find she's speaking not only to herself, but to us as well, and often in the imperative voice. This is a book of advice, a book of navigation: "Pretend your partner is a stable / influence," she offers in "Promenade," and later in the same poem: "keep the horizon level." Or more simply: "Let us live like Labs do. Dig / in the garden for the sake of digging" (from "Honing in the Too-Early Morning"). The honesty in this book is refreshing, but the poems don't quite do more than hold up a mirror in one hand, and an unhopeful road map in the other.

David Zieroth's *the bridge from day to night* also walks through a landscape of discarded images. He juxtaposes a rush of city images, but then most of the poems take a refreshing turn and provide us one image from the natural world that offers the unspoken yearning of our days: "their steel bellies have brought / the warm air of the ocean / from some island we can smell" (from "maritime clouds"). Like Kelly, Zieroth gives us a landscape of disconnection through ordinary objects, but he also gives us sensual memory paths. He names our longing for something more holy, as in "man at the bus stop": "counting items on the ground / butts, bags, stones / part of a wing." By naming that longing, he begins to search for specific roads through the chaos.

Believing is not the same as Being Saved tries to navigate the landscapes of love, loss, and spiritual belief. Lisa Martin's stories are of a father dying one summer, of a girl who fell hard and the boy who caught her too late, of Christ dying on the cross. Like the other poets reviewed here, she maps her stories with objects: a Tupperware bowl, bare feet, a green pool. While her images are ordinary, they are less populous than Kelly's and Zieroth's, which focuses our attention on them even more. We want to think *Tupperware* instead of *cancer.* Martin uses images like "ball diamonds of hammered dust" (from "One thing") and "light on the surface of that rock" (in the title poem "Believing is not the same as Being Saved") to help us look at the painful stories at the core of this map. Her best poems are the ones that help us look anyway. In other poems, though, we have only the chaos of emotional abstraction ("grief," "faith," "love") and its objects: silver-bright salmon, a glass vase, blue veins, a dirty grey feather. In the poems where she looks away from story, we get a little lost in the landscape of emotion.

W. H. New's *Neighbours* is the strongest of the four collections. He embraces the local, and embraces the story, in nearly every poem. He locates us literally in a neighbourhood, in a yard, across a fence. In doing that, he locates us emotionally in who we are. In "Appleseed," we live next to the old man who knows about leaves and aphids, and in narrowing to the neighbourhood, berry patch, leaf, or aphid, New positions us in the chaos. He says "we live on fragments" in the poem "Stream bed," acknowledging the disconnection of contemporary society and its constant shifting, and yet he acknowledges, too, our need to hold still as "our fixed place travels / centimetres every year." These are poems of yearning: for choosing the one right place to live, and in doing that, recognizing it is a way of choosing who we are. The poems are open, enticing, and laced with worry, but not with despair: "All you want is an ordinary place, safe enough / you can care about others / and vent at what you can't control."

All four poets use image well and with intention. Kelly spreads out the map of our chaos and lets us get lost in it, Zieroth tries to help us steer through it by finding small patterns, Martin offers us the rich images of specific stories, and New goes further by reminding us to name what's closest to us, helping us navigate the bang and clutter of contemporary Canadian life.

Recollecting Heritage

Annette Lapointe
You Are Not Needed Now. Anvil $20.00

Phyllis Rudin
My True and Complete Adventures as a Wannabe Voyageur. NeWest $19.95

Reviewed by Claire Omhovère

My True and Complete Adventures as a Wannabe Voyageur is told in the feisty voice of a young Montreal Jew, Benjamin Gabai, who wishes he had been born as a French-Canadian voyageur in the heyday of the fur trade three centuries earlier. He gets a chance to entertain audiences with tales of

paddling and portages after his mother's influence lands him a job in the fur-trade museum opened, in the basement of a downtown Montreal department store, in commemoration of the heroic past of the Hudson's Bay Company. Benjie's adventures end abruptly when the store's new American owners decide to shut down the museum and sell its priceless collection to private collectors.

The title of the novel illustrates the humorous blend Phyllis Rudin strives to achieve between a jocular eighteenth-century diction and a form of *skaz* peppered with teenage catchphrases and Yiddish idioms. The challenge is considerable. And, unfortunately, the novel does not quite measure up to it. The narrator's voice struggles to maintain a unity of tone as the plot ramifies to include flashbacks on the death of Benjie's father and the young man's subsequent friendship with a fur-trade collector who loses his wife to a degenerative disease. His mother's voice intrudes so often into Benjie's thoughts that her own story of emotional recovery tends to divert attention from her son's attempts to connect with an imaginary line of ancestors. As the plot inches toward the end—an outing in an "authentic" canoe stolen from the HBC collection—the main story regains centre stage and culminates in a scene reminiscent of Douglas LePan's 1948 poem "Coureurs de bois." When the ghosts of voyageurs step out from the past and beckon to Benjie to come and join them, the novel's light tone yields to a rather ponderous defence of the integrity of Canada's cultural memory in an age when it is feared that many of its emblems—the Bay is definitely one of them—will not endure in the face of neoliberal greed.

Annette Lapointe's collection *You Are Not Needed Now* is her third book to date. Like Rowan Friesen from her debut novel, *Stolen*, who filled Saskatchewan granaries with stuff stolen from small, rundown prairie towns, the narrators of these eleven short stories are obsessed with storage—finding appropriate containers for keeping the remains of their lives, but also people to entrust with what has been preserved. Storing and storying, retention and transmission—these are the contrary impulses Lapointe's narrators strive to reconcile in startlingly unusual ways. There is Nicole who, while cleaning Mrs. Gamble's place, chances upon the metal box in which the elderly lady has been keeping the desiccated heart of her long-dead daughter. "You found my heart," blurts out Mrs. Gamble in an assertion that sounds like a plea for acquiescence. And indeed Nicole will surprise herself (and the reader too) with the use she will have for the remnants of Mrs. Gamble's dear ones when the time comes to give birth to her own child.

In another story, the mother collects teeth from her days as a dental assistant in Cache Creek, BC. The place name harks back to the fur-trade era and the past custom of hiding supplies from potential predators so that trappers would be able to collect them later. Hoarding is a precaution Lapointe's characters simply cannot avoid, especially the most vulnerable among them, who keep moving across the western provinces in search of employment and shelter, while others survive on "shop-slave wages" and wrestle with more insidious, emotional forms of destitution. Lapointe's handling of sparseness and compression, the two cardinal rules of the short story, makes for a subtle compassion that renders admonishment superfluous, but calls for full attention on the part of her reader, as with this first sentence—"Erin knows about serenity because she had a boyfriend for a while who was in AA"—and the abundance of revelations it suggests.

Voyage au cœur de la nostalgie

Stéphane Ledien
Des trains y passent encore. Lévesque 22,00 $

France Boisvert
Professeur de paragraphe. Lévesque 25,00 $

Compte rendu par Magali Blanc

Qui ne s'adonne à de douces rêveries des temps anciens quand l'occasion se présente? La remontée des souvenirs, le flottement des pensées et la contemplation des sentiments quelquefois nostalgiques transportent le rêveur vers une contrée bien gardée et protégée : le sanctuaire du Passé. Écrire sur le passé, c'est explorer différentes potentialités, différents récits même, d'une réalité objective. Seules les histoires de chaque individu donneront une nouvelle coloration à cette réalité unique et terne. Ainsi, non seulement les mots décrivent les situations dans lesquelles les personnages prennent vie, mais ils permettent également de les voir, de les observer de plus près, comme si nous étions face à un tableau; là, devant, debout, à contempler la peinture qui se dévoile devant nous.

Dans *Des trains y passent encore*, Stéphane Ledien nous invite à prendre place à bord du train roulant sur le Tracel de Cap-Rouge et nous fait voyager à travers les différents récits et anecdotes entendus sur cette structure de fer. Nous traversons les contrées de la poésie, du récit, du fait divers pour aller rejoindre le pays du flux de conscience, de la focalisation interne de l'homme, du chien, voire du pont lui-même. Les douze nouvelles voyagent également à travers le temps, par exemple avec l'histoire de l'apparition du pont qui se dessine dans le ciel aux yeux de trois générations différentes : celle des tribus des Premières Nations, d'un brigand et enfin du constructeur du pont. Il y a aussi l'histoire de deux robots, à des années-lumière de notre civilisation, qui retrouvent un morceau du Tracel et qui le décrivent comme un vestige des « Hommes Modernes ». Les nouvelles écrites par Ledien sont un bel hommage à cet édifice transformé en convoyeur d'histoires et de récits, le temps d'une lecture.

De l'autre côté du pont, nous attend *Professeur de paragraphe,* roman de France Boisvert, écrivaine qui enseigne la langue et la littérature françaises au niveau collégial. L'intrigue est centrée sur le personnage de Maurice Lecamp, professeur de littérature au Cégep, dépassé par la nouvelle génération Y (les fameux « Millennials ») et bouleversé par la réforme de l'orthographe. Mais cela ne l'empêche pas d'enseigner de manière ludique les grands textes de la littérature du XVII^{e} siècle en donnant des noms de marquis.e, baron.ne ou duc.hesse aux étudiants. De temps en temps il divague et donne un cours d'histoire plus que de littérature, mais où est le mal? En réalité, ces divagations sont le fil conducteur du récit dont le point de focalisation est Maurice Lecamp qui essaie, bon gré mal gré, de gérer une vie tourmentée par les récents changements sociétaux, technologiques, académiques et relationnels. Il voit sa vie défiler et prendre une tournure différente de ce qu'il avait envisagé : sa femme devient son ennemie puisqu'elle travaille sur la réécriture du dictionnaire pour y inclure les nouvelles règles de l'orthographe française et il la soupçonne de l'avoir trompé, car il découvre qu'il a la syphilis. Plus tard, il sera accusé d'attouchements par une ancienne étudiante : l'enquête sera rapidement classée et il sera condamné à des travaux communautaires. Même sa voiture lui joue des tours et exige des réparations de plus en plus fréquentes. En somme, Maurice Lecamp est entouré de figures féminines qui l'accusent, le déçoivent, le trompent ou l'abandonnent. Plusieurs thèmes sont abordés dans ce roman, mais de manière très ponctuelle, sans jugement aucun. Il semblerait que Boisvert ait décidé de montrer un pan de la vie d'un professeur

de littérature française au Cégep dans son objectivité la plus totale.

Tout comme chez Stéphane Ledien, le récit reflète majoritairement le flux de conscience de Lecamp pour lequel il est parfois difficile de discerner si les paroles ont été intériorisées ou extériorisées. Le héros lui-même se pose parfois la question. Le lecteur est ainsi amené à voyager à travers les pensées troublées d'un homme dont la vie lui échappe. Seule la littérature reste sa constante, son amie, sa confidente de toujours.

Stéphane Ledien et France Boisvert décrivent un univers nostalgique d'un temps révolu, qu'il soit architectural ou langagier. Le voyage au cœur des souvenirs, des histoires, voire des réflexions, nous interroge sur ce qui a été, ce qui est et ce qui sera. Quel genre d'empreinte l'Homme veut-il laisser de son passage sur Terre? Que transmettra-t-il aux générations futures et par quel moyen linguiste le fera-t-il? En somme, le lecteur aura le plaisir de découvrir des hommages à la langue de Molière ainsi qu'au Tracel de Cap-Rouge.

(Im)possible Redress

Julia Lin
Shadows of the Crimson Sun: One Man's Life in Manchuria, Taiwan, and North America.
Mawenzi $24.95

Lisa Yoneyama
Cold War Ruins: Transpacific Critique of American Justice and Japanese War Crimes.
Duke UP US $25.95

Reviewed by Guy Beauregard

In *Cold War Ruins*, Lisa Yoneyama investigates what she identifies as "post-1990s redress efforts" comprising varied calls for historical justice spanning Asia, the Pacific Islands, and North America following the collapse of the Japanese empire in 1945. In exposing the inadequacy of the forms of transitional justice administered immediately after the end of World War II, such redress efforts have, as her study observes, been indelibly marked by belatedness and feelings of indignation, leading her to ask: "Why so late? Why after almost half a century? Why failure?"

In posing such questions, *Cold War Ruins* focuses upon what Yoneyama calls "the predicament of transitional justice" both within and potentially beyond a US-led Cold War frame that has attempted to contain and manage decolonization efforts in Asia and the Pacific. This focus leads Yoneyama to bring together two apparently distinct yet closely related critical projects: questioning the politics of Cold War knowledge production, particularly concerning sites in Asia and the Pacific, *and* remaining attentive to the transnational production of "insurgent memories, counterknowledges, and inauthentic identities that have been regimented by the discourse and institutions centering on nation-states." By developing this two-pronged approach, *Cold War Ruins* makes a brilliant contribution to current debates over justice, historical violence, and the (im)possibility of redress.

The breadth of Yoneyama's critical project is bolstered by illuminating discussions of specific histories and sites. In individual chapters, she addresses ongoing struggles over US military bases in Okinawa, read through unexpected forms of "catachrony" (glossed as "temporal discombobulation") that can help link US military hegemony after 1945 to the Japanese colonial annexation of the Ryukyu Kingdom as "Okinawa prefecture" in 1879; the discursive construction of "Japanese women" in the US-led occupation of mainland Japan following the end of World War II, analyzed through media representations of "normative Cold War subject[s] of liberation"; the modalities of historical revisionism following the establishment of the Japan Society for History Textbook Reform in 1996, revisionism read "as a historically structured discourse" tethered to Japan's

post-World War II position as the "model minority nation" as seen by the US; the turn to legal and juridical means in the US to address Japanese war crimes, an uneven and ambivalent process through which "Asian/American immigrant-citizens are emerging as subjects of redress"; and the mid-1990s controversy over the *Enola Gay* display at the Smithsonian National Air and Space Museum, marking a dispute over "how, with what, and where to commemorate the nation's past war." In each case, Yoneyama's study urges us to ask what "historical justice" would look like. How—if at all—could forms of Cold War knowledge be undone?

Julia Lin's *Shadows of the Crimson Sun* opens additional space to consider such questions through an account of what its subtitle calls "one man's life in Manchuria, Taiwan, and North America." The man in question eventually came to be known as Charles Yang—his remarkable story is narrated by Lin in this "told to" text. His life includes time spent in the Japanese puppet state of Manchukuo, Chinese Nationalist-ruled Taiwan, the US, and Canada, which is presented as his "final destination." In these varied settler-colonial sites, Yang assumes different identities: Akihisa Takayama, Masaaki Takayama, 楊正昭, Yang Cheng-Chao, C-C Yang, Charles Yang. How might this man's story be told? Along with its compact narrative, Lin's text provides maps, photographs, a list of works cited, notes, and multilingual lists of places and peoples referred to in Yang's story. In so doing, Lin brings together many of the strengths, and some of the limitations, of *Miah* (2012), Lin's debut collection of short stories, which generatively cut across seemingly scattered sites but also at times laboured to explain histories to readers presumed to be unfamiliar with them.

At its best, *Shadows of the Crimson Sun* sympathetically represents the resilience of a man living across empires and displacements and somehow, despite enormous challenges, managing to thrive. From the abrupt end of the Japanese settler-colonial project in Manchuria (depicted as a "frontier land" where the protagonist's family had migrated from Taiwan as "pioneers"), to the "[m]onths of terror" following the Soviet invasion of Manchuria, to the chaos of the Chinese civil war, to state-directed disappearances in the ensuing White Terror period in Taiwan, Lin's text moves from key moments of ideological capture under Japanese colonial rule to its unsettling aftermaths. Lin writes:

> After fifty years of being Japanese citizens, the Taiwanese had suddenly found themselves under Chinese rule. . . . Akihisa knew he was now supposedly Chinese but he felt no affinity with the Chinese students at school. His feeling of alienation surfaced each time he struggled to speak Mandarin.

Following his migration to North America, different ideological pressures and apparent forms of closure come to the fore, with the protagonist developing political consciousness as a Taiwan independence activist and eventually immigrating to Canada in 1964. Through his participation in—and willingness to speak at—a 1980 demonstration in Seattle protesting Chinese Nationalist rule in Taiwan, Lin contends that "[h]is four-decade search for belonging was over." Canada, through its "largely successful multiculturalism policy," seemed "for the most part . . . to be able to accommodate differences peacefully," even as the text foregrounds how forces of capitalism and globalization continue to reshape Vancouver's built environment and its communities.

In "Possibilities of Asian/Canadian Transnationality" (published in *Canadian Literature* 227), Yoneyama writes:

> [i]f 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.

Shadows of a Crimson Sun is an exemplary textual site for such critically intersecting work, but for its potential to be "unleash[ed]" (as called for in the powerful epilogue of *Cold War Ruins*), its readers must push beyond depictions of Canada as another "model minority nation" to instead relearn how, as a settler-colonial space, it continues to be tied in intimate ways to what Yoneyama calls "global colonial constellations."

First Lives

Doris Jeanne MacKinnon
Metis Pioneers: Marie Rose Delorme Smith and Isabella Clark Hardisty Lougheed.
U of Alberta P $45.00

Cecilia Morgan
Travellers through Empire: Indigenous Voyages from Early Canada. McGill-Queen's UP $39.95

Reviewed by Margery Fee

Tracking the travels of Indigenous people to Europe is a busy area of academic research: Kate Flint's *The Transatlantic Indian* (2008), Kate Fullagar's *The Savage Visit* (2012), Jace Weaver's *The Red Atlantic* (2014), and Coll Thrush's *Indigenous London* (2016) all arrived on the scene before Cecilia Morgan's *Travellers through Empire*. Morgan focuses on a relatively small group of well-educated men and fewer women from early Canada whose status and literacy mean that records remain of their movements. Despite the emphasis on travel, Morgan produces insightful analyses of the rhetorical self-fashioning of these travellers. Thus the book will be of interest not only to historians, but also to literary and performance studies scholars. Self-fashioning is also a focus of Doris Jeanne MacKinnon's *Metis Pioneers*, as she details the lives of two Métis women born in 1861, during the time when the fur-trade culture into which they both were born transitioned into a new settler-colonial economy. The books overlap to some extent: both spend time on Métis fur-trade children who were sent abroad for education.

Morgan's first chapter deals with John Norton, the dashing Scottish-born son of a Scottish mother and a Cherokee man captured by the British as a child. Morgan does not deal at length with Norton's exceptional leadership in the War of 1812, recorded in his journal, instead bringing to the fore less well-known parts of his life, including his duel over an insult to his young wife, and his subsequent estrangement from her and his adopted community, Six Nations Grand River. A chapter on Anishinaabeg travellers to Britain between 1830 and 1860 discusses Peter Jones, Peter Jacobs, John Sunday, Catherine Sutton, and George Copway. "Intimate Entanglements" examines the marriages of Eliza Jones, Elizabeth Howell Copway, and Frances Kirby Brant-Sero, and the travels "home" to England of mixed-race children of the fur trade, including the daughters of Ann Hodgson, a Cree-Scottish woman, and HBC chief factor John Davis. One of these daughters, Matilda, set up a school for young ladies in Red River, and paid to educate some of her nephews at schools in England. The network of HBC traders and wives produced correspondence that Morgan has mined to discover the ordinary lives of Métis children educated abroad. The letters of Letitia Hargrave, the Scottish wife of trader James Hargrave, are a mine of gossipy information about the HBC network, including detailed accounts, half-disapproving and half-envious, of the ostentatious wardrobe of a fur-trade daughter, Jane Ross. What future historians will do without such troves remains to be seen: where will our emails have gone?

MacKinnon's book pays detailed attention to two women, Marie Rose Delorme Smith (1861-1960) and Isabella Clark Hardisty Lougheed (1861-1936), whose lives intersected with many others in the fur trade. The book aims to explain how

two Métis women fashioned themselves as respectable homesteading pioneers, transforming a birth identity that was increasingly scorned as incoming settlers swamped more inclusive fur-trade sensibilities after the Riel Resistance in 1885. MacKinnon published *The Identities of Marie Rose Delorme Smith* in 2012. However, this book situates Smith's life in a broader context that tackles the ever-more vexed issue of Métis identity; Smith came from a free-trading, French-speaking Métis family of some means. Nonetheless, her mother forced her, at sixteen, into marriage with a hard-drinking older white trader, Charlie Smith, with whom she had seventeen children. A widow for forty-six years, she ended up supporting herself on their ranch in Pincher Creek, Alberta.

Lougheed was born into a relatively privileged English-speaking Hudson's Bay Company family. Lougheed's father eventually became an HBC chief factor for the Mackenzie district, and she married James Alexander Lougheed, a lawyer who became a senator in 1889 at age thirty-five. Through marriage, he gained a connection to Richard Hardisty, Isabella's uncle, described in James Lougheed's *Dictionary of Canadian Biography* entry as "the richest man in the North-west Territories," and to Donald Alexander Smith, her uncle by marriage, described in the same entry as soon to become "the richest man in Canada." (Genealogical charts might have clarified some of these family relationships.) After her husband died in 1925, Lougheed lived in Beaulieu, their family mansion in Calgary, supported by the province. For Marie Smith, self-fashioning took the form of writing; she produced an array of manuscripts as well as publishing some articles in the *Canadian Cattleman*. Lougheed arranged her self-fashioning differently, encouraging interviews and news coverage of her life. MacKinnon's text occasionally rambles or repeats and at times falls into (forgivable) speculation of the "of course we can't know . . . but undoubtedly" type. MacKinnon definitely should lobby to enter these women's lives into the *Dictionary of National Biography*.

In Her Element

Daphne Marlatt; Susan Holbrook, ed.
Intertidal: The Collected Earlier Poems, 1968-2008.
Talonbooks $29.95

Reviewed by Tanis MacDonald

There's something great about hefting the firm weighted mass of *Intertidal*, and readers will get a second happy jolt from the subtitle, because this nearly six-hundred-page volume of Daphne Marlatt's poems collects only her earlier work. The way this tome takes up space on a shelf practically shouts "slow down and read," and it flies in the face of thinking of a poet's output as "slight"—to the detriment of our foremothers who wrote their hearts out. This material history of feminist poetry in Canada as practised by Marlatt since the early 1960s earns every word of its twenty-two sections covering four decades of Marlatt's work. Reading *Intertidal* offers evidence of what can be repurposed and re-seen, of what can be, in Marlatt's words, not the wreckage of history but poetry's conscious recuperation via challenge of location and form: to be "in her element in other words. blurring the boundary."

Susan Holbrook's introduction to *Intertidal* reminds us that the fight for women's language is a material fight. Pulling together the "textual complications [that] comprised the very compositional features that distinguish and energize Marlatt's work," Holbrook has curated not only Marlatt's poems but also her prolific poetic practice, including her invention of stanzagraphs and other methods devised to walk the tightrope between poetry and prose. Holbrook's introduction outlines Marlatt's

peripatetic biography and influences while sharing the principles with which she (Holbrook) organized this volume of collected poems, the first of two. These principles underscore Marlatt's career-long interest in the exploration of edge-places and the liminality of belonging.

An essay by Marlatt, "Further Thoughts," offers her understanding of her poems as musical scores and her interest in revising, revisiting, and otherwise working with texts that have already seen publication, as she did when she rewrote 1972's *Vancouver Poems* to become the reconfigured and reconsidered 2013 volume *Liquidities: Vancouver Poems Then and Now*. Marlatt's dedication to reconsidering her earlier work is more than an exercise in boundary-blurring; it is also an archive of salvaging as a feminist act and an entirely welcome approach to work of such breadth and ambition. Marlatt's negotiations with linguistics, feminism, and second-wave modernism via the 1963 Poetry Conference at UBC mixes in *Intertidal* with a sampling of the work of some of the visual artists with whom she has collaborated, including Frances Hunter's drawings in 2008's *Between Brush Strokes*, Marlatt's JackPine Press chapbook about the life and work of Okanagan artist Sveva Caetani, reproduced in facsimile in this volume.

The poems themselves—their linguistic play, their formal demands, their documentary recuperation and refusal—make up the bulk of this text. Within the poems, the trope of exploring where land and water meet becomes something more than an elemental metaphor or a poetic one. Marlatt's poems are always watchful, and she is careful to note the way that poetry telescopes the self, or as Marlatt writes in "Locative, for Phyllis": "writing reaches, stretches intact in turns and just beyond the pen- / (its quick fluid motion, its unread remembering) -manship." That split penmanship, that playful reach, shows Marlatt engaging the fluid motion of the intertidal as sustained inquiry. How do we watch shifts in water and in ground? How do we unread remembering? Politically, these are perennial questions; poetically, they are constant questions.

On the back cover of *Intertidal*, Fred Wah calls the volume "the breathtaking shoreline of forty years of poetic practice." Wah's cartographic metaphor for a life spent writing "the literal and the littoral"—exploring the in-between zones between prose and poetry, between nations and cultures, between river and delta—is apt. To read a volume of collected works is to be invited to read together what has been "collected" until then only in the writer's mind, and it should be said that one of the things we gain from reading these poems together is the enormous power of propinquity. For Marlatt, a poet who has always been fascinated with how objects and people change when they are read adjacent to each other, be it environmentally, linguistically, or semantically, this propinquity does more than suggest the kinship of works created and developed over forty years. It offers another way to think of what lies (and what matters) between one state of being and another, between Marlatt's past and her present, and between her sense of history and the undeniable present of her writing.

Environmental Metamorphoses

David Martin
Tar Swan. NeWest $19.95

Alice Major
Welcome to the Anthropocene.
U of Alberta P $19.95

Rachel Lebowitz
The Year of No Summer: A Reckoning.
Biblioasis $19.95

Reviewed by Kait Pinder

Martin, Major, and Lebowitz illuminate the tension between stillness and change that underpins our relationship to the environment. Their collections meditate on metaphor, the poetic device of transference and transformation, to work through the threat of apocalyptic stillness that may conclude the environmental change characteristic of the Anthropocene. Refusing the hubristic analogy between the poet and God, they also position the poet not as a proud creator, but as a humble witness.

Tar Swan is an examination of the Alberta tar sands that imagines a poetic retribution born from the sands' transformations. Each poem in Martin's formally ambitious collection is spoken by one of four distinct voices, identifiable by the form of the poem and its placement on the page. Drawing on the history of the tar sands' development, the poems tell the disorienting story of Robert C. Fitzsimmons, the "[f]irst man to unveil a commercial oil sands separation plant," Frank Badua, accused by Fitzsimmons of sabotage, and Dr. Brian K. Wolsky, an archeologist studying the Fitzsimmons camp. At the centre of the human drama, the eponymous tar swan is "[i]gnored by others," even as it inhabits them and orchestrates their violent metamorphoses. Arising from the "elephant drool" of the sands, the swan is that thing "[we] have unearthed" that, Fitzsimmons warns, "cannot be veiled again." In his epigraph, Martin cites Ovid's account of Cycnus' metamorphosis into a swan—"underneath the armor there's no body; / for Cycnus had acquired a new form"—alongside the historical Fitzsimmons' recorded belief that "the cause of the trouble was by design." Martin takes poetic inspiration from the "new form" of the oil and interestingly uses a fixed form, the Shakespearean sonnet, to express the swan's powers of metamorphosis. Martin's complex collection criticizes the hubristic development of the tar sands and unearths fixed forms to reckon with environmental change.

Major's collection similarly criticizes the hubristic postures of human society in the Anthropocene. Drawing on Alexander Pope's "Essay on Man" in the epigraph to the long title poem, Major catalogues the "post-natural creation" that evinces the "reas'ning pride" in which Pope claims "our error lies." Major positions the poet as "just / another figure in the chorus," highlighting creativity as nature's domain: "we forget we live / on a planet that is more inventive / than ourselves." This wide-ranging and beautiful collection combines scientific knowledge of evolution, DNA, and mathematical formulas with a caring attention to the wondrous connections between human and non-human life. Major returns to images of chains—the double helix of DNA, the catenary curve, and the misplaced faith in the binds of necessity are just some examples—to transform "The Great Chain of Being" from "a ladder to the angels" to "a horizontal loop that rearranges / life repeatedly," a "net in which we claim / a place." As the collection discovers webs of relation in unexpected places, it shifts its criticisms of hubris into a poetics of humility that advises the reader to "*Hope humbly*" from within an earthly chorus where "everything is common and everything is rare."

Lebowitz's fascinating lyric essays meditate on the environmental crises that have punctuated the last two centuries, especially

the title's "year of no summer" caused by the eruption of Mount Tambora in 1815, the rain that flooded Flanders a century later, and the ever-present threat of similar disasters today. Like Major, Lebowitz rejects an explanatory or creative authority; instead she "question[s] wisdom" and claims, "I am not wise." Lebowitz, like Martin, also foregrounds environmental changes through comparisons to Ovid's *Metamorphoses*; allusions to several of the myths are interspersed throughout the book. While "[in] Greek myths, the transformation stays," however, the author notes that in nature, "transformation never holds," a fact that is both hopeful and ominous, as when the poet's son poignantly asks, "Why is the earth always changing?" Invoking the avian metamorphoses in Ovid's poem alongside the catalogue of recently extinct birds, Lebowitz explores the apparent finality of some transformations. In the last essay, as she studies the stuffed bodies of extinct birds on display at the Royal Ontario Museum, she places the unwise but feeling poet in the position of describing something that is "both here and gone." In these surprising, melancholic, and perceptive essays, Lebowitz finds a new form to witness, if not explain, the "still body—the still-fierce beating heart" of life on earth.

Found in Translation

Andrée A. Michaud; Donald Winkler, trans. *Boundary: The Last Summer.* Biblioasis $19.95

Dominique Scali; W. Donald Wilson, trans. *In Search of New Babylon.* Talonbooks $19.95

Reviewed by Natalie Boldt

Rarely do a mystery novel and a Western have much in common—unless the books in question are Andrée Michaud's *Boundary: The Last Summer* and Dominique Scali's *In Search of New Babylon*. Both are works in translation: Michaud's French-language novel *Bondrée* was translated by Donald Winkler and Scali's À *la recherche de New Babylon* by Donald Wilson. And both are award-winners: Scali's debut novel earned her a First Novel Award in Chambéry, France, in 2016, and Michaud's, her tenth, a Governor General's Literary Award in 2014—along with a few others. Finally, both are timely, thought-provoking, and rewarding books.

Set in 1967 in Bondrée, a popular vacation spot straddling the Quebec/Maine border, *Boundary* is aptly titled. It speaks to a confluence of borders—geographical, cultural, and temporal—and replicates and blurs them to great effect. The "last summer," for example, begins and ends in 1967—a banner year for sex and nationalism in this country, neither of which go unproblematized here. Marred by the deaths of two vivacious young beauties, best friends Zaza and Sisi, the "Summer of Love" in Bondrée is bluntly terminated as holidaymakers and the inspector in charge of the case come to terms with the idea that there is a violent criminal targeting young women in their community. In their attempts to solve the crimes, all must negotiate the cultural and linguistic differences that have, until now, sustained boundaries between French-speaking Canadians and English-speaking Americans.

Though the premise as I have described it borders on cliché—sex and murder have long been the mystery novelist's bread and butter—Michaud manages to avoid that designation by incorporating a concomitant conversation about the underpinnings of this violence. As the case unfolds, the residents wonder about the nature and impetus of the crimes committed. Where, they muse, does responsibility lie? Was Zaza too beautiful? Did she and other similarly "happy and desirable women" provoke this "savagery"? The misnomers are disturbingly familiar. Beautifully written and compelling, this book will prompt important conversations, as will Michaud's adept handling of

cultural difference, which is well represented even in translation.

Much like *Boundary*, *In Search of New Babylon* is a riff on a familiar genre. It has all the trappings of a Western—saloon brawls, gunslinging, horse chases, and hangings—and a resonant cast of characters. The novel begins in 1881 with the Reverend Aaron, who appears helpless on the side of a dirt road in southern Utah, his hands having been severed at the wrists by his nemesis, the Matador. The story extends backwards and forwards in time via a series of "notebooks," a prologue, and an epilogue, through which the Reverend's story unfolds along with those of the other major characters—outlaws, immigrants, and an opportunistic pioneer turned prostitute.

Scali's work is familiar without wandering into the realm of formula. Readers who have enjoyed Patrick deWitt's *The Sisters Brothers* or Guy Vanderhaeghe's Frontier Trilogy will enjoy Scali's haunting, McCarthyesque foray into the West and her creative engagement with memorable tropes. Like these other texts, *In Search of New Babylon* departs from a generic idealism involving romance, sunsets, and a protracted climax, and speaks instead to a history and tradition of violence. Scali's characters meditate powerfully, overtly, and by example on the irresistible catharsis and, ultimately, the toxicity of the violence that drives their world. Beautifully and compellingly written, these characters frequently transcend their fictional nineteenth-century context with pertinent insights about humanity's seemingly insatiable desire for spectacle.

But this is not a book with an expressly postcolonial agenda per se. Though the entropic nature of the violence in Scali's West is critically framed, specific historical traumas go unaddressed. The cast of characters is mostly white—though the Matador is, to be fair, Mexican—and Indigenous peoples, when they do appear, frequently emerge in the guise of problematic stereotypes (the sneaky savage, the vicious scalper, etc.). So, while the book pushes boundaries in some areas—most notably through its deconstruction of an idealized anti-heroic West—it unconsciously recapitulates them in others. In its entirety, however, *In Search of New Babylon* is thought-provoking, even more so if read in the context of the growing number of authors who have creatively reimagined this familiar genre. Whatever your literary preference, neither of these books will disappoint.

The Actual Real

Robert Moore
Based on Actual Events. Véhicule $17.95

Noah Wareness
Real Is the Word They Use to Contain Us. Biblioasis $18.95

Reviewed by Dale Tracy

Noah Wareness' *Real Is the Word They Use to Contain Us* and Robert Moore's *Based on Actual Events* show the actual real is actually weirdness. Or what they suggest is that the actual real is weird beyond our knowing: with our human ways of thinking, we can't even get close. In Wareness' words, "The world's netted through with words, whichever / way, but always too fine to catch nothing at all." Or in Moore's: "Our descriptions / so mean a substitute for the real thing." These collections are unsettling and also warm-hearted, insidiously serious, and astutely fun.

Each collection interrogates existing logics while pursuing weirder logic. Their ordering systems suggest as much. Wareness' collection is lettered (the poems are listed by A, B, C . . .) and Moore's collection is numbered—only numbered, with no titles or table of contents. The lettered order of Wareness' collection points to its interest in words that take shape after being spoken, that "*sped across all the room's lines,*

animating in turn the uncountable shapes that had slept within them"; the sections of numbered "Providences" dividing the lettered poems suggest that the order is tenuous, a mere fluke of fate. Plus, Z has escaped. Moore's numbering points to the contiguity from poem to poem: each poem takes off from the one before. The word "series," for example, connects poems "1" and "2," even if "[a]ssociation eats at logic like a newt licking a barn owl / in Twain."

Moore's *Based on Actual Events* uses a strategy of association within poems as well, such that "series" seems a good indication of what will follow in individual poems. Moore's speaker tells us that "[a] standard / exercise in creative writing classes is to demand the inclusion / of three otherwise unrelated objects, such as a comb, a fish / and dialectical materialism," and these poems halfway invert the exercise by showing how weird it is that things are not, actually, unrelated. The collection is interested in the borders that aren't, and is "guided not so much by syntagmatic sequence / as attention to the multiplicity of non-linear textures." The book's back jacket calls these "colloquial poems," but the collection actually features a successful mixing of registers and vocabularies as it channels elements of philosophy, literature, and pop culture. While Antigone, "for whom every word invoked / every other word in every possible combination / couldn't do small talk to save her life," these poems can do talk of all sizes and keep the combinations, telling stories about what might count as real life: "To live / is to make fiction, is what she's saying. Okay, good. / That helps." These poems help, if what you want help with is maintaining your complicated relationship to actual events. Or, as Moore puts it, "The poems on this side of the book would like it known they / have a complicated relationship with the poems opposite." "True story."

Wareness' *Real Is the Word They Use to Contain Us* has a three-part structure: a story about realness; lyrical hauntings, isolated from the story; and weird poems. The story rewrites a children's classic, the lyrical paragraphs haunt the story, and the poems explore the same stylistic-tonal perspective in diverse forms and scenarios. Many of these poems work with the philosophical end of the horror genre spectrum, playing with bizarre and nightmarish scenarios to "what if?" the world. They are also funny, sometimes in the gentle way of *Calvin and Hobbes* (a quote from which provides the epigraph to "Pittsburgh O"), as in a poem ending in film credits with "DOG" credited as "'Noam Chompy,'" and often less gentle—actually, quite bloody—as in the warning that "you shouldn't cut steaks on that wood cutting board. They were / alive, and it'll leave ghosts in the wood. Worse, they're the ghosts / of Joe Hill." The poet's name, which perhaps we should imagine in the same scare quotes that hold "Noam Chompy," might claim not to have any, but awareness is what these poems are about, from the opening villanelle that declares that, in writing, "at best you see / a ghost look out that's wiser far than us," to the final poem's downhearted wisdom that "seeing makes more seeing, this mind, / ours, running up to itself with shapes in its mouth."

Something to Be Learned

Heather O'Neill

Wisdom in Nonsense: Invaluable Lessons from My Father. U of Alberta P $11.95

Reviewed by Gabrielle Mills

Heather O'Neill's *Wisdom in Nonsense: Invaluable Lessons from My Father*, the print version of her 2017 Canadian Literature Centre Kreisel Lecture, is in some ways strange. Strange because it reads less like a biography of the late Buddy O'Neill, which it is, and more like an absurd instruction manual for living. Stranger still is the wisdom shared; although Buddy's advice

is never categorically wrong, it is often preposterous and abstract. Despite the strangeness of it all, O'Neill generously translates her father's eccentricities and antics into a reflection on how much and how little one can learn from a parent, and how that learning is complicated by class and circumstance.

Readers of O'Neill's novels will recognize Montreal's streetscapes and street performers, but it is Buddy and his cast of mostly real, occasionally imagined friends—bank robbers and respected old-timers who, like him, make the most out of sharing food and exaggerating stories—who are explored intimately. O'Neill's character study of her father connects the thirteen lessons and is an effective foil for O'Neill's coming of age and development as a writer. O'Neill wonders at one point whether it is because she read a lot as a child that she had the literary skills to appreciate her father's friends, or if it was these characters that "caused [her] to read books in a different way." Regardless, Buddy and his friends are extolled generously through metaphor and memory.

Occasionally, O'Neill's tone changes abruptly and she interrupts the narrative to lambaste her father's foibles. These interludes are brief but poignant, as Buddy is revealed to be at once an excellent baker and an overeager bar brawler, brandishing a broken bottle of ketchup. These moments are infrequent but necessary. The verve and affection with which O'Neill retells her father's escapades risk obscuring some of the sombre truths and hardships present in her father's life. These asides necessarily complicate an otherwise romanticized retelling of Buddy's experiences with poverty, and contextualize instances that demonstrate the class anxiety that shapes O'Neill's relationship with her father.

As the Montreal that Buddy knows drifts further from O'Neill's own experiences as an upwardly middle-class writer, O'Neill and her father are like overlapping circles slowly separating into a Venn diagram with fewer shared experiences and strange encounters. This separation is made painfully finite as O'Neill reflects on Buddy's death. While *Wisdom in Nonsense* reads like a *Bildungsroman*, it also reads like a eulogy, chronicling tender moments but only alluding to uncomfortable truths. O'Neill's coda claims that "sometimes there is nothing left to learn," and though *Wisdom in Nonsense* offers few revelations—it is a relatively straightforward text about a father-daughter relationship—it generates space for learning. The concluding pages invite readers to record lessons from their own fathers "because their words, for better or worse, are unforgettable." *Wisdom in Nonsense* is similarly unforgettable. O'Neill elicits belly laughs and makes space for the quiet sadness of loving parents who will always be complicated to learn from and to remember.

Where Is the Justice?

Jim Reynolds
Aboriginal Peoples and the Law: A Critical Introduction. Purich $29.95

Reviewed by Olivia Burgess

As General Counsel for the Musqueam Indian Band, a position he has held for over thirty years, Jim Reynolds joins practical experience with academic understanding to both explain and question the development of Aboriginal law in Canada. Specifically, he looks to "modern Aboriginal law developed since [Harold Cardinal's] *The Unjust Society* [1969]" to answer the questions "Do we have a just society?" and "Are Aboriginal and treaty rights now restored?" Spoiler alert: the answer is no. Reynolds concludes that there "is still a long way to go before Canada can claim to be a just society for Aboriginal peoples." To reach this conclusion, he engages in a practical analysis of the past, the present, and the foreseeable

future. He looks back on significant decisions in the Supreme Court of Canada (and a few lower court decisions), their outcomes, and their effects on the Aboriginal peoples involved as well as the rest of Aboriginal Canada. In addition, Reynolds looks to the ongoing discussions of these decisions, acknowledging both their proponents and their critics while also stating, in no uncertain terms, his own stance in these debates. Finally, he looks forward as he makes projections regarding future government and court conduct and the probability of key court-proposed changes coming into effect. While he supports many of these potential solutions, Reynolds does not shy away from critiquing the role the courts have played in creating an unjust society for Aboriginal peoples.

In an era of "reconciliation," when academics, politicians, and courts have become increasingly sensitive to the terminology used to refer to Indigenous peoples, Reynolds draws attention to this predominantly nominal shift by continuing to use the term "Aboriginal"—most visibly in the title of his book. He chooses this term not only because it is "the term used in Canadian law," but also because Aboriginal law in Canada does not yet reflect Indigenous legal principles or perspectives, and instead remains "the law of the Canadian legal system applying to Aboriginal peoples." This is not a book about Indigenous laws, Indigenous politics, or Indigenous peoples as they strive to be seen; this is a book about Canadian law and Canadian politics as they apply to the peoples described and defined therein as "Aboriginal." Reynolds suggests throughout that bridging the gap between these two sources of law would be a significant step towards achieving a just society for all Canadians.

If the subject matter sounds inaccessible to anyone outside the legal community, fear not. Despite its focus on the genesis, history, and implementation of Aboriginal law, Reynolds' book truly is a "critical introduction." Its intended readership includes "law students; students of Aboriginal studies, politics, and the social sciences; and general readers interested in this fascinating and important topic." As an introduction, it offers ample contextualization of contemporary developments within the law—including overviews of historical background, treaties, Crown sovereignty, and Aboriginal rights and title—while keeping legal jargon and technical analysis to a minimum. In its efforts to remain accessible to all readers, *Aboriginal Peoples and the Law* invites all Canadians to participate in this crucial national discourse.

Who Was Clark Blaise?

J. R. (Tim) Struthers, ed.
Clark Blaise: Essays on His Works.
Guernica $25.00

J. R. (Tim) Struthers, ed.
Clark Blaise: The Interviews. Guernica $25.00

Reviewed by Nicholas Bradley

Once upon a time, Clark Blaise was a Canadian writer. He was admired above all for his short stories; his first two collections, *A North American Education* (1973) and *Tribal Justice* (1974), were highly regarded. He proved successful in other genres as well. Two accomplished novels, *Lunar Attractions* (1979) and *Lusts* (1983), were preceded by *Days and Nights in Calcutta* (1977), a collaborative work of non-fiction written with his wife, Bharati Mukherjee. The son of parents with family ties to Canada, Blaise spent an unhappy childhood in the US; he has described himself as the only Canadian author born in Fargo, North Dakota. In 1966 he moved to Montreal, becoming a Canadian both by law and by sensibility, and still later he moved to Toronto. Mukherjee, an Indian author—she and Blaise met at the Iowa Writers' Workshop—also acquired Canadian

citizenship, but her unhappiness with life in Toronto led to a scathing account, published in *Saturday Night* magazine in March 1981, of the city's racism. The year before, the couple had decamped for the US, where they remained. Mukherjee died in 2017, and Blaise now lives in New York. His writing is not utterly ignored in the country he left, but neither is it the subject of unabated attention.

For a period, however, Blaise's stories were widely anthologized, and his works were examined in detail by various commentators, including Barry Cameron (*Clark Blaise and His Works*, 1984) and Robert Lecker (*An Other I: The Fictions of Clark Blaise*, 1988). Blaise crossed the border between Canada and the US, and his stories and novels blurred an analogous distinction between fiction and autobiography: he epitomized a voguish set of critical concerns pertaining to national identity and postmodern style. But times and fashions change, and Blaise has not lately attracted much scholarly notice. In Nick Mount's *Arrival* (2017), a history of "the CanLit boom," Blaise is mentioned only a few times, although *A North American Education* is praised, and the title story of that collection appears in a list of "fixtures in CanLit classrooms." The low ebb of Blaise's reputation means that two important anthologies edited by J. R. (Tim) Struthers—*Clark Blaise: Essays on His Works* and *Clark Blaise: The Interviews*—are likely to be received quietly. They serve nonetheless to advance scholarship on Blaise and his numerous and sundry books.

The volume of interviews includes eighteen conversations with Blaise, eight of which were conducted by Struthers himself; nine of the interviews are published for the first time. (It is a minor nuisance that the interviews, which took place between 1973 and 2013, are not presented in chronological sequence.) The volume of essays contains sixteen studies, an autobiographical note by Blaise, and a useful "Checklist of Works." Seven essays are reprinted from other sources—a review by Margaret Atwood of Blaise's *The Meagre Tarmac* (2011), for instance, and a chapter from Lecker's *An Other I*—and although the republished statements may already be known to connoisseurs of Blaise's writing, it is convenient to have them assembled in one place.

Two essays stand out. W. H. New's "Subcontinental Drift" is a memoir of Blaise and an account (primarily) of *Days and Nights in Calcutta*. It begins charmingly and with novelistic flair:

> New Year's Day, 1977: Clark Blaise was living in New Delhi, and by chance my wife Peggy and I met him then for the first time, the morning of our first day in India, in the lobby of Claridge's Hotel, along with Eli and Ann Mandel, who had also recently arrived. Clark was candid, gregarious, welcoming, observant: I was overdressed for the January heat. I would need to change. Yes. I would not be the only one.

New's essay is a compelling demonstration of the vitality of Blaise's writing. He concludes with the perceptive and generous remark that a

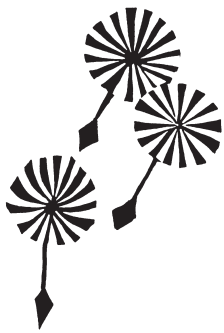
> state of in-between is Clark Blaise's subject and perennial metaphor. As readers, watching over his shoulder and listening in while conversations multiply and drift, we're invited to be companions through the precise details of personal trait that he chooses to cast as fiction, the cycles of style that he shapes into narrative, and behind them, always, the politics of place and time.

Such assessments persuade the reader today that Blaise's neglect is decidedly unwarranted. New's contribution to the *Essays* complements his "Remembering India," from a special issue of *Essays on Canadian Writing* on Eli Mandel (45-46, Winter-Spring 1991-1992).

Stephen Henighan's "Mitteleuropa Mothers in Montreal," a comparative study of Blaise and Mavis Gallant, is meticulous and provocative. It attends to

the city's formative influence on the two authors—"For both Gallant and Blaise, adult life in Montreal was an experience of their twenties, the decade that places an indelible stamp on identity"—but suggests quite rightly that the binary oppositions of English/French and Canada/US are insufficient to account for the complexity of the cultural forces that affected the writers' lives and works: "The missing influence is that of the two writers' mothers," who had strong connections to "Mitteleuropa, the richly syncretic arc of interlocked cultures and territories with large minority populations" that came to exist in "nostalgic memory as a lost proto-multicultural paradise." Henighan shows that the biographies of acclaimed writers, even those as celebrated as Gallant, stand to be corrected, revised, and enriched as new information is unearthed and original interpretations are devised. He seeks, in this case, to know more about Gallant's and Blaise's mothers, but his interest is not merely Freudian: as he proposes, literary works register the familial and historical circumstances of their authors' lives in manifold ways.

Blaise is a fine writer. Perhaps he will be taken again into the fold of Canadian literature; perhaps he will linger instead on the margins of the ever-changing canon. Time, as always, will tell. His loyal readers will be thankful regardless for the *Essays* and *Interviews*, and for Struthers' editorial labours.



The Backwards Sobriquet

Tony Tremblay, ed.
New Brunswick at the Crossroads: Literary Ferment and Social Change in the East.
Wilfrid Laurier UP $39.99

Reviewed by Shane Neilson

Growing up in the Saint John River Valley meant a few things: (1) school would be reliably closed for at least one snow day a winter; (2) country music was pretty much inescapable; and (3) you'd have a higher-than-usual chance of somehow crossing paths with a poet. In what is atypical for Canadian public school education, the New Brunswick Ministry of Education seemed to publicize the Confederation Poets a lot in the curriculum, and perhaps that program made me more inclined to notice when actual poets appeared in the schools. Sheree Fitch came to Hubbard Avenue Elementary one time. So did a lesser-known figure, Michael O. Nowlan. And to anyone who cares, I tell you this: I first encountered the work of Travis Lane in 1993 on a bulletin board in the University of New Brunswick's English Department. It took another fifteen years to meet her in person, but I remember being cheered that there were poets nearby who made the local news.

A lot of time has passed since I left the province in 1996 because I married an Ontarian. But I keep going back every year even though both my parents are dead, and one of the reasons is to stay close to poetry itself. For me, there's something about being there that helps. It's a secret some know, but too few. The skeptical among you might call this phenomenon a simple one, that of home upon the perpetual child in all of us, but I am not so certain. New Brunswick punches far above its weight when it comes to literary talent—if you cared to even discover this fact in the first place.

This review is less a skeptical analysis of a text and more a love letter, one penned after

long pining. Moreover, *New Brunswick at the Crossroads* is a book that I welcome heartily as a platform upon which to conduct my own projects designed to assist and examine Maritimers generally and the writers of New Brunswick specifically. Though New Brunswick did a fair job within its borders of cherishing its notables, in my opinion, the same can't be said outside the confines of the Picture Province. Scholarly journals do their best to cover literature in this country, but somehow the writers of and from New Brunswick don't make the same impressions upon national stages. Editor Tony Tremblay in his preface and introduction characterizes the lack of serious attention paid to writers from the province as a "paucity of scholarly work on the province": "To put the matter bluntly, New Brunswick has been characterized by a paucity of venues for, and scholarly personnel committed to, critical explorations of provincial culture and heritage." New Brunswick literature is an "understudied" and "neglected field." If that doesn't emphasize the point enough, we encounter the strongest signal here: "Both as signifier and site of production, then, New Brunswick continues to be the least studied province in the country." For some, this repetition might seem a little much, especially when the point is rebroadcast *again* in the book's foreword and afterword; but for a poet like me who comes from the province, one who has watched, baffled, as the nation fails to clothe its designated literary emperors from BC and Ontario, the point can't be emphasized enough. To overcome the sobriquet of backwardness that still afflicts writers from this place, one has to know how far back such stigma goes and how far back it falsely places us. To redress this matter, Tremblay has edited a scholarly text that uses as organizing metaphor and theory a "literary ferment" model that borrows from the fields of cultural geography and spatial theory. I report with great pleasure that the text is strong scholarship and adds much to the multi-aforementioned "paucity." A foreword by Christl Verduyn surveys the crowded field of Canadian/regional literary histories and multidisciplinarity, placing *New Brunswick at the Crossroads* in a similarly fermenting national context. From there, Gwendolyn Davies covers Loyalist literature, Chantal Richard covers the first Acadian Renaissance, Thomas Hodd considers Fredericton as a living place among its (Confederation) writers, Tremblay refreshingly moves into a more recent context with his take on the emergent modernism of the mid-twentieth century, and Marie-Linda Lord updates Acadian literature using the similar frame of modernism, albeit up to the end of the twentieth century. At the end, David Creelman summarizes the various threads. The result is a magnificent, if necessarily episodic and partial, analysis of two of New Brunswick's literatures, and I encourage the rest of the nation to peek at how the book's blend of multidisciplinarity can be used for wider application. Even if a reader isn't interested in reading another study of historical writers (albeit with the rarity of being from the backward place I was born to), there is much to recommend this book in terms of methodology.

I mention a single—but important—criticism in brief to balance the analysis of this long-overdue text. To begin with, New Brunswick needs more analysis of contemporary writing, especially in the English case, and to stop in the middle of the twentieth century is to remain in the realm of that academic cliché—the safely dead. English-language writers still drawing breath could benefit from the attention of Tremblay's research team, too. (Full disclosure: my main critical activity is to cover these very writers.) Furthermore, there is more to New Brunswick than English and French, a fact acknowledged by Tremblay in his introduction when he mentions the Mi'kmaq and Wolastoqiyik peoples. The lack of

investigation of Indigenous writing in *New Brunswick at the Crossroads* is explained by Tremblay as a temporal problem:

> Had we extended our treatment of ferment forward, however, or had we undertaken this work twenty-five years into the future, we would have included the cultural moments fermenting today, foremost among those the excitation in First Nations communities. New Brunswick's First Nations artists, musicians, writers, and filmmakers are mobilizing currently, as are First Nations artists in other parts of Canada; however, that mobilization is current and thus out of our (admittedly historical) purview.

Although there is a basis for the claim, it's too easy a claim for me and one that costs the people who, again, *are alive now*, not only Indigenous writers but also settler and diasporic populations who aren't just writing in French and English. To truly escape the backwards sobriquet, there needs to be more scholarly attention placed on matters anterior to the distant past while acknowledging the present pastness inherent to any supposed new idea, technique, or vantage point.

I conclude by expressing my delight at having a place to start, to stand on, to build past and beyond while also acknowledging the present pastness of Herb Wyile, someone who I sorely missed in the text due to his untimely death a few years ago. I like to think how Wyile himself would review this book that renders backwardness as a boomerang.

Mentoring and Being Mentored: South Asian Women Writers

Sharanpal Ruprai and Sheniz Janmohamed
in Conversation

We first want to acknowledge the land that we are occupying as we write this: Sharanpal Ruprai is located on the traditional territory of Anishinaabeg, Cree, Oji-Cree, Dakota, and Dene peoples, and on the homeland of the Métis Nation; and Sheniz Janmohamed is located on the territory of the Mississaugas of the New Credit, the Anishinaabeg, the Chippewa, the Haudenosaunee, and the Wendat peoples, the closest neighbour being the Chippewas of Georgina Island First Nation. We offer our gratitude and love to all the lands that have supported our living and well-being.

* * *

This paper presents a discussion between us, two South Asian Canadian writers who are passionate about mentoring the next wave of writers. The idea started with a phone call in the summer of 2017 between Sharanpal Ruprai, a poet and Assistant Professor of Women's and Gender Studies at the University of Winnipeg, and Sheniz Janmohamed, a poet, artist educator, and land artist based in Toronto. That initial phone call turned into an ongoing series of conversations about race and CanLit, South Asian feminism and friendship. We realized that the conversations go well beyond the two of us and so thought it would be useful to share with others here. One of the main topics that kept coming up in our discussion was about mentorship and how often we feel, as South Asian women of colour in Canadian literature (CanLit), a lack of support. Our structural impediments were/are time, physical location, and financial constraints. Our conversation here addresses our own need for mentorship across genres and within various South Asian communities. Our late-night phone calls were scratching the surface of creating new works of art and connection but also mentorship of artistic practice. After some self-reflection and research, we realized that the conversation format itself was a form of mentorship and has a long tradition within South Asian Canadian women's work and anti-racism work.

Did you read any literature by South Asian women that pointed you in the direction of being an artist? The record of our dialogue that follows opens with our reflections on reading literature by South Asian writers and how those experiences influenced our paths toward becoming artists.

Sharanpal Ruprai: The literature that I first read that pointed me in the direction of art/creative writing was *Shakti's Words: An Anthology of South Asian Canadian Women's Poetry*, edited by Diane McGifford and Judith Kearns. The South Asian women in that collection opened the door for me to start thinking about writing and seeing myself as an artist. Himani Bannerji's

"'Paki Go Home'"—I remember reading it and thinking, you could create art out of this hate and use the hateful words against themselves. Recently, I reread Lakshmi Gill's "Immigrant Always," a tiny poem that is for me loaded with meaning. I'm sure that both these works are subconsciously at work in my own creative practice. At the time—that is, in the 1990s—it seemed that there were many South Asian writers across the Prairies but really it was one or two people in each province; this was my starting point into South Asian Canadian literature written in English. It was not until I saw and heard Kuldip Gill read from her collection, *Dharma Rasa*, that I started thinking of myself as a writer. I needed to see and hear her reading and I think that is why representation at readings/panels/institutions is critical. I'm not sure I would have been a writer if I had not seen Kuldip Gill read that day; I was in a writing group by then and I was lucky enough to have a writing group that made sure I knew about the writing scene in Winnipeg. Shout out to Tanis MacDonald!

Sheniz Janmohamed: The pivotal texts for me were the following: *The Body of My Garden* by Rishma Dunlop, *Women Dancing on Rooftops* by Yasmin Ladha, *Oppositional Aesthetics* by Arun Mukherjee, *Father Tongue* by Danielle Lagah, and poems by Kamala Surayya (formerly Kamala Das). These South Asian women's voices coaxed me into understanding my own location as a South Asian writer on Turtle Island, and they were my first unofficial mentors. I had managed to find the late Rishma Dunlop's email address while I was reading her work in my undergrad, and she was kind enough to oblige me in meeting for a coffee. She was the first South Asian woman who helped me familiarize myself with the literary scene in Toronto. She also wrote a reference letter for my Master of Fine Arts (MFA) in Creative Writing at University of Guelph application. I ended up getting into the program, and was later mentored by the late Kuldip Gill.

Ruprai: Conversation between women of colour is transformative in terms of mentorship. Here I am thinking about written conversation between Louise Saldanha and Aruna Srivastava in *Rungh: A South Asian Quarterly of Culture, Comment and Criticism* in the *Antiracism* issue, which dates to the mid-nineties, and the conversation between Sharron Proulx-Turner and Sanhita Brahmacharie, "A Braided Silken Cord: Aboriginal Women and Women of Colour Working Together," in the same issue. These conversations have been ways of mentorship that happen, and in a way that is what you and I are doing right now. These women of colour model for us how to engage with each other by having conversations and supporting each other. These intergenerational discussions fuel mentorship. Aruna Srivastava, Louise Saldanha, and Sharron Proulx-Turner are all women who in one way or another have fuelled my academic career and my creative work, but more importantly, have shown me how to be a mentor and how to be mentored. I remember sending Aruna Srivastava an email, it would have been maybe 2002, telling her that I enjoyed her work in *Returning the Gaze: Essays on Racism, Feminism and Politics*, and if I was ever in Calgary I would love to meet her. At the time, this seemed like a bold move and I am glad I did it because Aruna has been a wonderful mentor within the academic setting. One of the first articles of mentorship I read was from *Returning the Gaze*, edited by Himani Bannerji. The essays in that collection grounded not only my creative work but also my reading and thinking about women of colour writers within Canada. In the article "A Jewel in the Frown: Striking Accord Between India/n Feminists," Anita Sheth and Amita Handa have a conversation

about mentorship and friendship, and they address how connections between women of colour can be tense because of unconscious "Otherness." What is striking about this particular conversation is the way both Sheth and Handa are honest about how they have come to consciousness about their personal frameworks of identity and the ways in which they learn together. This collection of personal critical/creative narratives and essays is the foundation for South Asian mentorship within Canadian literature. When we begin to speak to each other directly with a sense of understanding and how we understand our locations, we begin to piece together how structural impediments, such as racism, have impacted and affected our understanding of each other, our creative/academic work.

As we discuss the structural impediments of mentorship, what occurs to me is that as South Asian women of colour within CanLit we still have a long way to go. What is needed is not only mentorship but also clearer pathways towards each other and some leadership skills/training along the way.

Janmohamed: I was mentored by Kuldip Gill in the first summer of my MFA program at the University of Guelph-Humber for a short manuscript project that consisted of me writing English ghazals. We only met once because of the nature of the mentorship program and the fact we lived in different provinces. The initial meeting we had, over lunch, was one of the most memorable and transformative experiences in my writing career. Kuldip was practical and embodied in her approach, pulling out a piece of paper and brainstorming refrains with me. She demonstrated techniques for me to use in writing my collection of ghazals, and also insisted I researched and wrote an academic paper on the ghazal form. I feel that this was her way of protecting me—ensuring that I understood the tradition I was writing in so I could respectfully and skilfully break the rules when the work required me to.

Ruprai: Sheniz, is mentorship within academia more or less valuable to your practice now?

Janmohamed: Less so. I operate outside of academia, and therefore I no longer have access to the kind of mentors I used to when I was in my early twenties. It is more challenging to find literary mentors outside of academia, particularly for women of colour. While I feel that there are more WOC writing and publishing, there are only a few established women writers of colour who have the time, resources, and funds to support and nurture emerging WOC writers. While there are mentorship programs available, they often require participants to pay, and thereby create economic barriers for women of colour writers who don't have the financial means to access those spaces. I also find that while there are spaces being developed for new generation WOC writers, there are not as many for mid-career writers or writers who are new to the craft but are in higher age brackets than new generation writers. The question is, where do they go? Who do they look to? It's just as vital for mid-career writers to have mentors, particularly when there are more expectations being placed on them to mentor and nurture upcoming generations of writers.

Ruprai: Yes, this is a common issue that has been brought up not just at conferences but at readings events, CanLit gatherings. Those rare moments when we do gather at events, such as the Canadian Writers' Summit this past June (2018) or at various writers' festivals across the country, we rarely get a chance to sit with each other and discuss our work, discuss support, or even talk about the ways in which we can build a network together. The intergenerational aspect of this is important because there has been a

lot of anti-racism work done within CanLit but new people coming into CanLit may not know of the past work that has been done. Yes, technology and social media are great things, but we need time and a way to build up trust, honesty, and connections with each other. It is difficult to do this under the gaze of white CanLit structures. There is a lot of emotional healing and learning that happens behind closed doors, over the phone, or even on Twitter. But something happens at these gatherings. We need to slow down the process and really talk to each other about what we need.

Janmohamed: Exactly. In listening to the younger women of colour writers speak at our roundtable at the Canadian Writers' Summit, some of them had expressed how their peers would've liked to have attended but were unable to due to economic barriers—something that was expressed amongst the older, mid-career WOC writers as well. It's important for programming to be accessible otherwise we are having these conversations in silos. In truth, some of us have the challenge of operating in two spaces: the CanLit space and the community space. How do we effect meaningful change in both spaces, while at the same time having the time and resources to write, and write well?

Ruprai: Recently, at two different events, I have been calling upon women of colour writers to support younger WOC writers. Not just by reading each other's work or connecting with each other via social media but by asking women of colour writers to be present on panels or meet with writers face to face. When people are in the same room with each other magic happens; people begin to see each other and know each other in a professional and personal manner. In October 2017, I asked Hiromi Goto to be on a plenary panel with Rosanna Deerchild, Gwen Benaway, and moderated by Jenny Heijun Wills, as part of the "Call to Conversation: Two Spirit & Queer People of Colour Call to Conversation with LGBT & Allies" conference held at the University of Winnipeg. Goto said one way she claimed her identity was by "writing back," and we need those literary representations of ourselves and our lives as a way of mentorship and as a way of leadership. We need more roundtable events or workshops rather than panels for mentoring and leadership building. The idea that Goto brought up, that idea of "writing back," brings up for me notions of postcoloniality and the famous phrase by Salman Rushdie, "the Empire writes back to the Centre." But in this context Goto was saying, as a queer writer of colour, she was taking back her voice and her representation of her experience and herself.

Janmohamed: Agreed. We also need to understand that there are numerous conversations happening among us, and that it is vital to hold spaces for experiences and narratives of women of colour who don't reflect our own narratives. While wider conversations are necessary to understand how we can be allies within CanLit, we also have to know when to step out of conversations and give space and respect by listening. For example, Toronto-based writer and educator Whitney French runs Writing While Black, a space for writers who identify as Black. Sakinah Hasib and Timaj Garad have established a writing series for Muslimah women in the GTA. These spaces are *necessary*, and we need to, as South Asian WOC, support these spaces as allies.

Ruprai: Yes! I know of spaces on the page rather than in person. In an odd way I feel like I am back at the beginning of my career in Winnipeg. I am still having to create community here for writing; I had a ray of hope that the community might have blossomed but it seems we are still organizing and gathering.

Janmohamed: Through my training as an Artist-Mentor through the Royal Conservatory's Learning Through the Arts program, I was able to work with mentors in the field of arts education. One of the things they encouraged us to remember is to call upon the right person for the task. If you know you're not the right fit for a mentee, don't take up that space. Find the right person for them. Most of the models of mentorship I have learned have come from firsthand experience—observing and witnessing how I have been mentored, and how my peers have been mentored. For me, it's less so about reading articles and more so about lived experience and listening for what people need.

Ruprai: We have talked about various mentorships at various stages in an artist's career. There seems to be a lot out there for writers without books or emerging writers with one to four books. It occurred to me that communities might want to address how to define youth or emerging writers, or even established writers or writers who have been within the writing community for years. When younger South Asian women of colour writers ask to be read by or mentored by South Asian WOC writers, what are the chances of finding someone who has the capacity to mentor?

Janmohamed: I think it's important to ask some foundational questions here: What makes a mentorship meaningful? What makes one a good mentor? A suitable mentor? What is an appropriate area to mentor someone in? We talk about mentorship but also what we need to address is *how* to mentor, and perhaps we need spaces for women of colour mentors-to-be in and outside of CanLit to learn how to be effective mentors, editors, and educators so we're not unintentionally creating a carbon copy version of our literary work in someone else.

I am currently mentoring a young South Asian poet whom I met through a workshop I facilitated in one of her undergrad classes. We met again at the Festival of Literary Diversity, and then she tapped my shoulder through an email to ask if I'd be willing to mentor her. I think it is important to make it known to younger writers that you are willing to mentor and adaptable to their needs as mentees. We discussed reasonable rates for both of us. On one hand, I want to make sure that she has access to the mentorship she needs within a budget that suits her, and on the other hand, I have to value my time. It's a tough balance especially when women of colour are constantly giving away our time, energy, and resources to ensuring that the writers we are mentoring have the support that we needed when we were starting out. It's important, however, to also know our worth so we don't continue the cycle of being underpaid and overworked—thereby ensuring our mentees are paid well in the future.

Ruprai: I have a few mentors in academic circles, for example, Dr. Aruna Srivastava at the University of Calgary, but within the arts communities on the prairies it has been difficult to find South Asian or other women of colour mentors. Clarise Foster asked me to be on the board for *CV2* in Winnipeg in the early 2000s and I have worked on and off at the journal for the last few years. What strikes me is that I was learning what it meant to be on an arts board. I was, I think, the youngest person on the *CV2* board at the time and I had a lot of energy to take on that learning, but she also provided me with mentorship and showed me how to navigate the creative writing scene. For me I always think back to the fact that I learned about Canadian literature through academic classes but also by going to reading events and reading journals and poetry magazines; but I learned about the people, mostly women, doing the work on the ground and not getting paid.

Janmohamed: I see more mentorships that focus on craft than mentorships that focus on navigating the industry, understanding our role and privilege as writers in the political/geographical context in addition to craft. We need to expand our responsibilities beyond the page if we truly want to nurture and also prevent our mentees from appropriating or making assumptions in their work.

Ruprai: Agreed. How do we protect our mentees if we have our own blinders on? It is something that we have to actively work at. It takes a lot of time and energy to do this work.

Janmohamed: This is why we need mentors and peers to call us out. I think we have to better prepare our mentees to understand the consequences of their writing, not just the craft of it. In order to do that, we have to address it within our own writing practice. Are we calling out our internalized racism? Are we addressing anti-Black racism within our communities? Are we acknowledging how we occupy spaces of privilege in CanLit? Are we addressing how we break or uphold traditions or confirmation bias in our writing?

Ruprai: Addressing our own internalized racism takes a lot of patience and at some point, you almost need a mentor/teacher to unpack this not just in your own writing but also in daily life. As you and I both know, a lot of South Asian communities have embedded culturally-specific racism within language, for example, which often means anti-Black and anti-Indigenous. As someone who has not attended creative writing classes but has lead workshops and classes, I try to create an atmosphere of collaboration and learning together, and work though a decolonizing lens.

Janmohamed: Mentorships that are short-lived for the purpose of a course, class, or manuscript residency are valuable, but they do not foster long-term relationships with mentors and mentees. The evolution of the writing process is lost or stagnated because there is no guidance after publication or completion of a manuscript. This is something I want to actively change. It also speaks to the need to have more mentors across generations.

Ruprai: That is a great point. I think it's been difficult to find people who can mentor not just on the page but also through the process of getting published and putting together a manuscript. It seems to me that creative writing classes have allowed for mentorship though not necessarily with the class instructor but with peers within the class. In terms of addressing systemic change I think we did some of that work with the roundtable discussion at the Canadian Writers' Summit this past summer. I am focused on BIPOC and 2S writers but again these spaces need to be created and maintained until they become engrained in the writing communities. I am starting creative writing workshops for BIPOC emerging writers in order to develop a network on the prairies.

Janmohamed: I think there are a handful of things we can do as South Asian women mentoring in CanLit.

One: Be better allies, and that means addressing racism and bias in our own work and the work of our peers, acknowledging who is missing from our conversations, and asking how we can continue to build meaningful dialogue and relationships.

Two: Find ways of doubling mentorship opportunities for ourselves and others—whether it is through traditional models (i.e, institutions or expanding existing programs) or looking at non-traditional models of funding, like crowdfunding. This might also require more conversations with allies and stakeholders in CanLit, to start to shake off the systemic issues that create barriers of access.

Three: Perhaps develop our own collectives within the cities we live and create in, so that we can have these conversations across disciplines.

Four: Be more willing to commit to non-traditional models of mentorship that require more than advice on craft, but advice on how to live, work, and navigate the world as South Asian writers in and on occupied land.

* * *

We recognize and acknowledge our privilege in having this conversation as two women of South Asian heritage, and that our perspectives are our own. This paper is the beginnings of deeper work that needs to be done within our communities and in collaboration with South Asian writers living and working on Turtle Island. In order for these changes to truly take effect, we cannot do this in a silo and it requires systemic change to take place within CanLit communities. It's been exciting to research the shared texts and people we have in common but when we look around at CanLit events there is still a lack of diversity, inclusivity, and mentorship.[1] One way to address this is to start the conversation and do what our unofficial mentors did, which was to listen, reflect, and share in the un/learning.

NOTE

1 We wrote this paper in a response to the call for papers for a special issue of *Canadian Literature* on diversity and inclusivity. We understand that the editors did not receive enough submissions to make an issue; this of course is part of the discussion about CanLit and diversity.

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Student of Light

Shazia Hafiz Ramji

for my teachers

> "All right then, let me try to rephrase. When I was alive, I aimed to be a student not of longing but of light."
> —Maggie Nelson, from *Bluets*

1) I just retweeted a video clip of Venus Williams being interviewed at age fourteen. It begins with her discussing an upcoming tennis match. "I know I can beat her," she says calmly about her ability to defeat an opponent. The interviewer, a white man, questions and calls out her confidence, after which Richard Williams steps in. Here's a transcription from ABC, where this interview aired in 1995:

> **Interviewer**: You know you can beat her? (Venus nods.)
> **Interviewer:** Very confident?
> **Venus:** I'm very confident.
> **Interviewer:** You say it so easily. (Pause. Insistent.) Why?
> **Venus:** Because I believe it.
> **Richard Williams:** Alright, hold it right there if you don't mind, let me tell you why. What she said . . . she said it with so much confidence the first time, but you keep going on and on—
> **Interviewer:** But—we can't keep interrupting. I mean, if you want—
> **Richard:** You've got to understand that you're dealing with an image of a fourteen-year-old child. And this child gonna be out there playing when your old ass and me gonna be in the grave. When she says something, we done told you what's happening. You're dealing with a little black kid, and let her be a kid. She done answered it with a lot of confidence. Leave that alone!

2) Yesterday, I went to the other side of town to hang out with my mom. We ended up in Safeway in Burquitlam, where I bought her biscotti and a chai latte from the Starbucks inside the store. I can no longer remember the context, but my mom said, "Ever since you've been little, you've been writing, writing, writing all the time, eh?" I looked away to the security guard by the entrance and tried not to cry from the relief of being seen by my mom, after all these years. Suddenly I fantasized about having sex with the guard.

3) The first story I ever had the guts to send out, "Pilgrims," is about a solitary girl who works in surveillance. She has tried to leave a violent and co-dependent relationship many times and is finally able to do it. The story received an honourable mention for *The Humber Literary Review*'s fiction contest judged by Cherie Dimaline and Ayelet Tsabari. I sent it in because I had read their work and felt sure that they had known violence in some form. This perceived commonality gave me hope of being understood.

4) In the last week of April in Toronto, I tried to make the most of my visit and decided to attend a book launch. I befriended an accomplished older poet I've admired for a long time and we went outside to smoke cigarettes. I saw the way he was drinking and smoking. It was hungry, lonely, excessive. I felt sad and saw my past self and my old patterns of addiction in him, though I was smiling outwardly. I decided I was going to trust him. I wanted to seek his opinion on some poems about addiction that I'd been reluctant to include in my book scheduled for October 2018 publication. To try to ask him, I began talking about drinking and drugs, and I told him that I'm a recovered addict and a recovered alcoholic. "How can you say it so calmly?" he said.

5) When I was choosing my major and minor for undergraduate studies, I clicked "English" and "Music." My parents found out and made me drop music because we

were poor immigrants and music would not get me anywhere. I cried secretly. In case I was told the same about English, I reassured my parents that people who study English can earn a living by becoming teachers. Student loans came through and I enrolled in music. When I got to music class, I dropped out after a few weeks, telling myself I couldn't do it, even though I was getting good grades.

6) My late uncle broke his fingers while using heavy machinery. Recently I found out that he was the first of my mom's siblings to ask their father if he could leave the family to study engineering and music. His father refused. Before I knew this, a dark and perverse part of me imagined and still imagines that he broke his fingers deliberately because he couldn't live towards his dreams.

7) I'd been in bed for seven days until a calm voice inside my head told me I needed to get up and talk to somebody, before I ended up like how I used to be—a major depressive and an addict. I got up to do something about the manuscript that had received an award and a book deal: I withdrew it from publication. If I hadn't done that, it would've been published with a press where a man accused of sexual assault was an editor.

8) When I worked as an editor at a press a couple of years ago, I worked alongside an older white woman who had been there for years. It took me months to realize that when authors I was working with would enter the room, she would position her chair in front of me so that it was difficult for the authors to talk with me. Later, she photocopied hundreds of pages with my edits and initials so that she could add her own initials on the corners instead and pass the edits to the authors as her own. And later still, she left me out of the conversation on emails meant to be shared with authors and staff. I resigned. The only reason I stayed for as long as I did was because the publisher had invited me to work there. I foolishly presumed this meant he would look out for me eventually. Months later at a new job as a poetry editor, while completing the mandatory run-through of WorkSafe BC videos, I learned that what happened with her in that office is categorized as harassment and bullying.

9) Who could I tell that I had withdrawn the manuscript? When I got out of bed, I wanted to email the women I'd worked with online and whose work I'd read. Nobody knew I'd withdrawn the manuscript. I needed to ask for help. I thought of the mean woman who bullied me. I thought of Flannery O'Connor's "Good Country People." I told myself, "Just because you're a woman and somebody else is a woman doesn't mean you're going to be buds."

10) The fear of falling into clinical depression again was bigger than the fear of trusting other women. I emailed them, and they emailed other women to share word about my manuscript. "This book has won an award and it needs a home," they said for me. I cried. Leigh Nash at Invisible Publishing took my book after Erin Wunker reached out to her. I cried again.

11) On the night that I signed the contract, another editor emailed me to say she'd like to take a look at my book. I presumed it was because people like the women I confided in had heard that I'd previously withdrawn my manuscript and were trying to help. Half a year later, in June, I visited Toronto again. I talked to the editor who had emailed and I thanked her for wanting to take a look at my work during that difficult time for the book. She was utterly confused. It turned out she had been following my work and the invitation was a coincidence. I had felt entirely alone during this time, yet everything that followed proved otherwise.

12) When I withdrew my book, I also told Ian Williams, my poetry mentor. Later, I told him about the addiction poems. I wrote more in his class. I also admitted I wrote the book in the wake of being stalked by a thief. He suggested I was working through trauma. Later, at the Canadian Writers' Summit, and because of Ian, I was able to share the process of writing the book. It was the first time I talked about what had happened.

13) Earlier in the spring, Ian said he had nominated my work for the *Best New Poets* anthology. He said that regardless of whether or not the poems make it, he's sure he'll be seeing some of my work in a *Best Canadian Poetry* anthology sometime. In April this year, I woke up to an email from the *BCP* saying that Hoa Nguyen included a poem published in *Canadian Literature*. I can't help but feel as though I somehow made it happen, because I kept Ian's words with me, but if I believed this, I would not be believing in myself. I can only thank Ian for reminding me to do so.

14) This year, I am working on a novel and a few non-fiction pieces. Timothy Taylor is my mentor. He has been my fiction professor and my non-fiction professor at UBC. For the first time in my entire education, I came across a reading list that featured writers of colour whose experiences and lives reflected my own. This was in Timothy's class in my last term at school. We read Alexander Chee, Durga Chew-Bose, Dur e Aziz Amna, and others.

15) A young white writer approached me after a reading at the Vancouver Public Library. We went for a quick bite and he said that he had read *Refuse: CanLit in Ruins* and that he felt that there was no place for him, but he found my work inspiring and wanted to write. I was overjoyed to read *Refuse*. I was surprised to feel so sad for him. I left wondering what exactly we talk about when we talk about making space for others. I decided I would think of space not as territory, but as interval, a distance between two points. There are infinite points on a line. After our meal, I sent him calls for submission and upcoming events he could participate in. He was white, yes. He was male, yes. He was privileged, yes. He was also younger than me and his life was full of possibility.

16) While teaching poetry class, I watched my students as they completed their free-write at the start of class. I was overcome by how much I wanted to give them but couldn't. I thought: What kind of teacher could go ahead with a syllabus and reading list that didn't reflect their students' lives and experiences? The thought of such a teacher felt like that time when my Netflix froze on a shot of an iguana basking in the sun, and when it resumed, I realized the iguana was dead, not basking.

17) I began my first job in grade seven English class by accident. I had finished writing a story in the allotted time and had written two more, even though we were only meant to write one. The student next to me leaned in and realized I had finished. She asked if she could pay me "five bob" to write her story. I said yes. Word spread and the week after that I was writing *Titanic* rip-offs with *Jurassic Park* endings for a handful of my classmates. The teacher knew what was going on. She shook her head in disapproval, but she couldn't help but smile at me. Even though I was piling on the Chupa Chups with my five bobs, I stopped after seeing my teacher's disapproval. I remembered her smile, the way it filled me with silence and vastness, the space it made for me. I wrote and wrote and wrote after that. This was how I became a student not of longing but of light.

Contributors

Articles & Opinions and Notes

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Sheniz **Janmohamed** (MFA) is a poet, artist educator, and land artist and has performed her work in venues across the world, including the Jaipur Literature Festival, Alliance Française de Nairobi, and the Aga Khan Museum. She was awarded the Lois Birkenshaw-Fleming Creative Teaching Scholarship (2015) and holds an Artist Educator Mentor certificate from the Royal Conservatory of Music (Toronto). She is the founder of *Questions for Ancestors*, a blog that encourages BIPOC writers and artists across Turtle Island to ask questions of their ancestors and provide advice for their descendants. Sheniz Janmohamed is the author of two collections of poetry, *Bleeding Light* (Mawenzi House, 2010) and *Firesmoke* (Mawenzi House, 2014), and she is currently working on her third collection of ghazals.

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Deanna **Reder** (Cree/Métis) is an Associate Professor in the Departments of First Nations Studies and English at Simon Fraser University, where she teaches courses in Indigenous popular fiction and Canadian Indigenous literatures, especially autobiography. She is Principal Investigator of a five-year SSHRC-funded project for 2015-2020 called "The People and the Text: Indigenous Writing in Northern North America up to 1992." She has co-edited several anthologies including *Troubling Tricksters* (2010), *Learn, Teach, Challenge* (2016), and *Read, Listen, Tell* (2017). The most recent is *Honouring the Strength of Indian Women*, a collection of the plays, stories, and poetry of Vera Manuel, forthcoming from the University of Manitoba Press.

Sharanpal **Ruprai** is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Women's and Gender Studies at the University of Winnipeg. As an interdisciplinary humanities scholar, her research and teaching interests include: Indigenous and Critical Race Feminism, religious and cultural studies, and artistic practice. Sharanpal Ruprai's debut poetry collection, *Seva*, was a finalist for the Stephan G. Stephansson Award for Poetry by the Alberta Literary Awards. Sharanpal Ruprai's second poetry collection, *Pressure Cooker Love Bomb*, will launch in April 2019.

Alix **Shield** is a PhD Candidate and settler scholar in the Department of English at Simon Fraser University. Her research uses contemporary digital humanities methods to analyze collaboratively authored twentieth- and twenty-first-century Indigenous literatures in Canada, and is primarily focused on E. Pauline Johnson's and Chief Joe and Mary Capilano's 1911 text *Legends of Vancouver*. Alix is also a Research Assistant for Dr Deanna Reder's "The People and the Text" SSHRC-funded project, and the recipient of a SSHRC Joseph-Armand Bombardier Canada Graduate Scholarship for her doctoral work.

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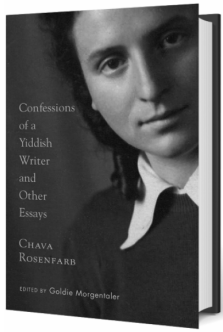

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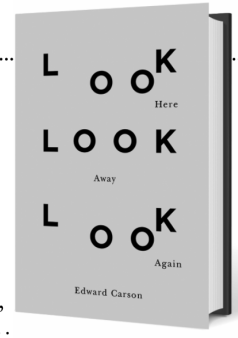

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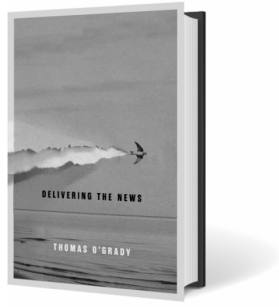

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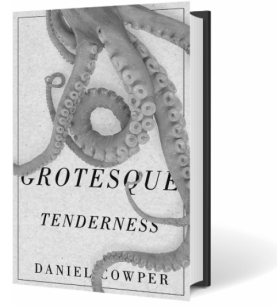

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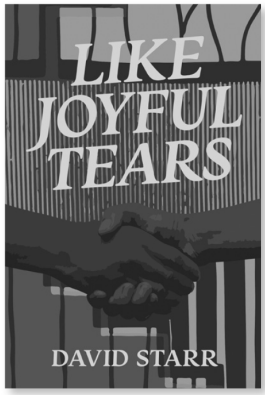

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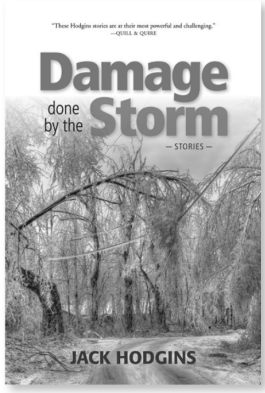

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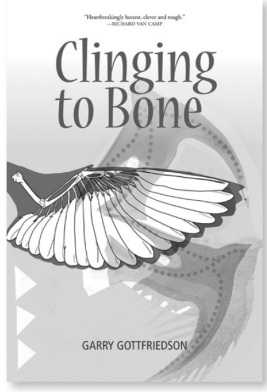

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