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

Editorial

On Disposability and a "Desire for Life"

Christine Kim

On March 16, 2021, an armed man went into three different Atlanta-area spas—Young's Asian Massage, Gold Massage Spa, and Aromatherapy Spa—and murdered eight people, six of whom were Asian American women. The victims of these shootings are: Daoyou Feng (44), Hyun Jung Grant (51), Sun Cha Kim (69), Paul Andre Michels (54), Soon Chung Park (74), Xiaojie Tan (49, owner of two of the spas), Delaina Yaun (33), and Yong Ae Yue (63). Ten days have passed since these attacks as I write this editorial, and in that time US and Canadian media reports have shared details about the shooter, such as his relationship to his church, that he played the drums, and that he liked pizza (Berman et al.). Such reports established a fuller picture of the assailant, even humanizing him to a degree, days before all of the names of the victims were even released, presumably because the authorities were working to contact their next of kin first. During this time, the public was told that the Korean Consulate in Atlanta had been notified of these deaths, even though it was not entirely clear whether the four Korean victims were US or Korean citizens. We also heard from the Cherokee County sheriff, who explained the shooter's attacks on the women as an attempt to eliminate temptation given his sex addiction, and that the shooter was having "a really bad day" (Brumback and Wang). FBI Director Christopher Wray also offered an initial assessment that supported the sheriff's office, as it similarly ascribed the shooter's motivations to his sex addiction and stated that the crimes did not appear to be racially motivated

(Walsh). This contrasted sharply with Korean media reports which noted that eyewitnesses had heard the shooter explicitly state that his intention was to "kill all the Asians" (Song). That neither the US media nor law enforcement officials seemed to have interviewed these eyewitnesses is a stark reminder of the invisibility of non-native English speakers. The shootings and their aftermath have produced much anger, sorrow, and frustration in Asian American and Asian Canadian communities, and led to an outpouring of questions being asked on social media, in newspapers and magazines, at rallies, in private and public conversations: if the deliberate targeting of Asian-run spas and the murders of six Asian women who worked in them do not constitute a hate crime, then what does? What does this say about the law's persistent inability to protect those who need protection? How do we understand these murders in relation to the sharply escalating cases of anti-Asian racism that have been taking place across Canada and the US during the pandemic? I want to centre these women as I reflect upon these questions. But in order to think about what it means to grieve their untimely deaths, we need to first recognize their lives. So, in the aftermath of the shootings, I find myself wrestling with the question of how we tell the stories of what happened to these women. What contexts inform our individual and collective understandings of these losses?

Of the Asian American women who died on March 16, four were Korean American and two were Chinese American. This tragedy shook Asian Canadian and Asian American communities, and many individuals have felt compelled to speak out about it at venues such as roundtables and webinars, and have expressed the need for continued resistance as we confront the many forms of anti-Asian racisms with their long histories. A week after the shooting, I had a three-hour conversation with a Korean Canadian woman who is both an esteemed colleague and friend, and we talked through some of the ways in which the murders as well as the media violence were resonating for us. Our own stories are the specific entry points into how we begin to make meaning from this moment, and grow connections with others that are increasingly expansive and caring. Given the entangled histories of migration, sex work, colonialism, war, and militarized occupation that bind Korea to countries such as Canada and the US, it was difficult to read the coverage of these shootings without thinking of the particular form

of structural disposability that Korean migrant women have presented throughout history and in the current moment. And while the historical trajectories that brought Korean migrant women to North America are important to bear in mind for understanding these women's stories and lives, I also recognize that structural disposability is a condition that is pertinent for thinking more broadly about migrant Asian women, and particularly for those who work at massage parlours, whose stories are frequently sidelined even as we work to address the intersection of race and gender.

This need for specificity is crucial because, as Asian American and Asian Canadian scholars know, the category of Asian is a capacious one that has long struggled with problems of difference and representation. But again, the historical specificity of various Asian diasporic populations matters if we are to understand how their experiences as racialized peoples differ. As Hae Yeon Choo noted during a roundtable on the Atlanta tragedy composed of Toronto-based Korean diasporic scholars, her experiences of being attacked during the pandemic gave her a small window of insight into how it must feel to be the target of Islamophobia. To be seen as a South Asian body that is feared is a very different experience than to be seen as an inconsequential Korean or Chinese body, even though both of these are forms of hatred directed towards Asian bodies. Similarly, to be a Filipinx body seen only in terms of care work is an experience distinct from that of being a Vietnamese or Cambodian body seen through the lens of the refugee even as these are also forms of hatred. And while intellectually we have always known that these differences exist, what Choo speaks about is the experience of also *feeling* those different racializations.

In an article written in the immediate aftermath of the Atlanta shootings, Min Hyoung Song reflects upon how Feng, Grant, Kim, Park, Tan, and Yue were represented in the media. He writes,

> I've been puzzled by how many rushed to claim that the Korean American and Chinese American women who were killed in the Atlanta massacre were sex workers. Even now, a few days after the event, and with the help of numerous news accounts of the women who were its victims, I'm not sure how involved in sex work they were, or how they themselves would have characterized their jobs. (Song)

Song's question about how the Asian American victims of the Atlanta shooting are being read can be productively considered alongside one

that Laura Kang poses in her study of Asian women and anti-trafficking discourses, namely, "how did the privileging of spectacularly and especially sexually violated Asian female bodies foreclose other terms and conditions for making 'Asian women' intelligible?" (16). These questions are key to keep in mind when we note that in media reports published a week or so after the shooting, we were told that Soon Chung Park prepared food for Gold Spa employees, that Xiaojie Tan and Yong Ae Yue were registered massage therapists, and that many of the deceased women were older women with children and grandchildren. I make this point not to disavow sex workers or to try to recuperate the women through a middle-class respectability, but rather to draw attention to questions of how these women located their labour and themselves in the world, and the legibility of their experiences given how age, class, race, and gender intersect in their stories. I am also interested in the more material question of what the specific circumstances were that made their workplaces more dangerous than many others. Elene Lam, founder of Butterfly, an Asian and Migrant Sex Workers Support Network based in Toronto, argues that migrant sex workers in Canada are endangered by laws that conflate trafficking and sex work as this conflation is "informed by racism, xenophobia, and myths of the migrant worker" (2-3). While these anti-trafficking policies may be intended to protect workers from exploitation, they actually make workplaces less safe and prevent workers from reporting threats or violence (Lam 3). Even those massage parlours that do not offer sexual services but are suspected of doing so are at risk of being subjected to repeated inspections or police raids. Laws passed under the Harper government against prostitution even criminalize "those who gain material benefit from sex work (e.g., security, drivers, receptionists, agency owners)" (Lam 10). Thus even though not all of the women who worked at the spas were sex workers, they were made more vulnerable because they were migrant women employed at massage parlours; moreover, as Lam reminds us, while the murders of the women in Atlanta were tragic, they were not exceptional, as migrant women who work at massage parlours across Canada and the US are murdered every year (see Women and Gender Studies Institute).

To think about the lives of Feng, Grant, Kim, Park, Tan, and Yue requires an intersectional approach to social justice, one that takes into account the

complexities of race, gender, sexuality, class, age, relationship to the English language, and migration. As Kimberlé Crenshaw argued more than thirty years ago, new and nuanced approaches are needed to understand the range of ways in which oppression is experienced:

> I argue that Black women are sometimes excluded from feminist theory and antiracist policy discourse because both are predicated on a discrete set of experiences that often does not accurately reflect the interaction of race and gender. These problems of exclusion cannot be solved simply by including Black women within an already established analytical structure. Because the intersectional experience is greater than the sum of racism and sexism, any analysis that does not take intersectionality into account cannot sufficiently address the particular manner in which Black women are subordinated. (140)

Crenshaw gave us the term intersectionality in 1989, and it was invaluable for naming the experiences that women of colour had been sharing in Canada and the US long before that. In anthologies such as *This Bridge Called My Back* (1981) and *Telling It* (1990), women of colour told deeply personal stories about how they moved through the world in bodies that were racialized, gendered, and queer, and about the forms of violence they were met with. The stakes of this work were described by Cherríe Moraga as being "about intimacy, a desire for life between all of us, not settling for less than freedom even in the most private aspects of our lives. A total vision" (1). And this, I think, is the goal we must keep in mind if we are to honour the memories of all of those individuals that have been taken too early.

In addition to the shootings in Atlanta, many other things are unfolding as we assemble this issue. We are now over a year into the global pandemic; the City of Minnesota has just negotiated a civil settlement with George Floyd's family, and Derek Chauvin's murder trial for killing Floyd is to begin at the end of March; the Civilian Review and Complaints Commission for the RCMP has released its report on the investigation into the death of Colten Boushie and found, among other things, that the RCMP had racially discriminated against Boushie's family; the protests against the military coup in Myanmar continue as do the farmer protests in India; and Oprah's interview with Meghan and Harry aired at the beginning of March. These are a range of media stories that draw our attention to how matters of social justice pertain to Indigenous, Black, and Asian lives, to local and global

contexts, and to how matters of racialization connect the North American working class and British royalty. In this general issue, we have six articles: one focuses on temporality in *Rilla of Ingleside,* one examines Indigenous comics and their female protagonists, and the other four articles examine Asian Canadian texts by Anita Rau Badami, Roy Kiyooka, Roy Miki, and Rita Wong. We also have a forum that examines two autobiographical texts, Eternity Martis' *They Said This Would Be Fun: Race, Campus Life, and Growing Up* and Samra Habib's *We Have Always Been Here: A Queer Muslim Memoir.* Collectively, they present a different analytic for thinking about our contemporary moment. And while I am buoyed in many ways by the current efforts to draw attention to anti-Asian racism and particular intersections of migration, class, gender, sexuality, religion, and race, I cannot help but wonder what this attention to marginalized Asian women will look like a year from now. Or whether this tragedy will even still be remembered by the time this issue comes out.

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Russell Thornton

Paths

We have our thoroughfares, we have the descendants
of the wooden plank paths
laid down through the hacked and sawn and blasted forest—
now Lynn Valley Road, Mountain Highway.
We have our drives and avenues
cutting across where there were once fish-filled sloughs—
now Marine Drive, Bewicke Avenue.
But where are the paths
leading from river to river? from mountain lake to village?
from village to winter camp?
Where are they, the original paths of this place?
Like the routes within the rain-sounds,
like the routes the rain takes on winds
when the low heavens release it,
like the routes the sunlight takes through the rain—
they must still be here.
The new roads go from street to street,
machine to machine,
connect grid after grid.
The old roads must go
where the roads within people go—
the roads that vanish when a person dies,
yet while a person is alive
show the way through what does not stay to what stays.
Those paths that lead where they led
long, long before I was here,
they lead where I will be when I am gone and am nothing
except what I did not know of this place.

Nicole Go

The "retinal-world" of Roy Kiyooka's *Wheels*

> i'd hazard the guess that photography is
> nothing if not the phenomenologist's dream-of-
> the irrefutable thing-ness of thing/s: all
> comprising the retinal-world. what the eye can
> plainly clasp in all its rotundness posits
> photography's occulate terrain. each thing visible
> a permeable "text" by which we measure our own
> sentience, conceit and recognition/s . . .
> —Roy Kiyooka, "Notes Toward a Book of Photoglyphs"

Roy Kiyooka once stated in a 1975 interview that he was "truly bored with labels, what they pre-empt," and that he was "sick of having my origins fingered. Its as though an utterly 'Canadian' experience couldn't embrace either ocean and what lies on the far side of each. Or a Moose Jaw, Saskatchewan" (*Roy K. Kiyooka: 25 Years*). As Donald Goellnicht[1] points out, Kiyooka is here arguing "for a Canadian identity rooted in both the *local*—Moose Jaw—and the *transnational*" (76, emphasis original), or what Roy Miki describes as "a 'localism' that exceeds the 'nation'" ("Altered States" 56). Kiyooka's photoglyph *Wheels: A Trip thru Honshu's Backcountry* (1981) exemplifies this connection between the local and the transnational, and past scholarship on the collection has focused on how an imagined "Japan" figures into a Canadian text. Studies by both Susan Fisher and Judith Halebsky focus on the influence of traditional Japanese literary forms like *uta nikki* and make comparisons between Kiyooka and writers such as Edo-period poet Matsuo Bashō (1644-1694). Miki's own treatment of *Wheels*—part of a considerable body of work on Kiyooka—considers how the text, and in particular a pivotal scene in the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum in which Kiyooka recalls his own racialization during the internment period, "is symptomatic of the

minoritized subject who is produced through externalization as the perennial alien . . . the Asian in Canadian who is both of and not of a nation formation" ("The Difference" 24). More recently, Miki writes that the overlap of Hiroshima and the Japanese Canadian internment in this scene "binds [Kiyooka] to his parents' homeland" in an "affirmation . . . of Japan—and the Japanese language of his past—as a poetic resource for his work" ("English" 166, 163).

I would like to extend Miki's analysis of *Wheels* by revisiting the same museum scene using a framework of photography and visuality. By processing issues of racialization and the nation through different visual modes—namely, the related operations of seeing, being seen, and showing—I argue that the text posits vision as perceptual *practice*, rather than the mere faculty of sight. I first use this notion of perceptual practice to think through the "framing process" (Miki, "Asiancy" 120) of Asian Canadian literature and cultural politics, and then to consider the broader implications of Kiyooka's relationship to Japan vis-à-vis transpacific histories of imperialism, violence, and memory.

The first section of this essay explores how Kiyooka implicates the reader in the touristic consumption both of the Japanese landscape and of himself as a racialized writer and artist within the larger, whiter field of Canadian literature. Kiyooka's self-characterization as "tourist" (*Wheels* 156) expresses his alienation from Japan while ostensibly presenting a Western (camera) eye that gazes upon the non-West. However, his emphasis on photographs as mediated by train windows and car windshields undermines the camera's illusion of visual mastery. His constant references to the *act* of photography—winding up film, brushing dirt off the lens, clicking the shutter—create a mode of *seeing* that is not only filtered through the mechanical eye of the camera, but through the subjective "I" of the photographer. This mode effectively puts his own body into the viewfinder as the object of the reader's gaze.

The second part of this essay will delve more deeply into the aforementioned museum scene, discussing how Kiyooka's racialization as an artist merges with his racialization as an enemy alien. As he moves through disturbing displays of the bomb's aftermath at the museum, he becomes acutely aware of *being seen* by the reader, a process intrinsically tied to the *being seen* of racialization. In that moment, his recollection of his own racialization by the Canadian state's World War II internment order becomes overlaid with the trauma of the atomic bomb. At the same time, Kiyooka

acknowledges his complicity in the aesthetic consumption of trauma, both as a museum-goer and as a racialized artist who produces work for mainstream consumption. He attempts to displace the fetishizing gaze of the tourist by turning his camera eye away from the displays and towards his own body. Just as photography is emphasized in *Wheels* as a corporeal act, racialization is expressed phenomenologically. This underscores an understanding of race as operative at the level of perceptual practice, rather than as a characteristic we perceive through objective human sight.

The third section of this essay returns again to the museum scene, examining how "Japan" figures into Kiyooka's work in perhaps more material (as opposed to imagined) ways as a nation-state with its own national narrative. I expand further on the idea of perception as inherently interpretative, a process mirrored in the ideologically charged *showing* of museum objects in the contested spaces of both the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum and the 1970 World Expo in Osaka. Again, Kiyooka's participation in each of these spaces (as both subject and object of the gaze) reinforces the notion of complicity of the writer and reader in national narratives.

what the "I" can plainly clasp

Kiyooka implicates his readers in their perceptual practices by undermining vision through an emphasis on mediated seeing, particularly as embodied by the figure of the tourist, with whom he identifies while in Japan despite his diasporic subjectivity. According to Dean MacCannell, sightseeing is meant to "overcome the discontinuity of modernity" (13) by creating a sense of identity, meaning, and purpose. Tourists want "to see life as it is really lived, even to get in with the natives," yet they "are deprecated for always failing to achieve these goals" (94). As a result, the word "tourist" becomes "a derisive label for someone who seems content with his [*sic*] obviously inauthentic experiences" (94), encompassing both desire and alienation. If Japan is a space where Kiyooka might be presumed to feel at home as a diasporic subject, then his own self-identification as a "tongue-tied tourist" (*Wheels* 156) names language as a barrier to intimacy, leaving him with only his touristic gaze. The very act of *seeing*, then, becomes an expression of distance and alienation.

Similar sentiments are found in Kiyooka's first poetry collection, *Kyoto Airs* (1964), which describes an earlier trip to Japan to see his eldest sister Mariko, who had been left behind in Japan as a young child. Descriptions of "the hunger of / the lean days" (Kiyooka, *Kyoto* 20) of her wartime experience appear alongside impressions of the cityscape, in which Kiyooka felt himself a "tongue- / twisted alien" (12), at once intimately tied to and distanced from both his sister and Japan. As Miki notes, Kiyooka "weaves in and out of the historical and cultural signs of what he thought might be his lineage," and it is through "touristic eyes" ("Afterword" 307) that he views sites like Higashiyama's silhouette "humped / against the blue-black sky" (Kiyooka, *Kyoto* 19) and Ryōan-ji's rock garden, where "each stone / fills the eye / with another stone / of the inner eye" (16-17).

The notion of "touristic eyes" is key in *Wheels*, gesturing towards a similarly alienated experience of the famous landmarks that fill a "backcountry" journey. The text documents Kiyooka's travels around Japan in 1969, accompanied by his father Harry and artist friend Syuzo Fujimoto. Beginning in Kyoto, the trio travels mostly by train along the Sea of Japan, following the coast westward before looping back to the old capital via Hiroshima. Because Kiyooka's route is dictated by rather restrictive rail lines, he inevitably stops at spots already designated to be points of interest, such as an event (Hiroshima), a famous historical building (Itsukushima shrine), or a natural feature (Tottori sand dunes). Additionally, because Japan's railways are heavily implicated in imperialism and nation building, his travels might be read as following an (imperial) national narrative: during the Meiji period (1868-1912), railway development facilitated imperial expansion in colonies such as Manchuria, and enabled a domestic colonization of rural regions by the Tokyo metropolis (Wang 136-37). After their nationalization in 1906, "railway companies effectively came to realize a frightening level of vertical integration of virtually all aspects of their riders' everyday lives" (Fujii 111); capitalizing on popular hot spring, nature viewing, and religious pilgrimage sites, rail lines "transform[ed] . . . suburban and metropolitan intercity lands into extended [railway] company towns" (113). The famous efficiency and convenience of Japan's transit infrastructure, too, only hint at the heavy firebombing during World War II that necessitated its reconstruction as part of the nation's postwar (re)building efforts. In 1949, Japanese Government

Railways was reorganized into a state-owned public corporation under the directive of the US General Headquarters in Tokyo. The resulting Japanese National Railways operated the Matsukaze or "Pine/Wind" train (*Wheels* 136) taken by Kiyooka.

However, Kiyooka's awareness of the contrived nature of such touristic hot spots is clear. Upon visiting one of Japan's oldest and most important shrines, he remarks that "i'll never take snapshots of Izumo like / the glossy postcards" (147), which could be read as a lament that he lacks the skill to replicate the photos, or as a refusal to imitate "official" views of the shrine offered up for touristic consumption. Either way, the statement emphasizes a discrepancy between his own way of seeing and what the nation puts forth as examples of itself, a version mediated through the limitations of "touristic eyes."

Kiyooka further undermines the act of seeing by collapsing it with the photographic act. Landscape shots taken through train windows double the framing of his viewfinder:

> Backcountry is / an open window on a slow train / bags full of mail / boxes full of fresh veggies / Backcountry is / a slow train with open doors / obento with tea / a velour seat with a wide view / sniff the air / feel the rain / pelt of solitude / humming wheels . . . / father has his suitcase filled with Seagram's VO: / each bottle carefully wrapped inside his change of clothing. / i've got my faithful Canon & 20 rolls of Fujicolor film. / nobody noddin' off on the Pine/Wind knows our 'family name' / or 'where' we hail from . . . (*Wheels* 137)

These references to the physical *act* of taking photos emphasize that what the reader experiences of Japan is ultimately mediated *through* Kiyooka as both photographer and narrator: descriptions of "winding the film up" (138), "clicking the shutter" (147), and brushing off the "grit on a 35mm lens" (141) are paired with the emphasis on his own physical presence in the train—the feel of the velour seat, the sound of rain. Likewise, his introspective narration inflects the photos in ways that suggest that what the reader sees is not what Kiyooka sees. Shots of lakes and rice paddies are paired with Kiyooka's ruminations on the strained silences between him and his father:

> . . . how come we have so little to say
> given all the years we've travelled separate ways.
> . . . how is it we seem to have spoken of all

> manner of things cast-up in familial nets.
> . . . o the assuaged tongue/s of a father & son
> riding Pine/Wind train thru Honshu's Backcountry (138)

Like the camera, the train is a technology that enables an all-consuming gaze, allowing people to see more of the landscape in less time. But the compressed space of the train car breeds what James Fujii calls "intimate alienation":

> In an impersonal compartment used for mass transit of total strangers, people are thrown together in a space that provides no excuse or framework for establishing social relations. . . .This apparent contradiction—close physical contact with people whom one does not know, or whom one knows only visually—alienation, in a word—provides a new "logic" of sensual arousal. (Fujii 127)

Even with the close quarters of the train car and the bonding experience of shared travel, the distance between Kiyooka and his father remains, again echoing his distance from Mariko in *Kyoto Airs*. This sense of alienation becomes Kiyooka's aesthetic labour, documented in the textual portions of the photoglyph which, in effect, make the reader privy to his *punctum*, Roland Barthes' term for the personal, affective "wound" (73) inflicted by photographs upon the viewer. The emphasis, then, is on the subjective "I" that reads the photo, rather than what is readable by any physical or mechanical "eye." This merging of the "eye" and the "I" is seen in a postcard written to "M": "O how I wished nihongo[2] fit me as snugly as these suede walking shoes I bought in Kawaramachi which have become my very feet. Thank goodness Syuzo is beside me to ease all the proprieties: it leaves me free to be the 'I' of my camera and not just a tongue-tied tourist" (Kiyooka, *Wheels* 156). This merging is later reinforced in the phrases "stone I's" and "an 'I' to behold" (156), echoing the stones that "[fill] the eye" in *Kyoto Airs*. Thus, the reader's experience of Japan is not only filtered through Kiyooka's (camera) eye, but through his subjective "I," which refuses to provide the caressing gaze of a more ethnographic, exoticizing account of Japan. He thus counters the view from "touristic eyes" by foregrounding the presence of the touristic "I."

In emphasizing his physical presence in the text through references to the photographic act, Kiyooka places himself squarely in the viewfinder, as the object of the reader's gaze, rather than merely doubling that gaze through his own. The notion of "touristic eyes/I," then, might be said to reflect the

marketing of Asian Canadian literature for white mainstream consumption as a kind of literary tourism. Miki's analysis of the Chinese Canadian literary anthology *Many-Mouthed Birds* (1991) illustrates this phenomenon: the cover photo of an exotic, feminized Asian male face peeking out from behind a shadowy curtain of bamboo leaves, originally taken by Chinese Canadian artist Chick Rice for the art exhibit *Yellow Peril: Reconsidered* (1990), was, as Miki argues of the book's marketing, decontextualized and reappropriated to "[evoke] the familiar western stereotype of the Asian 'othered,' secretive and mysterious, a sign of 'Chineseness'—Edward Said's 'orientalism' *à la* Canadian colonialism" ("Asiancy" 120). For Miki, the photo's intended self-reflexivity was thus transformed into a "one-dimensional Eurocentric frame of reference" that "invites the reader in to eavesdrop, to become a kind of voyeur—to listen in on the foreign, the effeminate 'Asian' of western fantasies" (120). Such texts become akin to "tours" offering novel experiences that form part of the larger "landscape" of Canada—a kind of colonialism through mainstream assimilation.

Kiyooka's posthumously published biography *Mothertalk: Life Stories of Mary Kiyoshi Kiyooka* (1997) demonstrates this assimilation. The book was edited by Canadian poet and author Daphne Marlatt, Kiyooka's former partner, who was partly forced to streamline his unchronological "free-floating succession of stories" (*Mothertalk* 5) because she could not "make sense of what Roy had done" (Egan and Helms 63). In rearranging Kiyooka's final manuscript into chronological order, she placed a heavier emphasis on "the importance of Mary's stories, Mary's place in the Issei community, and the Issei community's role in Canadian history" (64). In addition, Marlatt included translations of Japanese words and glosses for cultural context, an intervention which Susanna Egan and Gabriele Helms argue ultimately "determined that Mary's life stories find their place in the English reader's understanding of the Japanese Canadian experience" (62).

I read these interventions in two ways: first, the chronological rearrangement implies a teleological development from immigrant to citizen, which inadvertently absorbs Kiyooka's mother Mary into a Canadian national narrative. Second, the assumption of an anglophone reader reinforces the text's assimilation to mainstream audiences. Egan and Helms even claim that "the value of this book *for all Canadian readers* has been

significantly increased by the interventions that followed" (53, emphasis mine), going so far as to say that if Mary's stories had not been filtered through either Marlatt or Kiyooka himself, "the resulting work would *clearly exclude us as readers*. It would also play a more limited role in Canadian culture" (22, emphasis mine). But issues of linguistic accessibility aside, the resistance to being excluded here reveals a lack of awareness of how, as Miki suggests, "the framing process itself . . . [functions] as one aspect of the public space within which texts by writers of colour are represented, received, codified, and racialized" ("Asiancy" 120). Here we can see an imagined universal "Canadian reader" with an ostensibly universal, neutral, and objective viewpoint from which all works can and should be understood. But as Kiyooka's emphasis on mediation suggests, this visual mastery is a *méconnaissance* in which the reader misrecognizes or mis-knows the Other who serves as the object of their gaze and in the construction of their own subjectivity. Although Kiyooka's work remains largely "absent in national literary circles" (Miki, "Asiancy" 113), such interventions and readings filter "Asian Canadian" through a lens of "Canadian" which, rather than being a neutral background against which "Asian Canadian" is brought into relief, is itself a perceptual practice.

"the phenomenologist's dream-of-the irrefutable thing-ness of thing/s"

This idea of perceptual practice is expressed visually and phenomenologically in *Wheels* through the notion of *being seen*. Kiyooka demonstrates an awareness of being "watched" by the reader as he moves through the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum. He switches abruptly from an image of a group of old men playing *go* to a photo of a *hibakusha*,[3] one charred arm awkwardly splayed out, the shadows on the face suggesting the rough texture of burnt and blistered skin. From here, he moves through the exhibits, taking note of the displays:

> tall glass cases with pallid '40s mannikins
> attired in somebody's ashen clothes
> (click)
> an alarm clock with arrested hands anointing
> that awe-filled moment when
> (click)

> the shadow of a man taking his ease on a granite
> step was all that got left of him
> (click)
> heaps of domestic utensils made in purgatory
> bicycles shaped like pretzels
> (click) (*Wheels* 168)

While Kiyooka provides a photo of the alarm clock stopped at the moment of the bomb, the other displays of detritus found in the aftermath are only *described*, followed by a "(click)" (168) to indicate a photograph was taken. However, the "missing" photographs create a gaping hole in the text: by explicitly stating that he has taken the photos but denying the reader the ability to see them, he emphasizes the photographs as visual *acts,*[4] as records of *looking*. The absent presence of the photos thus performs a purposeful *looking away* from trauma, again in an attempt to resist the impulse of the touristic gaze. While this might be read as a refusal to partake in the aestheticization of trauma, Kiyooka's attempt to avert his gaze does not absolve him of his own complicity: "which hand / pulled the trigger? / which hand / turned gangrenous?" (*Wheels* 168).

Kiyooka's frequent references to the physicality of the photographic process thus foreclose the reduction of his body to a Western eye[5] gazing upon the non-West. Additionally, the focus on his own corporeality and his denial of the photographs to the reader emphasize his physical presence in the museum, suggesting his awareness of *being looked at*—in this case, by the reader. At the same moment that he becomes aware of his complicity through the act of looking, he recalls being the object of a racializing gaze:

> i remember "JAPS SURRENDER!"
> i remember all the flagrant incarceration/s
> i remember playing dead Indian
> i remember the RCMP finger-printing me:
> i was 15 and lofting hay that cold winter day
> what did i know about treason?
> i learned to speak a good textbook English
> i seldom spoke anything else.
> i never saw the "yellow peril" in myself
> (Mackenzie King did) (170)

Again, the photos in the museum prompt a flood of memories that can only be described as Kiyooka's *punctum*, overlaying the atomic bombing of Hiroshima with the trauma of displacement in Canada during the internment period. The racialization in this passage creates a particularly stark contrast to the earlier passage, in which he says, "nobody noddin' off on the Pine/Wind knows our 'family name' / or 'where' we hail from" (137): it's only when he opens his mouth to speak Japanese like a "tongue-tied tourist" (156) that he can be identified as a foreigner. But despite being able to go unracialized in Japan, he still "feels the weight of his melanin," to use Frantz Fanon's articulation (128). The scene gives the strong sense of what Fanon called a "third person" construction of the man of colour's "body schema," undergirded by a "historical-racial schema" created by "the white man, who had woven me out of a thousand details, anecdotes, and stories" (91). Kiyooka-as-narrator, too, has clearly internalized being the object of the racializing gaze: although the reader experiences the text through Kiyooka's eyes/I, his body still remains in view, as if he sees himself as an "image in the third person" (Fanon 90).

The text thus describes a phenomenological experience of race, in which certain bodies' possibilities for action are delimited by larger hegemonic frameworks. Sara Ahmed explains Fanon's "historical-racial schema" as a lens through which the phenomenological experiences of racialized subjects must be read. Such discourses are inherited from legacies of colonialism which "make[ ] the world 'white' as a world that is inherited or already given . . . . a world 'ready' for certain kinds of bodies, as a world that puts certain objects within their reach" (Ahmed 111). Racism, Ahmed writes in her reading of Fanon, "'stops' black bodies inhabiting space by extending through objects and others. . . . Racism ensures that the black gaze returns to the black body, which is not a loving return but rather follows the line of the hostile white gaze. The disorientation effected by racism diminishes capacities for action" (111). The idea of diminished capacity again recalls Miki's analysis of *Many-Mouthed Birds*, which, despite its "empowering agenda . . . to open a venue for writers of Chinese ancestry" ("Asiancy" 120), also resulted in the commodification of its contributors' otherness to cater to mainstream desires. As Larissa Lai argues,

"capitalism's gaze has been able to overtake the original intent" of minority literature, leading to

> the cumulative circulation of a particular type of text . . . [that] produces an expectation about what people of colour know and are, and does not allow us the full extent of our subjectivity, only that which confirms us as belonging to certain tropes of violence, outsiderness, and abjection.

In other words, there is no "space" for minority writers to move outside the narrow scope of representation allowed them by the mainstream, as the very category of minority literature dictates "what is and is not within reach" (Ahmed 112).

Miki's call to expose the "framing process" ("Asiancy" 120) resonates with Linda Martín Alcoff's statement that, when it comes to racial difference, "the realm of the visible, or what is taken as self-evidently visible . . . is recognized as the product of a specific form of perceptual practice, rather than the natural result of human sight" (16). Racial distinctions are generally made visually, which allows them to seem "real" insofar as they have a perceptible, material basis. However, modes of visual perception used to determine racial difference are a "learned ability" (Alcoff 20), and thus "there is no perception of the visible that is not already imbued with value" (19). Racism therefore *precedes* the human tendency to differentiate and categorize bodies, which are themselves, as Elizabeth Grosz puts it, "volatile": "It is not simply that the body is represented in a variety of ways according to historical, social and cultural exigencies while it remains basically the same; these factors actively produce the body of a determinate type" (qtd. in Alcoff 19).

Thus a particular type of body is produced by bringing it into relief against a white world, much as certain types of texts are produced through the category of "Asian Canadian," whose historical formation has often been brought into relief against a supposedly ordinary, undifferentiated background of "Canadian." But it is precisely because the world is white—that is, it is already raced and not an objective or neutral background—that Alcoff argues that race is not a *characteristic* that we perceive, but instead operates at the level of perception itself. Because race is that through and against which we perceive, perceptual practices of racialization are "tacit, almost hidden from view, and thus almost immune from critical reflection" (20).

We might then read Kiyooka-as-narrator's shifting from the foreground (as the figure who moves through the narrative of the poem) to the background (as the I/eye that sees and looks away) as a method of bringing this perceptual practice into view. Like a camera, *Wheels* employs multiple depths of field that, by turns, focus on the landscape of Japan, the poet-photographer himself, and the reader's perceptual practices. While Alcoff argues that interpretation is inseparable from perception, perceptual practices can be shifted "by the existence of multiple forms of the gaze in various cultural productions and by the challenge of contradictory perceptions" (Alcoff 21). Perceptual habits of racialization can thus be shifted through a form like the photoglyph, which emphasizes its own reading *as* perceptual practice.

For instance, another photoglyph by Kiyooka, entitled *Pacific Windows* (1990), features "an idiosyncratic ribbon / of gnomic Text" ("Notes" 91) running through the centre of each page, one line of text right-side up, and another upside down. The text is meant to be read through to the "end," flipped over and read again "backwards" to the first page, "literally turn[ing] the book upside down in a potentially endless series of unfolding circles . . . transcend[ing] the linear teleology of the typical book" (Deer 67). Glenn Deer characterizes such examples of Asian Canadian "photopoetics" as elliptical, in that we are meant to "imagine or *extrapolate* beyond the borders of what we can see and read" (68, emphasis original)—including, I would argue, the body of the reader. Typically, when readers immerse themselves into a book, the object's material reality "is still there, and at the same time it is there no longer, it is nowhere" (Poulet 54). *Pacific Windows*, however, draws the reader outside the text by foregrounding a phenomenological experience of the text: the turning of the book upside down in the reader's hands bars them from an immersive perceptual practice of reading. Perhaps this is what Kiyooka means by "the irrefutable thing-ness of thing/s" ("Notes" 89): the reader is reminded of the materiality of the book and, by extension, the irrefutable objectification of the racialized body. By dictating the direction of the reader's gaze and physical, corporeal movements, Kiyooka enacts a resistance to his own racialization: just as *looking away* functions in *Wheels*, the text's changing direction in *Pacific Windows* has the power to redirect bodies (like displaced racialized subjects) and gazes (always fixed upon racial difference).

"comprising the retinal-world"

As discussed earlier, the overlaying of the bombing of Hiroshima with the trauma of Japanese Canadian internment in *Wheels* attests to Kiyooka's desire for an identity encompassing both the local and the transnational, unbounded by either Japan or Canada. At the same time, the text demonstrates his acute awareness of his own participation in the narratives of these nations, namely through his experiences of exhibitions and museums. Such institutions, which function through the visual operation of *showing*, contribute to the centring, displacement, and erasure of certain aspects of memory and history.

Just prior to the travels described in *Wheels*, Kiyooka had been preparing a sculpture for the Canadian pavilion at the 1970 World Expo in Osaka. His selection as a representative artist by the Canadian government was perhaps unsurprising given Canada's push towards multiculturalism, which became official policy in 1971. This policy mobilized and managed racialized bodies in the service of projecting a tolerant, pluralistic, and progressive national image (Mackey 50). Guy Beauregard writes that "Kiyooka was well aware of . . . the ideological work performed by world's fairs and exhibitions" (41): his experience at Expo '70 resulted in his photoglyph *StoneDGloves* (1970), which "intervenes in our perceptions of the framing of national imperial space" (Beauregard 43). Likewise, Scott Toguri McFarlane argues that *StoneDGloves* questions the ethics of globalization as exemplified by projects like Expo '70, which enable an "archival act of forgetting"[6] (128).

National institutions like the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum operate in precisely the same way. Lisa Yoneyama, citing a study by historian Inoue Shōichi, notes that the Peace Memorial Park in which the museum is situated was based on a 1942 design by architect Tange Kenzō undertaken as part of a public competition for the Commemorative Building Project for the Construction of Greater East Asia (1). The Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere was a concept created by the Japanese imperial government to promote the "unification" of Asia against Western cultural and military incursions. It was, however, little more than propaganda justifying the occupation of other Asian nations. With Japan's surrender in 1945 and the subsequent collapse of its empire, Tange's design to commemorate the Co-Prosperity Sphere never came to fruition—that is, until it was resurrected

on a smaller scale in 1949 as the Peace Memorial Park. This ironic obfuscation of imperialism in the park's original design is emblematic of Japan's national memory of the Pacific War: Japan's status as the victim of American violence enabled what Yoneyama describes as "a national victimology and phantasm of innocence" (13) in the dominant historical discourse.

This national victimology is further enabled by the fact that Japan's war crimes and colonial atrocities vis-à-vis the rest of Asia have also been largely displaced in Western collective memory, particularly by the Allies' much more limited encounters with Japan at Pearl Harbor and the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Western industrialized nations' amnesia surrounding Japan's military aggression can also be attributed at least in part to their present "preoccup[ation] only with . . . widening trade imbalance between Japan and the U.S. and Western Europe" (Choi 326). While economic concerns were far from the only cause of wartime amnesia, they are foregrounded in *Wheels* in the photograph of what appears to be an unsigned letter that closes the museum scene. Directly naming the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere, the letter admonishes the Japanese public for their government's wrong-headed prioritization of imperial aggression over the well-being of its own citizens:

> In 1930, when your warlords had not started war on China, 10 Yen was worth:
> 1. 2 To 3 Sho of first-class rice, or
> 2. Cloth for 8 suits of summer-wear, or
> 3. 4 straw-bags of charcoal.
>
> In 1937, after the China Incident, 10 Yen was worth:
> 1. 2 To 5 Sho of inferior rice, or
> 2. Cloth for 5 suits of summer-wear, or
> 3. 2 ½ straw-bags of charcoal.
>
> Today, after waging a hopeless war for three years against the world's greatest powers, 10 Yen is worth:
> 1. 1 Sho 2 Go of first-class rice on black-market,
> 2. A small amount of charcoal (if it is purchasable at all),
> 3. No cotton cloth.
>
> These are the consequences of the Co-prosperity Sphere as advocated by your leaders. (169)

The letter is actually an English translation of one of many US propaganda leaflets dropped by plane on Japanese citizens as part of the US' psychological operations, and one of four messages printed on the reverse side of a fake 10-yen banknote (Navona Numismatics). While Kiyooka does not give context for the letter, its emphasis on economic decline and the devaluation of the yen, rather than the human toll of Japanese imperialism, is suggestive of the postwar Japanese economy's push towards free-market capitalism under American guidance. Fuelled in part by fears of a communist revolution, this economic restructuring was part of what H. D. Harootunian argues was a modernization narrative applied to postwar Japan by the Occupation. Ultimately taken up by Japanese historians and social scientists, this narrative centred on Japan's successful development from a feudal order into a progressive democracy characterized by a "commitment to peace . . . as a uniquely enlightened example for the rest of the world to follow" (Miyoshi and Harootunian 2-3). Japan's actions during the Pacific War did not fit into this image of an enlightened, peaceful nation, and were thus explained away as aberrations in which the country was "temporarily 'derailed' in the 1930s from its true democratic vocation" (Harootunian 201). While there was more willingness to see Japan as aggressor in the early postwar era, this perception was soon overshadowed by the image of Japan as victim, a shift directly "related to the Occupation's decision to turn former foe into friend after the collapse of Nationalist China" (Harootunian 212). The villainization of Japan's militarist leadership—which the letter in *Wheels* demonstrates—was set in stark contrast to the abject victimhood of the Japanese people. Furthermore, the Tokyo War Crimes Tribunal gave the impression of "evils early met and early mastered," resulting in an "unusually early closure" of public memory of the war (Gluck 6). Thus, historical amnesia surrounding Japan's military aggression was only made possible through the complicity of the US Occupation.

Within the context of the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum, then, the *content* of the letter, while attributing responsibility to Japan, ultimately supports the narrative of Japan's victimhood. Within the context of *Wheels*, however, the *photo* of the letter emphasizes its concreteness as an object or an artifact: darkened by a shadow (perhaps Kiyooka's?), the edges of the paper are held down by tape, emphasizing that we are seeing it mediated through the lens

of Kiyooka's camera eye/I. By extension, it reminds us that the letter does not represent a transparent history of postwar Japan, but is a curated object in a museum with its own ideological aim, and that it is curated again, by Kiyooka, for another. The photo of the letter immediately follows a verse that reads:

> there's a charred-hand reaching out of my abdomen to
> inscribe my "name" in the Museum's Guest Book:
> there's an acrid taint to all the consonants & avowals
> of a hundred-thousand (faceless) Signatories . . .
> (Kiyooka, *Wheels* 169)

The image of the "charred-hand" takes us back to the blackened arm of the *hibakusha* in the photo that opens the museum scene. The original photo, catalogued in the museum's Peace Database as Code SA152-2, is part of the permanent exhibit and was taken by the Photo Union of the Army Marine Headquarters. A bland caption is given: "A badly injured schoolgirl." Kiyooka's reproduction of the photograph, like the photo of the letter, emphasizes it as an object in the museum: its skewed, off-centre framing shows the edge of the photograph, as well as that of an adjacent photo. Again, the visual act of looking is suggested, the movement of Kiyooka's body as his camera "I" begins to look away, a quick glance out of the corner of his eye, as if he cannot bear the sight. Despite his reluctance to gaze steadily at the girl, the "charred-hand reaching out of [his] abdomen" (169) suggests that she has already incorporated herself into his being, hearkening back to his father's comment:

> halfway through the Museum
> father stopped. he said, i can't stomach anymore.
> i'm going for a walk. meet me
> at the tea house when you two have had your fill (168)

The overt reference to the consumption[7] of trauma becomes particularly grotesque when paired with the tea house, where the visitors, as Kiyooka writes, "sipped our tea and bit into our sandwiches" (170) upon leaving the museum. The image of a full stomach overlaps the affective and the physical, where Kiyooka has his "fill" (168) and the *hibakusha* are literally consumed to the point where they are spilling out—or "reaching out" (169)—of his

abdomen. There is no abjecting the trauma from his being: the "charred-hand" of the *hibakusha* girl, at once disembodied and embodied, is now so thoroughly identified with him that she signs his "'name'" (169) in the museum guest book on his behalf.

The reference to hands becomes particularly significant given Kiyooka's earlier question of complicity: "which hand / pulled the trigger? / which hand / turned gangrenous?" (168). The destabilization of his identity suggested by the quotation marks around his "'name'" (169) mirrors the earlier scene on the train, in which he notes that "nobody noddin' off on the Pine/Wind knows our 'family name' / or 'where' we hail from" (137). This ability to remain incognito mirrors that of the "faceless" guest book "Signatories" (169), who also gesture towards a kind of authorship: if the US Occupation is indeed the author of the letter, then perhaps the museum-goers, including Kiyooka himself, are complicit partners in the writing of the narrative posited by the museum, their patronage becoming "avowals" of a national victimology in which the "acrid taint" (169) of imperialism goes unseen.

Conclusion: sentience, conceit, and recognition/s

As I have argued, Kiyooka filters Japan through the *punctum* of his camera "I," emphasizing the mediated nature of *seeing*. His awareness of *being seen* in the museum by the reader is expressed as a phenomenological experience of race, underscoring an understanding of race as operative at the level of the perceptual framework rather than a characteristic we perceive through objective human sight. Vision itself is a perceptual practice that implicates not only the reader, but also Kiyooka himself: as an artist and poet who, in effect, creates representations, he is also implicated in the ethical relations of *showing*. While *Wheels* represents a marginalized subject's resistance to the nation's regulatory forces, it also demonstrates an acute awareness of its own complicity in the ideological operations of those same forces. He writes:

> perhaps the photo/glyphs i took
> of abandoned work gloves on the site of Expo 70
> will negotiate a tryst for my sense of
> an un-embittered, well-being. What's the price
> of clasping one another's hands ? (*Wheels* 171)

If his participation in the Canadian multicultural narrative at Expo '70 weighed on his conscience, his privileging of the absent-present photographs in the museum might be read as a form of mitigation in its refusal to allow the bombing of Hiroshima—and by extension, his own hybrid identity—to be represented and thus consumed.

Given Kiyooka's concern for the local and the transnational, I want to end by thinking about what *Wheels* means in the context of "global Asias," a paradigm that seems to imagine itself as somewhere between Asian Canadian Studies and Asian Studies, two fields that have historically been diametrically opposed in their aims and objects. While Asian Studies has traditionally taken an area studies approach, focusing on geographical, national, political, or cultural regions, Asian Canadian and Asian American studies have emphasized issues of race, citizenship, and diaspora in North America. Over the past twenty years, however, Asian Canadian and Asian American studies have moved increasingly away from nation-centred critique that "risks erasing histories of settler colonialism," in which Asians were hierarchized over Indigenous peoples in the Americas (Lee and Kim 7). The fields' shifts towards a transpacific model of inquiry suggest a new prioritization of "collaborations, alliances, and friendships between . . . marginalized peoples who might fashion a counter-hegemony to the hegemony of the United States, China, Japan, and other regional powers" (Nguyen and Hoskins 3). In addition, this paradigm promotes alliances between "academics on both sides of the Pacific and in the Pacific" (4) who share a goal of emphasizing how academic power and knowledge production operate.

The field of Asian Studies, too, has shown some signs that it may be moving beyond the geographical boundaries of Asia proper. In July 2020, driven by the urgency of the COVID-19 pandemic and the Black Lives Matter movement, Association for Asian Studies (AAS) president Christine Yano called for a reconsideration of the organization's "longstanding self-identification as a 'nonpolitical organization.'" She proposes expanding the AAS's current structure of four area councils (China and Inner Asia, Northeast Asia, Southeast Asia, and South Asia) to include a fifth "Global Asias" council, which would act as a bridge between AAS and the Association for Asian American Studies, stressing that "it is important that we structurally acknowledge and learn from each other" (Yano).

Just as Kiyooka turns the gaze towards himself to bring his complicity into view, the acknowledgement by both fields of their ethical responsibility towards decolonization and social justice might also be understood as an acknowledgement of their complicity in the production of certain narratives. If the shift towards "global Asias" can help reveal how "academic power is a function of state power, economic power, political power, and military power" (Nguyen and Hoskins 4), then perhaps texts like *Wheels* can also help us recognize our complicity as scholars—that is, as people who *circulate* texts, rather than people who merely comment on *how* they circulate—by making apparent the perceptual practices of each field.

NOTES

1 This article is dedicated to Donald Goellnicht, my late supervisor. Thank you for everything, Don. I still feel your guidance whenever I read your writing, which has been both an inspiration and a comfort to me in your absence.
2 *Nihongo* is the Japanese word for the Japanese language.
3 Literally, "one who was affected by the atomic bomb."
4 My reading draws on Kirsten McAllister's "Photographs of a Japanese Canadian Internment Camp: Mourning Loss and Invoking a Future."
5 I owe this insight to Atsuko Sakaki's "Tanizaki Jun'ichirō, or Photography as Violence."
6 McFarlane is referring here to the Human Genome Project, which he argues enacts violence through the collection and digitization of genetic information on the *hibakusha*. While the project's purpose was to record the effects of radiation on human cells, the transformation of human lives into genetic information results in the "forgetting" of the original context of the atomic bomb.
7 Many thanks to the anonymous reviewer for pointing this out.

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David Martin

Holy Trinity, Bankhead

I hike the strip between road and ditch
until a church crowns a blunt slope.
Not a church, but its foundation,
a chipped dish for trapping rain.
Each step's seal has been fractured,
nosing scraped away. Low risers
lessen my stride and compose
a view of remains weathering the sun.

At apex of ascension, lodgepole leaps
from pocked concrete, felled pillars
rust with needles, and fungus stews
in their shallow bowl. Father Zyla's
baritone swell had mirrored itself
from the whitewashed walls for
the Polish miners who dug up high
into Cascade's swamp-rock seams.

I lower myself into frame, the same
size as the church of my childhood —
I'm below floorboards, with marcato
nail-rasps as feet file to pine pews.
Muffled sense bleeds into basement,
congregation raked upright for hymns.
Boy fingers the program, tallies span
for prayers, readings, sermon.

Yet now overcome by some unbidden
hymnal mnemonic, souvenir of a first
death that crushed, crushes: plagal chords
drop their burden onto ears desperate
to know how music and fatal silence
ply so close. Tears are ruined in this
abode, undone in the time that worship
has contrived to remind him of dying.

Boy-strides retreat over my head, shame-
arpeggios reddening up the stave and out
the door, to the car, buckled and waiting
for service end. I climb out of cemented

container and descend flaking stairs
that stiffen the gait, satisfied to be
released from under, in a spruce-clutch
that shoots and falls, shoots and falls.

Dougal McNeill

Sounding: Roy Miki's Tokyo

A Chance Aural Encounter

Tokyo creates the poet Roy Miki but, as befits a writer of such complex negotiations in meaning, it does so by initiating productive displacement.[1] A chance aural encounter in the city's historic entertainment district initiates Miki into the project of sounding the "clashing" formations of "Japanese and Canadian under the sign of transnational processes":

> I was sauntering along a street in Asakusa, in Tokyo. I was drawn to the insistent rhythm of a barker's voice. A tightly knit crowd had cohered around him. Entering that circle, my imagination suddenly shuttled back and forth from the voice to the site of the Royal American Show in my Winnipeg childhood. There, at least for a "normal" kid, the barkers were mesmerizing for the uncanny ability they had to perform a stream of constant talk. I fantasized that, one day, I too might be able to perform so fluidly in the English language. But it wasn't only the voice that attracted me; it was also the discursive calling into appearance the object of its gaze—the so-called freak show. ("Turning In" 65-66)

Sound on a Tokyo street, the wondrous verbal dexterity of a barker drawing a crowd, stirs a memory of *home*, but that memory, sparked aurally, is unhomely, a reminder of visual, and racialized, exclusion. Just like "the so-called freak show," the young Miki's racialized body was, in 1940s and 1950s Winnipeg, exposed like "objects displayed for their divergences from the normative gaze" (66). In Asakusa, however, "among the normative bodies there," it was his "own invisibility" that "took on some uncanny effects" (66).

Miki found himself "slipping into the barker's world" and "anticipating the gaze": invisible, or not racialized, in the Tokyo crowd, Miki "could enter the language and 'pass' in a critical space" that began "to warp" his imagination. Far from this being a moment of return, however, or a feeling of home after the uprootedness of racist exclusion in Winnipeg, "the act of slipping into the barker's voice" makes Miki conscious of his "own displacement in the crowd" (67):

> The translation process that allowed the barker's voice to be folded into the remembered childhood moment disrupted my consciousness of the scene. . . . As the barker's voice trailed on, there I was, on a warm and pleasant Saturday afternoon, utterly immersed in the memory of a racialized, hence "freakish" as well, body that haunted my childhood in Winnipeg.
>
> In what was then a largely unconscious move to redraw boundaries, I decided to return to Canada, convinced that the I in the crowd at Asakusa would never be Japanese, whatever that term might have meant at the time. . . . But, for a JC, one born into the aftermath of uprooting and cultural deracination, the same moment initiated a turn away from Japan as a point of origin and towards Canada as the site of future critical work. (67)

Miki concentrates, with a particular intellectual intensity, on a cluster of lifelong political and poetic associations in this autobiographical fragment. Tokyo initiates, in this narrative, a double refusal, prompting a turn from the idea of Japan as a place of return, the ideal destination *home* for Japanese Canadians, in the language of both racist slurs and the official language of orders-in-council for repatriation, at the same moment as it spurs a critical approach to the problem of Canada itself. The passage, with its language of redrawn boundaries and turns, emphasizes the poet's productive *dislocation*, the juxtaposition of Winnipeg and Tokyo, not-here and not-home, with the promise of "critical work" as something done in the spaces between. Tokyo, across Miki's writing, is a real place but, more importantly, it is a signifier, a proper noun invested with and circulating between multiple, sometimes contested, national, personal, communal, and political histories. It also makes this link through a *sound* memory, the performed and denaturalized *thickness* of the barker's Japanese discourse drawing out the memory that Miki had "fantasized that, one day, [he] too might be able to perform so fluidly in the English language" (66). A barker's performance is a rendering of language enlarged, made strange and wondrous, and Miki, in one of the

understated substitutions so typical of his achievement, enacts it in this very sentence by the substitution of "fluently," the more obvious adverbial pairing with its associations of assimilation and the normative, with "fluidly," the language of *flow*, movement, transformation, and his own aesthetics of change. Tokyo, then, is a point of origin for a poetic oeuvre "w(e)ary of / all labelled things" ("Crossing the Date Line" 525)[2] and both suspicious and tired of the restrictions enforced by narratives of origin and national belonging. This essay positions Tokyo as central to Miki's poetry for its *soundings*. I use this term to cover both the importance of sound to Miki's exploration of the city, an aural- and performance-based dimension to his poetry perhaps neglected in our critical focus on the visual elements of West Coast innovative poetry, and to indicate the way the city initiates, or is the occasion for, a certain intellectual restlessness and openness, an opportunity for sounding out ideas and political-cultural developments.

Why take these soundings now? What is urgent, for readers now, in this decades-long poetic project to sound Tokyo? Two answers present themselves. In the literary sphere, the publication of Miki's *Flow: Poems Collected and New* (2018) offers chances for readers to take his poems as part of a continuous project, reading between collections and lines for continuities, threads, loops, and returns. Miki's individual poems work on their own terms, to be sure; the substance of his *Collected* poems, taken together, however, allows us to follow some of the streams through which his imagination flows. The focus on Tokyo in *Mannequin Rising* (2011), for instance, casts a different light on earlier poems when they are read as part of this recent, expansive, and generously conceived edition. More troublingly, in extra-literary contexts, Miki's poems take on new resonance and find new urgency amongst the racialized discourses surrounding the COVID-19 pandemic. Miki's "Viral Travels to Tokyo," with its exploration of colonies "of restless sojourners bent / on global migration to forge mobile identities" (427) and its careful ear for the racialized language of "social / distancing" (427), "viral globalization" (427), and "the hot zone" (427), gains an uncannily prophetic force, its representations of the "post-pig" (427) security at Narita Airport around the time of the 2009 H1N1 influenza pandemic now acting as a kind of anticipatory interrogation of the racialized discourse of COVID-19's spread and containment. Trump's repeated designation of COVID-19 as a

"Chinese virus" (or "kung flu"), the surge in anti-Asian racism in Canada through 2020, and the revival of older racialized metaphors of invasion, contagion, and spread in media descriptions of COVID-19 make Miki's "viral travels" (425) to and from Tokyo newly relevant.[3] His soundings, I will argue here, anticipate and respond to these limiting and destructive associations of racialized subjectivity with infection and viral spread, while finding in Tokyo opportunities for rethinking—and hearing—the subject in a freer composition of discourses.

Tokyo in Wobble

This prose rendering of Miki's Asakusa moment—suspended between sound (the barker) and sight (the freak show), the present and invisibility (Tokyo), and the past and racialized hyper-visibility (Winnipeg)—deploys what Louis Cabri has designated "wobble," Miki's literary technique to generate "semantic slippage" and "change of state" ("Floward" xii). Readers, Cabri contends, "need to adapt to the wobble of Miki's writing, not try to either force the wobble out, or downplay it" (xii). If Tokyo initiates wobble across Miki's oeuvre, appearing as a proper noun in the first poem of his first collection, *Saving Face* (1991), and in the titles of a further three poems across the next twenty-seven years' writing, it is also reimagined, in the poetry, as a wobble place, a space where Miki's own writing tries to give Orientalist discourse the slip, making dashes for spaces of freedom in an intensively imagined and narrated globalized space. Tokyo has, in English-language writing since the 1980s,[4] been deployed as part of what Fred Wah has called "a kind of current western Orientalism that seeks cultural inhabitation by globalization" (6-7). The source of much of this imagery comes from William Gibson's cyberpunk texts, work produced, like Miki's poetry, in Vancouver and its particular racialized spatial politics. Miki's poems, by contrast, often focus on everyday and intimate forms of sociality and experience with other Asian Canadian writers, from an evening out with friends—"On the plate sit three uneaten gyoza / neatly arranged as if we had not leaned / together with our backs to the wall" ("Glance" 351)—to the details of ordinary exchange: "the little yellow / melons wrapped / in cellophane on / styrofoam plates" ("Viral Travels to Tokyo" 435). Each of these details, accumulated across the poems, acts as a counterweight to wobble the stock "neon shudder"

(Gibson, *Neuromancer* 15) of Tokyo as a synonym for globalization. This may seem a belated recognition—Asian Canadian literary studies has, after all, for several decades now been turning critical attention to the tropics of the Other in white writing—but Miki's work takes on, I want to suggest, in this current moment, a new rhetorical power and insight. COVID-19 is, as Iyko Day puts it, "a great revealer, laying bare the structures of racial disposability that have sacrificed people, from migrant detainees to meat packers" (64), across North America. It also, she goes on to observe, highlights the ways in which current discourses presenting Asians as "viral transmitters of disease" are "symptomatic of something much more deeply ingrained" in settler-colonial ideologies, a "romantic anti-capitalism" seeing authentic community threatened by "peril" (64) from elsewhere. It is of scholarly interest that Miki's writing, (produced in the decades when "Japan bashing" on the American right, and cyberpunk on the literary left, were at their strongest), threads responses to these twin discourses in his Tokyo poems; it is of troublingly contemporary relevance that they continue to speak to and against these discourses' ongoing mutations and adaptations.

Tokyo is an opportunity for wobble, too, between and through the deadening nationalisms of our current era, whether Canadian, American, or Japanese. Tokyo is a productive place for a Japanese Canadian writer seeking to trouble *both* the logic of racialized exclusion encoded in traditional Canadian identities *and* the erasures of its updated, official, multicultural variants. Tokyo is, after all, a city characterized by its status as an intensely *American* space, subject to a continuous US military presence since 1945 and dominated, politically and economically, by its place in the US empire.[5] Its cultural life is characterized by what Takayuki Tatsumi has called "never-ending intercultural oscillations between Americanization and Japanization" (1). Miki's Tokyo is not a place for personal return; his ancestors' homes were in Kyushu and not a place where stabilizing identities can be forged. It is, rather, a site for wobbling in the slippage between an American-dominated cultural globalization ("the health of the local in / the spectrum of its splintered ends" ["Five Takes on Culture" 357]) and an always inadequate because constraining Canadian identity.[6] This Tokyo allows the writer to "re-orient himself" ("Tokyo Evening" 355), finding his bearings in both reorientation as mapping and spatial familiarity and as a kind of willed,

critical immersion in the discourses of Orientalism and its processes of racialization. My desire here is not inadvertently to orientalize Miki, and any number of essays could be written on an archive as rich as his taking as their bearings the visual poetics of bpNichol, say, or the inspiration of William Carlos Williams. Tokyo in Miki's work is, I hope to show, a place created by way of the *dislocative* qualities of the poet's voice; if you never quite know where you are with a Miki poem—"where is here?" once more!—that *generative* confusion is part of his poetry's elegance and imaginative provocation.[7] Miki's Tokyo is not held to be strange by some putatively objective measure, as it is in the discourse of "weird Japan."[8] Miki's Tokyo is rather, *made strange*, estranged, subject to the imaginative vivification of poetry. The early "Tokyo Poem" (1969/76), for example, the opening poem in the "Sansei" sequence, begins with wobble:

> shadows return one & by one cling
> to a single calla lily (a yellow
> pistle set deep as desire too is
> a conch a white petal a surface
>
> to pull the bee into its mysteries[.] (9)

The line breaks, for starters, slow us down: is desire "set deep," or is it "a conch"? Is a conch serving to "pull the bee" or is it "a surface"? The "mysteries" that follow these lines are quotidian details that, for all their names may be unfamiliar to white Canadian readers, are markers of the anti-exotic and domestic everyday. "[D]aikon gobo & lotus roots" (9) are commonplace features of the Japanese garden and larder. "Shadows" are both spatial, the darkening on a lily, and markers of time, the place of the sun and their "return" indicating patterns and order. How is the reader to place all of this in sequence? Flowers and seasonal markers are crucial to many forms of Japanese poetics, and to North American developments from them, certainly. Flowers are, in fact, a cliché in anglophone evocations of Japanese aesthetics and the discourse of authenticity. But Miki's "Tokyo" flower here is, crucially, an import, the calla lily originating in Southern Africa and being as readily found in British Columbia as in Tokyo itself.[9] The "return" of this poem is neither to a nativist idea of Japanese purity or readily legible *difference* nor

to any universalizing globalization *avant la lettre*, but rather to a productive uncertainty, a wobble in the space between "a surface" and "mysteries."

The swerves this poem performs away from meaning—from "one" to "& by one," without contextualizing stabilization for this odd phrasing—illustrate the energy-giving power of Miki's Tokyo as a site for poetic *refusal*. The barker's call highlights language's slippery, fluid, flowing powers in creating potential realities; the tout's job, after all, is to evoke a promise and an imagined future in a crowd's mind as much as it is to describe any given state. Miki draws on this affiliation to craft in his set of Tokyo poems a creative refusal, an imagined space outside what he has called "state multiculturalism," with "its production of . . . mandatory ethnic identities" ("Between" 221). Always suspicious of "the truthfulness of 'one's primary experience,' i.e., a point of origin for the 'I' that produces clarity of meaning to dispel the obfuscations plaguing contemporary life" (Miki, "The Future's Tense" 41), and alive to "the problems of representing the contemporary, the 'present,' which appears and disappears in flickering sights, sounds, and silences of language" (52), Miki's Tokyo is an imagined space neither reducible to the particularities of one Japanese Canadian biographical experience nor bleached of these details and their distinctive colourings and history. The imagined city balances between the "flow" of freely moving bodies and ideas and history's constraints and the record of forced movement and incarceration, between the promise of what Eleanor Ty has named the "*Asian global*" (133, emphasis original), explored by writers who are "mobile subjects in a global age" (xxvi), and the ongoing projects of bordering, racializing, and distancing that Miki works within and against in Tokyo and Vancouver. If, for William Gibson, "Japan is the global imagination's default setting for the future" (*Distrust* 124), Miki's blending and clashing of registers, a Winnipeg barker shouting out alongside the smooth "absence of local references" ("Viral Travels to Tokyo" 445), restores a sense of history and contest to too-easily-commodified and stunted images of the Asian global city, rejecting an assimilation into the exoticizing presentations of the globalization or touristic travel document or its theoretical and literary equivalents. "Wily roots of the translocal," the speaker of "Viral Travels to Tokyo" notes, "made for a daydream of origins and / ends" (445). Finding one's "roots," perhaps, is a matter of wiliness, being on one's guard against both the seductive ideological quality of daydreams of "origin" and alert to the multiple meanings of local

things in other places: "vibrant maples set alongside the / towering bluer than blue yuletide tree" ("Tokyo Evening" 355). The recurrent images of waters and "waves that breach the / shore line" (385) in these poems gesture at movement and freedom, but they also signify *distance*. Miki's poetic mapping involves, like Roy K. Kiyooka's, a "pacific pilgrim's solitude" (Kiyooka 101), writing a *somewhere*, a recognition of determinate Canadian material, the "solitude" being "no less conspicuous" than the more famous two, for Kiyooka (100), in a globalized space that is also shaped by its own unique and historically bound circumstances. The energy, and ethical promise, of this poetry is in its negativity, in what Raya Dunayevskaya called the power of the negative or "the dialectic of negativity as the moving and creative principle" (Marx qtd. in Dunayevskaya 62). As a place where the inadequacies of official multiculturalism can be refused and the "sheen of overwritten / landscapes wrong from the outset" (Miki, "Tokyo Evening" 355) can be countered by the journey to "re-orient" (355), Miki's Tokyo offers a vantage point from which to demand more of the discourses of both Canadian multiculture and globalized mobility. Just as "*each segment*" of a Tokyo train station "*enacts a serial poem*" ("Viral Travels to Tokyo" 441), so too can we follow the references and asides in Miki's poems, when read together in the solidity of *Flow*, as a kind of serial poem of Tokyo, with each return, from "TokyoPoem" (1969/76) to "subversion in tokyo" (2001) to "Tokyo Evening" (2011), adding nuance and complexity to the arrangement presented before.

Scavenged Lingo

Flow takes its readers on the currents of imagined sounds, introducing a Tokyo characterized by human voices and noise. The poet finds himself, in "A Pre Face" (1991) to *Saving Face*, "lost in a tokyo language school, sounds of childhood / japanese popping into my head" (Miki, *Flow* 5) while later poems will record more vertiginous pleasures in the "phonemic rush" (348) "in a sea of tossed eigo" (346) and "syllabic banter / mingling German with English with Japanese" (350) as speakers "[s]cavenged the lingo to survive in the city" ("Glance" 350). This is an intensely auditory poetics, a kind of sonic ekphrasis rendering the city as soundscape. "The chorus of chanting voices" ("Of Sentient Beings" 311) adds to the barker's linguistic dexterity and Viral's "chuckling" in "Viral Travels to Tokyo" (427). Tokyo's streets are

"bantering" (429) and "chuckling" (430), and "the hubbub of migrant / souls" are voiced outside Shibuya Station (447) while "the / path the rain takes / to the pavement" turns "out to be laughter" (441). These are consistently human, or personifying, sounds, an earscape of human activity, pleasure (laughter and chuckling), negotiation, and negotiated communication. Tokyo residents, in Miki's poems, *speak*. This sound city is in contrast, and an implicit rebuke, to the Orientalist tropes prevalent even in avowedly Critical Theory and oppositional texts produced to understand the globalizing 1990s. Critical works that positioned themselves as skeptical of, and resistant to, official ideologies and the work of racism could still, in their association of Japan with global capitalism, reproduce and intensify Orientalist imagery and associations. Scott Bukatman's influential account of the ways "[i]nvisible spaces now dominate, as the *city* of the modernist era is replaced by the *non-place urban realm*" (6, emphasis original) is symptomatic:

> What characterizes Tokyo is the domination of the image: not simply the static, oversized posters with their staring eyes . . . but the endless flow of images across the television screen and the endless televisions. . . . Tokyo exists as pure spectacle; that is, as a proliferation of semiotic systems and simulations which increasingly serve to replace physical human experience and interaction. (26)

This is Gibson's Shinjuku as a "manically animated forest of signs" (*Pattern* 125), or even, alas, my beloved Roland Barthes' conclusion that "there is nothing to *grasp*" (110) in the "empire of signs." Miki's "realization that 'Japanese' could not provide an origin for subjectivities produced in the historical contexts of the Canadian nation-state" ("Turning In" 68) by way of his encounter with the Asakusa barker and his unexpected poetic reach allows him to draw on noise and speech—on the barker's "fluidity"—to slip past both the restrictions of the Orientalist othering of the Asian as inscrutable, absent, or silent, whether in traditional or cyberpunk articulations, and to make this imagined city habited and habitable. A sound city is, after all, a city that is in good shape. Listening, rather than looking, is a method by which one may make one's way in Tokyo, a city of human experience and exchange. Kirsten Emiko McAllister, in conversation with Miki, prompts him to link the punning of "shopping" (consumption) and "scoping" (getting one's bearings and, via etymology, being a poet) with "a way to find some bearings, perhaps a way of 'orienting'—with the perhaps

somewhat shaky or loose pun on 'Asian'" (159). A shaky, loose pun can *flow*: scoping, as mapping and poem-making, is also a reminder of the role of speech in this process, the scop someone who "commanded a mastery of the complex oral-formulaic materials" (Bessinger and Brogan 1127) their audience expected. A scop, as "professional entertainer, [] harpist and poet-singer" (1127), needs to be heard, their scoping a kind of barking for the unruly, unhoused, human flows that counteract anti-humanist and Orientalist narratives of the city. "i'll take all the disorder // the reel spills out" (Miki, "albert house, wednesday" 132) Miki's poetic "i" announces: this overflow, of speech, discourse, signs, sounds, is how he scopes his Tokyo.[10]

"the let down"

If Miki's Tokyo is a sound city in its lexical patterning and through the poet's focus of attention, it prompts and encourages in turn certain pleasures in the poet's own soundings. Much of the thrill in Miki's work, for my ears anyway, comes from the ways in which he sounds out the complexities, hurts, and possibilities of his historical situation in unexpected rushes of competing vocabulary. Memories of Tokyo, in "A Pre Face," are preceded by "the spoken in the bleached record of memory" that follows "in the wake of / assimilation, the ad after bc" (5). The liberation of activism and activist assertion, in Miki, is not so much the finding of a settled (state-sanctioned, identifiable) *voice* so much as it is an invitation to *voicing*, to having sounds and word patterns bristle in poems. The poet has, in conversation with Louis Cabri, mentioned how "the ghosted nature of Japanese as a mother tongue for me prompts me to think again of its ripple effects in a kind of somatic memory," a memory that "could be a trace of sounds, or of rhythmic gestures, or of words" ("the coursing" 23). Miki practises a form of what Sarah Dowling calls "translingual poetics"; phrases, words, and sounds from Japanese heard and spoken in Tokyo and Canada work to decentre English as the central, canonical, or *native* language of the poems. In a strategic wobble, however, these words resist Orientalist mystification by being commonplace phrases rather than gestures at untranslatable or ineffable mystery. "[D]ensha" (Miki, *Flow* 212), "kasa" (347), "karada" (445), "ningen" (349), even "eigo" (346) itself: in *train, umbrella, body, person, English*, Miki's soundings give voice to a Japanese language suppressed by assimilationist

Canadian experiences and given new energy in Tokyo streetscapes. This brief list provides no stabilizing linguistic register, either: the Japanese words, romanized in Miki's poems, are dislocated sounds. Meguro, the fashionable inner-city Tokyo suburb, unspools in punning play from "me guro" to "eye black" (目黒, a literal rendering of the meaning of the two kanji that make its name) to a promise of development: "follow me / grow me // me guro" (446). Miki's soundings wobble between the utopian "not yet" ("mada mada" [175]) and the trauma of the past, long ago ("mukashi mukashi" [165]) and yet still working on the present. This wobble can be playful, "English" rendered both distinctively Canadian ("eh") and Japanese in the questioning imperative "*eh? Go!*" ("Half Dozen Haiku Like" 451), or in the experiment testing "[w] hat happens when he / got the H out of Utah" (451) and ending up with "uta! uta!" (歌/song) in the "ah so / spry spirit of Kiyooka-san" (451), "ah so" being both a racist taunt or stereotypical expression given to Japanese characters in any number of Hollywood films and an everyday Japanese phrase.

The translingual wobble can in addition evoke and recreate the traumatic displacements of internment and Japanese Canadian forced dislocation:

> jamais je crois hotondo on the way
> je crois caw carnage sumimasen domo
> le folie dans le foliage wasureta the let down
> ("Knocks at the Door—*ten*" 207)

Ste. Agathe French, the soundscape of Miki's youthful experience of cultural and personal dislocation in Manitoba, clashes here with French-derived English words ("foliage") and Japanese conversational phrases "hotondo" (almost, nearly), "wasureta" ("I have forgotten") in a bewildering recreation of the experience of a subject's breakdown and recreation. Miki brings this translingual energy from Tokyo to his wider poetic vocation in

> feigned sites
>
> of nomenclature
> . . . . . .
> dine on burnt syllables
> interrogate the blythe
> seams of grammatique ("The Rescue" 111)

Grammatique is archaic French and yet legible even to a monolingual anglophone reader; what though of "feigned" sites of nomenclature? Naming and grouping can be activities of self-discovery—as with the "[c]olonies of restless sojourners bent / on global migration to forge mobile identities" ("Viral Travels to Tokyo" 427)—or they can be oppressive, systems of classification fixing subjects in their own definitions. "Blythe" suggests wobble between the two, with its standard meaning, as "blithe," of kindly or joyous nestling within it the obsolete sense to do with that "of the waves" and their flow. Miki's soundings—"this viral dispersion" (430)—sets meaning loose and into new relation.

"the firey heart of the city"

Japanese Canadian has, in these writings, always been a condition of possibility, a point of departure rather than an identity to fix and hold in place. Never static, Japanese Canadian has, in Miki's work, "consistently been experienced as contingent and mobile, producing in its mediated relationships a network of signifying effects—effects that have been dynamic, sometimes turbulent, sometimes imprisoning, sometimes liberating and sometimes dumbfounding" ("Turning In" 64). As the Canadian state begins to "appear so much less tangible in the blurred border zones of transnational and global flows" (64), so too

> the time of the nation needs to be reconceived as non-synchronous—in contradistinction to the linear and totalizing time of imperialism and colonialism—so that texts, and especially racialized texts, can have the mobility to open cultural transactions that encourage the re-articulation of a more radical democratic system of values. (Miki, "Altered States" 54)

Tokyo, as an imagined space elsewhere to the maps centring the forty-ninth parallel or memories of dispersal either east of the Rockies or by deportation to Japan, is a good place to think with, a site for investigation of new "contingent and mobile" (Miki, "Turning In" 64) identity formations. The proliferation of dedications to fellow Asian Canadian writers—"Fred W," "Larissa L," "Hiromi G," "Ashok M," and so on—gives a collective sociability to this creative enterprise, with its confidence "that nothing / is irretrievable in the descent" (Miki, "Viral Travels to Tokyo" 428) and that "[d]istance only figures a desire for more intimacy" (429).

Other poets have recorded the first negation Miki notes as the fact that "almost / Japanese is never enough" ("Half Dozen Haiku Like" 451). Joy Kogawa's Tokyo poems, for example, emphasize the city's "smoke haze" ("Descent into Smog" 4) and alienating pressures:

> pelted shapeless in rush hour crush
> bicycle pedestrian cart jostling
> hip to bumper, wheel to toe
> police whistle siren scream
> political speech neon
> flashing particle people blur
> past ticket takers the world's
> most accurate mechanical man
> pummel down subway stairs
> and shove heave oh canada my
> home and native land give
> me land lots of land[.] ("Rush Hour Tokyo" 16)

Miki's poems acknowledge this urban reality too, "the face looking / back not mine" in "the reflection / in the subway window in the tunnel" ("market rinse" 160) recording an alienation from self and community in the anonymous press of the city. But Miki's work performs a second negation, registering the dislocation only, via the figure of the barker or insertions of the history of Japanese Canadian internment and displacement into the narrative of the present ("*a shift marked in jc time 1949, the turn of maple leaf forever*" ["market rinse" 157]), to in turn negate the first negation by way of Tokyo's potentially productive displacements. Miki's poetic "i" is not *not* at home in Tokyo, riding the wave of competing cultural currents and assumptions. Seeking out "islands of invention / to get thru the day" ("This is not political" 127), his Tokyo is not utopia but an imaginable, and desired, *elsewhere*:

> *the train from narita into tokyo, quantity assumes dimension, less and less space in the compartment. pulling in to the firey heart of the city, shinjuku, body pushing against the (now) cumbersome baggage. spilling in the station to enter the waves, the wheel of springs loose from the cart. sheer weight of paper and books works a stasis. stuck in the acentred gesture, the caricature of gaijin dragging baggage up the stairs. like stupid salmon going the wrong way and missing the tide. finally arrived.*
> ("market rinse" 155)

Shinjuku is a "firey heart," and the poem threatens to develop into katabasis, a narrative of crowds as hellscapes. But then the crowds become "waves," the speaker, no matter what their struggle upstairs with baggage, is in movement, and, rather than Kogawa's "oh canada," in an image (salmon) inflected with Canadian associations linked inseparably to movement, migration, and travel. Salmon, stupid or not, have here "finally arrived," travelling ("spilling") against the current—as a salmon run takes the fish back to spawn and create?—in an act of creation. Negation, an openness to nothingness, turns the pedestrian crush of a crowded train into something like negative capability on the "*train to narita airport*" ("market rinse" 175):

> (shade of sayonara
> say o
> say nara
> say nada (175)

This Tokyo is generative because of what it refuses to be, what it is not yet ("mada mada" [175]), what might be transformed by democratic forms of reading and imagining otherwise, unbound by affiliation either to Canadian state multiculturalism or Japanese nationalist essentialism. "[T]he viral dispersion disproves / the untimely death of history" ("Viral Travels to Tokyo" 430) in these shifting accounts of Tokyo, a city "fluid and capacious" (430) in its poetic occasions, initiator of wobble and aside and indirection, opening out ways the city's legacies can be reimagined and repurposed. The obscurity or waywardness some readers report as a frustration with Miki's aesthetics can be read, in his treatment of Tokyo, as a way of making material open for re-examination. When he has "[*t*]*he friendly / hearts at Shibuya stare into a hundred million cell phones*" (430), Miki upends both the renewed nationalist rhetoric of contemporary Japanese politics *and* the racializing accounts that would have wartime accusations of Japanese uniformity applied to minoritized groups today. A "hundred million cellphones" echoes the wartime slogan of "One Hundred Million Hearts Beating as One," as well as, in the realm of Asian Canadian literature, Kerri Sakamoto's powerful historical novel on similar themes, *One Hundred Million Hearts* (2003).[11] Miki takes this history and, rather than repressing or centring it, lets it join, transformed and transfigured, the flow of his poetic accumulation.

Conclusion

Takayuki Tatsumi, writing before the new isolationisms of the Trump era, notes:

> In the late 1990s, American and Japanese cultures entered a new phase of interaction: from then onward, essentially chaotic and transculturally infectious negotiations occur between orientalism and occidentalism; between the western belief in eternity and the Japanese aesthetics of the moment; between a western productionist and idealist sensibility and a Japanese high-tech-consumerist and posthistorical mentality; or even between the science-fictional Japan and the Japan of the American imagination and Japanese science fiction itself. The creative clash between cultures has made it easier for us to envision a new kind of theme park beautifully constructed within global space . . . a globalist theme park built by the nuclear imagination. (176-77)[12]

Where does Canadian writing fit in this "new phase of interaction"? Tatsumi's vision seems, in the wake of the war on terror, the global financial crisis, and the renewed nationalisms across East Asia and North America, a distant prospect. If I have stressed the inventive, playful, sounding qualities of Miki's Tokyo in this essay, I want to conclude with a return to Kiyooka's affiliation as a "pacific pilgrim" (101), and to link it to Miki's playfulness as a form of work and imagining otherwise. Tokyo made a poet of the writer in its refusal of his invisibility, his 1970 encounter with the barker bringing him into an awareness of language. In the process, it created for him a scene for ongoing writing, a location outside of the North American continent, and other to Canadian literature as normative identity, that could speak to the ongoing struggles to document Japanese Canadian experience, and to redress Japanese Canadian injustice, while also placing these in wider global relation. "All my texts have started in Japan," Kiyooka told Miki. "I don't know why that is so but that's true" (Miki, "Inter-face" 66). Whereas Kiyooka starts with Japan and asks "old mother pacific who truly keeps the family archives" ("Excerpts from the Long Autumnal Scroll," *Pacific* 245), Miki *re-turns* Tokyo, starting in Canada and its racialized injustices and then re-turning, and with each encounter adding a new layer, to Tokyo, not as a point of origin, but as a place of re-vision, re-turn, and longing:

> & to be among there are
> no roots
> there ships wait
> to be moved and they

too cross the pacific
once we said
we say[.] ("Sansei Poem—*five*" 21)

We say: the "lyric present"[13] gives over to readers each Tokyo encounter, in poems sustained over fifty years now, as a chance to sound the situation anew. Because "[a]ll the truths compiled in a list do / not add up to a usable commodity" (Miki, "Tokyo Evening" 355), and that, in Miki's hands, at least, is their sustaining power.

NOTES

1 I first rehearsed an early version of this essay's argument at the Aesthetics of Oceans conference, Seikei University, July 2019. I thank Fuhito Endo for his generous hospitality and intellectual and critical support and stimulation on that occasion and many others.
2 All poems are cited from *Flow: Poems New and Collected*.
3 Cathy Park Hong and Carol Liao have both written powerful accounts of the ways in which the pandemic has revealed and emboldened racial prejudice and violence.
4 See David Palumbo-Liu's analysis of the ways in which "[t]he permeation of Canadian space" by Japanese subjects "brings the exotic home to Gibson" and allows him to create "with impunity the necessarily separate spaces of Asian America" (381).
5 My argument here is informed by Gavan McCormack's analysis.
6 This fits with what Kit Dobson calls Miki's "broader literary and political project of questioning the legacies of national and state structures . . . [as] the transnational dialogue comes to focus upon the differentiation between dominant, American conceptions of transnational subjectivity and a more mobile form of the subject" (162). This more mobile form, in Dobson's reading, "comes to be aligned in part with Canada and with other spaces that are depicted as somehow escaping the hegemonic power of the United States" (162). Tokyo, in my reading, is both inside and out of this kind of escape.
7 I am grateful to *Canadian Literature*'s anonymous readers for prompting me to clarify these ideas.
8 See Patrick W. Galbraith's work for an astute exploration of the mutually reinforcing Othering going on between state marketing in Japan and Western discourses of Japanese exceptionalism and oddity.
9 Yoshinobu Hakutani has written powerfully on the cross-pollination of Japanese haiku and North American poetic traditions.
10 What then of the silence of the mannequins, those humanoid figures of consumerism at work in *Mannequin Rising* (2011)? Louis Cabri, in a bravura reading, suggests that Japan "seems crucial to understanding the gradual turning to economic language in Miki's poetry" ("the mannequin" 34) and that "the eponymous 'rising' mannequin is attempting to articulate the price Japan has paid for dominance by and success due to the inverse ratio. The price paid for such enormous economic success is cultural homogeneity and memory-loss. Consumerism—shrines of consumerism—would seem to be playing a

determining role in the public forgetting" (35). My own reading develops, I hope, as a dialectical complement to Cabri's. If he has mapped the power of the negative charging the poems' representations of a dominant consumerism, my readings here scop(e) the ways in which stray sounds and soundings show human activities and connections being made possible "in defiance of the injunction / not to expose the frailty of the codes" ("Scoping (also pronounced 'Shopping') in Kitts," *Flow* 396).

11 See Dower, "Cultures of Defeat," for a thorough account of the assumptions behind the slogan and the way these were shared by Imperial and Allied leaderships, material relevant to Miki's unbundling of the phrase from its wartime past.

12 See also Andrew McKevitt's account of this process across popular culture.

13 The term, as I use it here, is Seo-Young Chu's.

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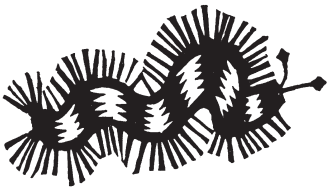

Stephen Bett

Fred Wah: A Floating Space

nv s ble
tr ck
five 6 seven nine and ten
its a trap. [1]

Pictograms from the Interior of B.C.—Fred Wah
(with nods to Creeley's numbers)

nv s ble
naught for the eyes
behind any danse's russe[2]
a floating space (no axes

tr ck
trans-ekphrastic,[3] no dots
to connect, no juiced up
berries in this vine-line

1 "Its" [*sic*]
2 Once again in these glosas, WCW's renowned & wonderful poem, as a self-portrait; look at all the i's
3 Bowering notes Wah's response to these pre-historic cave drawings is "'transcreative'—neither translations nor descriptions." (Intro to Wah's *Selected,* p. 15)

five 6 seven nine and ten
by the numbers then One and
one and one / Make a picture
two things / one and one[4]
rolls back into itself (. . . but

its a trap.
Trompe l'oeil frame(d) / two things,
four things / one and three[5]
this dream pops too, rubble freed

4 "One and one . . . a picture" (from Creeley's "Enough"); "two things one and one" (from Creeley's "Song (What do you want, love")

5 "two and two . . . one and three" (from Creeley's "Numbers"); & more loveliness still: "let / me sing, *one* to / *one* to *one,* and let / me follow" (from Creeley's "One thing done")

Emma Lansdowne

Rustling Shadows: Plants as Markers of Historical Violence and Diasporic Identity in Badami's *Can You Hear the Nightbird Call?*

Anita Rau Badami's *Can You Hear the Nightbird Call?* is a novel of negotiation. Explored in the context of simmering animosities—socio-economic, cultural, religious, racial—and recurring communal violence, Badami's three female protagonists spend their lifetimes negotiating their personal, public, and often conflicting identities, as well as the legacies and traumatic memories of dislocation, violence, and loss among transnational communities in the decades following India's 1947 Partition. This paper explores the role of plants in *Nightbird* as indicators of violence and evocations of diasporic identity. If Badami's novel grapples, as Shilpa D. Bhat argues, with "the question of the homeland/hostland binary and historical realities" manifest in the experience of twentieth-century diasporic Indian communities in Canada (55), it follows that formulations of home and belonging play an integral role in exploring the distinctions and gaps between these physical, psychological, and temporal spaces. The forging of identities resilient to the precarity of diasporic liminality and intergenerational trauma is a challenge shared by the novel's female protagonists, and plants play a key

role in contextualizing through metaphor home in its various iterations as a reflection of this process.

Like the protagonists and their memories, plants are living, evolving beings that through their own forms of mobility both erect and dismantle boundaries; and, as commodities, companions, and cultural symbols, they are acted upon by humans in ways that reflect back to us the challenges of migration and marginality. It is fitting, then, that Badami—herself an avid gardener and plant lover—has chosen through *Nightbird* to employ plants as a medium by which contests of place, home, and memory are explored.[1] In channelling my analysis of *Nightbird* through a deep attention to the plants that dot its landscapes, I draw upon the precedents being set by the burgeoning field of critical plant studies. As Woodward and Lemmer argue in their introduction to the 2019 *Critical Plant Studies* issue of the *Journal of Literary Studies*, "plants play a crucial role in the experience of being human" (24).[2] In *Nightbird*, plants reflect and actively support ongoing human negotiations of memory, power, and belonging as they manifest across transnational and temporal contexts, not only because of the prominent role certain plants play in the history of colonial and postcolonial India, but also because plants are deeply integrated in human processes of placemaking and identity construction. In the novel, Badami turns recurringly to plants to articulate, through symbolization and sensorial evocation, inarticulable experiences of dislocation, violence, and (non)belonging, and the often fragmented and repressed memories those experiences create. Tarun K. Saint, in his book on fictive testimony in Partition literature, argues that "literature as a mode of surrogate testimony, folding back into historical memory after such a detour through the imagination" (20), employs a form of truth-telling whose emphasis on symbolization and whose oblique renderings of traumatic memory attempt a counter-memory to official narratives, speaking on behalf of those who have experienced violence but who cannot, for a multiplicity of reasons, bear witness to or recount their own stories (23). In offering a close reading of plants in Badami's *Nightbird*, this paper contributes to ongoing scholarship on Partition and diasporic literature whose representational strategies negotiate the challenges of intergenerational memory and trauma that continue to haunt South Asian communities across the globe.

Can You Hear the Nightbird Call? follows the stories of three women whose lives are marked and connected by shared intergenerational and community traumas inflicted by Partition and subsequent iterations of socio-political upheaval and violence within and beyond the borders of India. Bibi-ji, born Sharanjeet Kaur in a small Punjab village, leaves her homeland for Vancouver, Canada, as a young woman to fulfill her father's unrequited desire to immigrate to the Pacific Northwest. She loses touch with her remaining family in the wake of Partition, leaving her bereft and burdened by guilt for having left. Nimmo, Bibi-ji's long-lost niece, is a mother in New Delhi, haunted by the fragmented memories of Partition violence (rape, murder, dislocation) in which the rest of her family was lost. Her happenstance reunion with Bibi-ji leads to the forging of a challenging relationship built on tenuous family connections and disparate cultural and socio-economic experiences. Leela Bhat, daughter of a German mother and Brahmin father, is a South Indian biracial woman who, upon immigration to Vancouver, finds herself suddenly without the good reputation of her husband's family that has always preceded her, and upon which she has so carefully built her sense of belonging. Leela is befriended immediately by Bibi-ji, her landlord, but their relationship becomes increasingly strained as the consequences of political violence in India reverberate within the diasporic community.

Bookended by the turning away of the *Komagata Maru* on the West Coast of Canada in 1914 and the Air India bombing in 1985, the novel navigates the transnational history of post-Partition Punjab through the protagonists' direct and indirect connections to the major events that mark this history—Partition, the Indian Emergency, the Khalistan movement, the attack on the Golden Temple, the assassination of Indira Gandhi, and the subsequent anti-Sikh pogroms—and, just as importantly, to the oppressive colonial history that preceded and informed it. Focusing first on the sugar cane fields surrounding Sharanjeet's childhood village, on the imported lavender soap coveted by Sharanjeet, and on Mrs. Hardy's Amritsar English garden, I argue that plants evoke past, present, and future communal and familial traumas, reflecting the entangled histories of colonization by a foreign power and the mass violence of independence as these resonate through Bibi-ji's life. I then argue that the roses in Bibi-ji's Vancouver garden are the evocation of a carefully constructed but always precarious diasporic domestic identity,

while the mango trees of Leela Bhat's past and imagined future are both a symbol of and an impediment to notions of belonging.

The opening pages of the novel, which introduce the young Sharanjeet Kaur, immediately provide the reader with a succinct description of pre-Partition West Punjab, a "landscape of villages" scattered across fertile fields of sugar cane, the inhabitants alike "in their annual yearning for the monsoon rains and a bountiful harvest" (Badami 3). In these opening pages, Badami already hints at a fraught history of violence, the "fertile fields" having made the region highly prosperous and, in conjunction with its strategic geographical position, highly desirable to foreign invaders since the seventh century (Badami, "Historical Note" 407). Specifically, the fields of sugar cane can be read as an allusion to more recent foreign intervention. Although sugar cane cultivation has a long history in India, British colonial rule forced greater emphasis on the production and export of cash crops (such as cotton, tobacco, indigo, and sugar cane) through trade regulation and oppressive tax policies. These policies, along with land enclosure, created divisions among the peasant class, leaving many with greater wealth but many more with crippling debt (Attwood 9). A system of debt peonage arose from the monetization of agricultural production achieved through the colonial-era requirement that peasants pay their land revenue in cash, a move that encouraged the commercial sale of crops but also forced a reliance on collateral advance loans (Fox 465). The burden of the colonial tax system and the entrenchment of predatory moneylenders within the peasant economy are clearly evoked in these early pages of the novel as Sharanjeet's father seeks freedom from "the endless cycle of uncertain monsoons, the certain arrival of the tax collector with his pursed lips and implacable eyes, and the inevitable journey to the moneylender who waited like a vulture to lay his hands on their meagre land" (Badami 15). His desire to escape the oppression of lifelong debt propels Harjot Singh to make his failed journey to Canada, an experience that leaves "an indelible mark on [Sharanjeet's] psyche," manifesting in "an intense longing for the land that had refused her father entry" (Chakraborty 123) and setting her on a path toward diasporic subjecthood.

In Sharanjeet's childhood village, sugar cane represents not only the region's agricultural economy and her own rural upbringing, but also the

socio-political consequences of colonial rule. Sharanjeet's Sikh household, we learn, is "[o]ne of a small cluster of Sikh and Hindu houses . . . separated from the Muslim homes by fields of swaying sugar cane" (Badami 3). Like the colonial censuses that drew strictly demarcated religious lines across communities sharing regionally specific histories (Khan 20), sugar cane, the beloved British cash crop, portentously divides the Muslim households from their Sikh and Hindu counterparts in a topographical rendering of growing ethno-religious divisions. Ominous, too, is the foreshadowing function of the fields the night that Sharanjeet's father disappears—an event that propels Sharanjeet toward her self-purported destiny of immigrating to Canada. Badami's description of wind hissing through the fields so that the sugar cane "shook its long fingers at the dark sky" (12) is, in itself, an unsettling image made worse by the near-silence that accompanies his departure, a single bird call sung in warning the only evidence of something amiss. But more unnerving still is the echo of this scene in the fragmented recollections, discussed in more detail later, of Sharanjeet's niece Nimmo's unimaginable childhood trauma: "A child runs through the rustling shadow of tall sugar cane, its syrupy smell mingling with the pungent odour of smoke from burning roof thatch" (152) in the aftermath of an ethno-religious slaughter during Partition. Sugar cane thus functions geographically and socio-economically to contextualize Sharanjeet's upbringing, but also as an interlocutor between past, present, and future instances of colonial and communal violence. A marker of British colonial enterprise and of the landscape of Sharanjeet's father's failure as a rejected colonial subject, the sugar cane also presages the extreme violence arising from Indian independence and the country's subsequent partition into India and Pakistan as experienced through the suppressed memories of Sharanjeet's niece.

Just as sugar cane positions her family within a specific rural cash crop economy in West Punjab, so Sharanjeet's childhood longings reaffirm their relative poverty. Sharanjeet's small world revolves around the "tumultuous envy" she feels for her best friend Jeeti, resident of the large brick-and-mortar house down the road from Sharanjeet's family's mud and thatch home (4). The object of Sharanjeet's deepest affectionate envy, however, is "Jeeti's supply of lavender soap, sent by Sher Singh, her father, all the way from Canada" (4). In these early pages, lavender soap is, for Sharanjeet, a marker of her family's

poverty by virtue of its very inaccessibility, a poignant contrast to the stench of cow dung that seems to permeate her existence (6). Lavender is equally a symbol of the life of privilege to which Sharanjeet early aspires. Comingled in the powerful scent of the bar are the historical underpinnings of this socio-economic disparity between friends, for Jeeti's family's wealth is modelled through her father Sher Singh's status as a diasporic Indian subject living in Canada, his emigration portrayed as an investment that has paid dividends to his family back home in the form of a large house, expensive food, and parcels of "strange and wonderful things like soap and chocolate" (14). His success stands in stark contrast to the failed attempt by Sharanjeet's father to replicate Sher Singh's success by finding his own way to Canada. Propelled by what Sharanjeet's mother Gurpreet terms "'the troublesome question Why Not'" (18), Harjot Singh uses the family's meagre assets to fund his ill-fated journey, arriving on the western shore of Canada in the *Komagata Maru* only to be turned away "as if he were a pariah dog" (10).[3] Having returned confused and embittered, Harjot Singh spends the remainder of his life until his disappearance housebound and chronically sleepy from psychological exhaustion. Jeeti's lavender soap, then, is more than mere childhood idolatry. As an exotic luxury import, the soap for Sharanjeet is the material expression of an elusive but attainable dream of privileged diasporic subjecthood: "Canada, with its lavender soap and chocolate," evolves from a source of childhood envy to Sharanjeet's fated destination (27). When Sharanjeet reaches Vancouver and becomes Bibi-ji, she scents her diasporic subjecthood with lavender, scattering dried flowers throughout her drawers and in her shoes (54), fulfilling her lifelong dream in its most basic material sense.

Yet, the lavender soap that in the early pages of the book drives Sharanjeet to fulfill her inherited dream of immigrating to Canada and marks the construction of her new diasporic domestic identity later becomes tainted with the unshakeable odours of grief, trauma, and violence. Following Partition and the disappearance of her sister, Kanwar, and her family, Sharanjeet-turned-Bibi-ji rejects the scent that in Vancouver had "preceded her arrival and remained like a memory after her departure" (54), clearing away the evidence of her selfish aspirations though, despite her efforts, "the smell of the herb clung to her like guilt" (54). Like the rustling sugar cane

that is witness to the multi-generational trauma of Sharanjeet's family, lavender soap takes on the function of a violent echo, an evocation of past, present, and future traumas, so that what was once a scent representing privileged cleanliness metamorphoses into an unshakeable smell of horror. For Bibi-ji, lavender becomes the scent of her family's silence—ominous and sickening, and inextricably tangled in her callous teenage decision to rob her sister of her purported suitor in a desperate bid to get to Canada and make her life "complete" (35).

Later in the novel, a second echo reverberates across the pages. Bibi-ji's niece, Nimmo, bereft of coherent memories of early childhood and the loss of her family in the violence of Partition, is left only with confused, fragmentary images imbued with the sweet fragrance of "pale violet-coloured soap that her aunt had sent from somewhere far away" (156). The scent of lavender conjures flashes of her mother washing herself in the dark after hiding Nimmo in a grain bin for hours, and of "a pair of lavender-fragrant feet suspended above the floor" (161). Through the disjointed imagery of Nimmo's recall, we are made to understand that her childhood village was the target of anti-Sikh communal violence during Partition, her mother bearing the brunt of a horrific assault after hiding her daughter away. Yet these memories, elusive like the scent that conjures them, leave both Nimmo and the reader grasping at lost details.

Traces of the herbal fragrance drift across the last pages of the novel, too, as Nimmo reminds herself in the throes of her newest grief that this scent is all that remains of her "foolish" mother (401). The reminder is a conscious attempt to reject this grief, a drawing of distinctions between her mother and herself as a shield against the reality of losing her family yet again. In Nimmo's grief-addled mind, her mother was naively unprepared to meet the threat of violence, whereas Nimmo herself has been "a careful woman, a fearful one, who is prepared for trouble" (401). But the communalist violence of Nimmo's childhood—fated by the scars of violent and outrageous death to rest in delicate, angry dormancy until new events prompt its re-emergence—reverberates and rematerializes throughout her life, culminating in the deaths of her husband and two of her children during the anti-Sikh pogrom that followed the assassination of Indira Gandhi. Nimmo is left alone in the domestic space of the house, the blind familiarity of her kitchen where the

smells of nightly cooking for an absent family compete with the lingering scent of purple soap for control over her brittle psyche. In witnessing Nimmo's rejection of this memory, this scent, we the readers are made all too aware of the cyclical nature of generational trauma.

The ability of plants to migrate across temporal boundaries through sense-driven embodied memory speaks to the cycle of (inter)generational trauma most keenly on display in the fraught relationship between Bibi-ji and Nimmo. In a critical analysis of women writers whose works explore diasporic subjecthood, Sneja Gunew writes that Badami anchors her meditations "in the sensorium—the manner in which particular ways of being are embodied—scripted in and on bodies" (34). Gunew argues that in *Nightbird*, this embodiment takes the form of "traditional nostalgias associated with cuisine or, more unexpectedly, the barely noticeable smell of lavender soap that poignantly binds together an aunt and her lost (and subsequently recovered) niece" (34-35). The binding together of these characters in the novel is essential to the propulsion of the narrative, affirming for the reader the familial connection between Bibi-ji and Nimmo that for them remains hidden in the murky, Partition-muddied waters of the past. Yet Gunew's use of the word "nostalgia" is, I think, misplaced, conjuring happy associations where none remain. The scent of lavender is from the very first tainted by oppressive historical associations that only gain strength as the luxury product becomes witness and unwitting accomplice to increasing violence. Nimmo's memory of lavender soap confirms her blood tie to Bibi-ji, yes, but their shared familiarity with the scent—never spoken of between them—is not to be celebrated, nor is it a wistful evocation of a home and time left behind; rather, it is a thread of violence that runs from the *Komagata Maru* through Sharanjeet's betrayal of her sister in order to reach Canada, the deaths of Nimmo's parents and sibling in Partition, and, later, the deaths of her husband and children in the 1984 anti-Sikh pogrom. Embodied memory, here, is a burden of trauma whose aromatic echoes Bibi-ji and Nimmo both try to avoid. For the reader, lavender—like sugar cane—offers an alternative sharing of individual and collective memory that leaves room for the gaps and silences that necessarily accompany women's histories of Partition. As Urvashi Butalia explains, there remains a collective historical silence surrounding the violence and trauma experienced by women during

Partition, both because such trauma is difficult on an individual emotional level to acknowledge and discuss, and because the type of violence experienced by these women is thought by families and communities to be unacceptable or shameful (63). For Nimmo, the dark memories of Partition are "wicked spirits" (Badami 152) whose power and unpredictability leave her with a compulsion to suppress the "monstrous, silent" (158) fear that accompanies them. She cannot vocalize her past. The novel's acknowledgement and negotiation through symbolization of Nimmo's attempted foreclosure of memory is in keeping with a tradition of post-1980 Partition literature in which "we find oblique gestures towards loss and trauma, circling around a silence at the core" (Saint 14). The power of Badami's narrative, then, lies in the indirectness of its telling, which offers embodied yet unarticulated acknowledgement of these traumas through the protagonists' interactions with plants.

Other plants play an equally important role in locating Sharanjeet's construction of identity within the context of colonial oppression and postcolonial political upheaval. In transitioning from Sharanjeet Kaur of the village of Pandaur to Bibi-ji, wife of Kushwant (Pa-ji) Singh, Bibi-ji relocates to Amritsar to undergo the education necessary to live up to her husband's expectations of a modern but culturally faithful Sikh wife. A key part of this education are English lessons with a British colonial transplant, Mrs. Hardy, who teaches Sharanjeet to speak and act like a proper Englishwoman. The lessons take place in Mrs. Hardy's drawing room by a window overlooking "an English garden of roses, delphinium, phlox and lilies that drooped and died in the scorching sun of Amritsar" (Badami 34). Badami's choice of garden plants is consciously significant. Mrs. Hardy's futile attempt at cultivating English horticultural favourites is an easy allusion to the fading of British colonial rule, their slow death under the sun speaking to the increasing disillusionment of colonial subjects chafing under foreign governance. That these plants are purely ornamental can be read, too, as an implicit critique of a colonial government whose power was in many ways nominal, relying heavily on the cheap costs of a bureaucracy and military made up of colonized subjects to maintain control over the vast geography of the subcontinent (Fox 466). The uncomfortably physical image of the plants' demise under the hot sun symbolizes the end of British dominance, a

transition of power that brings in its wake waves of unimaginable violence. "Partition," Iyer writes, "is part of a continuum of disruption and dislocation caused by the British Empire and decolonization" (54). In my reading, these doomed plants not only symbolize the imposition of a foreign power. They also serve as premonitory markers of mass violence borne of the consequences of a hastily and carelessly organized British departure that leaves the earth of the subcontinent literally and figuratively charred.

Carefully juxtaposed with Sharanjeet's window view of the garden is her view on the opposite side of the room of the Golden Temple, Harmandir Sahib, the holiest site in Sikhism, where Sharanjeet undergoes religious instruction on the weekends. The contrast of the English garden with the Golden Temple, as well as Sharanjeet's positioning in between them, foreshadows her transformation into a new Canadian Sikh wife and the in-between state she inhabits as a diasporic subject, "caught between a homeland and a hostland" (Iyer 57). As readers we are quickly made aware that this spatialized binary is an overt representation of the two aspects of education undertaken by Sharanjeet in order that she "become the two-edged sword that her husband wanted her to be" (Badami 34). She is expected to learn enough of the English language and culture to successfully navigate the Canadian cultural landscape while also maintaining a strong connection to her own Sikh religion and culture so that she may display behaviours expected of a good Sikh wife. This gendered, hybrid education is a turning point in the narrative of Sharanjeet's life, defining future encounters with others in India and Canada and modelling a process of transcultural identity construction demanded of a good diasporic subject.

The carefully curated setting for Sharanjeet's tutoring by Mrs. Hardy is also a spatiotemporal expression of a historical continuum of violence whose effects ripple across Sharanjeet-Bibi-ji's life. The plants, "drooped and [dying]" (34) from intense desiccation, conjure palpable visions of the impending violence of Partition, while their positioning opposite the Golden Temple speaks to the violent trajectory of the fight for Sikh political-religious freedom propelled by a long history of ethno-political oppression and communal violence. Sikh loyalty to and subsequent disillusionment with British rule contributed to a longer process of politicization of Sikh identity that strengthened through Partition and evolved over the following decades

in the face of long-standing ethnic suppression by the state (Cheema 67; Jetly 62). The fight for a separate Sikh state would gain its greatest momentum in Punjab in the 1980s under the leadership of Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale. Bhindranwale is a complex historical figure whose extremist tactics were first encouraged and later used by the Congress-controlled Indian state to justify incalculably violent suppressive action that would ultimately fuel the Sikh nationalist movement (Butt 101-02). His calls for defensive violent action against suppressive state measures and his decision to headquarter in the Golden Temple complex led to the Indian government's attack on this site (Operation Blue Star, directed by Indira Gandhi), a stark violation of a sacred space that resulted in a high civilian death toll and perpetuated a cycle of inter-ethnic violence whose impacts continue to resonate in both India and Indian diasporic communities (Butt 101; Singh 104-05).

The reader experiences this trajectory of violence through the eyes of the female protagonist. As Sharanjeet watches the dying plants through one window and the Golden Temple through the other, she gazes upon events that will shape her life as a diasporic Sikh Indian subject: Partition, in which she loses her sister and sister's family; the Operation Blue Star attack on the Golden Temple, during which Sharanjeet-Bibi-ji's husband Pa-ji is killed; the highly organized 1984 anti-Sikh pogroms in which her niece Nimmo's husband and two youngest children are killed; and the 1985 bombing of an Air India flight, of which her long-time friend Leela Bhat is a victim. Negotiation of the individual and collective memories of trauma arising from these events both informs and is informed by the liminality of Sharanjeet-Bibi-ji's diasporic identity and sense of belonging. Her geographic separation from homeland and family mostly shields Bibi-ji from the physical experience of living through the violence of Partition and the anti-Sikh genocide, but it also prevents her from reaching loved ones who have fallen victim to that violence, so that this spatial detachment becomes both a burden of guilt in the wake of intense loss and, following Pa-ji's death, a growing anger toward the perpetrators. This anger ultimately redefines Bibi-ji's sense of identity and belonging in her diasporic community as she retreats from old friends and allies, stops running the Delhi Junction Cafe, and closes her home (the whimsically named Taj Mahal) to the inter-ethnic stream of visitors she had always hosted, opening it instead to Sikh separatists. If, as

Chakraborty writes, "how one deals with grief and which direction one takes are determined by the subject's relation to a broader history of loss and suffering" (126), the counterposing of the English colonial garden and Sikh Golden Temple is a contextual reference both to the entangled history of British colonialism in Punjab and the rise of Sikh separatism, and to Sharanjeet's own fraught position within that history as it develops through the twentieth century.

The spatial in-betweenness experienced by Sharanjeet in her tutelage is a blueprint of her later experiences as a diasporic Sikh woman living on the West Coast of Canada, its domesticity equally heralding the gendered spaces in which her hybrid identity is (re)constructed and managed. The starkly gendered space of Mrs. Hardy's drawing room, "festooned in lace" (Badami 34) and overlooking the soft pastels of English floral finery (tended by colonized labourers), is a site of old power, a quiet rendering of colonial patriarchal heteronormative domesticity. The gendered intersubjective relationship between colonizer and colonized is poignantly conveyed in Badami's description of Sharanjeet being taught "ABCD and 1234 like a little girl" under Mrs. Hardy's "sky-blue gaze" (34). While this old power is ultimately rejected by the Indian subcontinent, like the myriad legacies of British colonialism Mrs. Hardy's lessons on Englishness resonate throughout Sharanjeet-Bibi-ji's adult life in Canada, reflected in her graceful interactions with and secret admiration for the white population of her adopted country (41). Significant to my argument here, they are equally reflected in her construction of a domestic space that meets the criteria of an acculturated immigrant Canadian woman and that supports Bibi-ji's self-presentation as a successful community leader.

More than the homes she and Pa-ji have previously shared in Vancouver, the Taj Mahal house and, to a greater degree, its garden are spaces that define Bibi-ji as matriarch of her community. Although Bibi-ji played hostess to newly arrived Indians in her previous homes, and to the diasporic Indian community more broadly in both the grocery store and, later, the Delhi Junction Cafe she owned with her husband, the Taj Mahal property is the culmination of Bibi-ji's social and financial aspirations. It speaks to economic and socio-cultural integration, its purchase by Pa-ji signifying that the couple has been woven into the institutional fabric of Canada. The heterogeneous

mixture of inhabitants in the neighbourhood equally indicates that the couple is part of a larger multi-ethnic landscape (115), their devotion to which is made clear by their efforts to acclimatize and aid new arrivals from India. The palatial appearance of the Taj Mahal—"faux-marble lions adorning the gateposts" (131)—is a marker of status within Bibi-ji's diasporic Indian community, too, an assertion of her female leadership within that community. Sitting in spacious glory, its large rooms play continual host to a stream of visitors anonymous in the hubbub of activity. While the interior of the house is demarcated along gender lines—the men congregate in the living room in front of the TV while the women crowd into the kitchen (132-33)—it is the garden that surrounds the house that most accurately reflects Bibi-ji's carefully constructed yet ultimately fragile diasporic domestic identity.

When new arrival Leela Bhat first visits Bibi-ji at the Taj Mahal, we are told that pine trees line the driveway in twin rows, and a front garden is "full of rose bushes" intermixed with tulips and other unnamed flower species (132). We learn early on that they are Bibi-ji's favourite (64), though the origin of her affection for roses is ambiguous in the novel. The rose, its praises sung by "the bards of all nations and languages" (Shaw 4), figures prominently in the horticultural and national histories of both England and India, and their competing claims to the rose as a symbol of cultural identity are made manifest in the palimpsestic impositions of English garden design and practice on pre-existing Indian garden sites.

Rose cultivation in India is said to stretch back at least five thousand years, although the earliest known written records of its use appear in the Common Era (Viraraghavan). References to the rose abound across a wide range of literary, medico-scientific, and historical Indian texts such that its long-standing socio-cultural and economic importance in the South Asian region cannot be overestimated. Babur, sixteenth-century founder of the Mughal Empire who was known as the "Prince of Gardeners," planted gardens wherever he claimed new territory, "convert[ing] the world," as a later Mughal chronicler would say, "into a rose garden" (qtd. in Welch 60) in a horticultural assertion of political and aesthetic control (Fatima 90; Herbert 210). Babur was known to have a particular fondness for roses and used them in his garden schemes: he is known to have brought into India the Persian quadripartite garden design now associated with classic Mughal gardens and

within which roses figured prominently (Fatima 6, 127; Herbert 207; Viraraghavan). Babur's descendants continued his horticultural legacy, commissioning new gardens as imperial playgrounds and funereal monuments, one of the most famous of which, the Taj Mahal, would later be appropriated into the hands of the British colonial authorities.

Like the Mughal empire, British colonial rule of India, consolidated by the mid-nineteenth century (Roy 35), was reflected topographically in the garden spaces taken over and altered by their administration. The Taj Mahal, already deeply imprinted upon the British Orientalist imaginary, became a particular target of horticultural intervention by Lord Curzon, viceroy of India from 1899-1905, who made it a personal mission to restore the site to its apparently lost former glory (Herbert 198). Purportedly aiming for a strict restoration grounded in historical accuracy, in actual practice "the garden was profoundly altered at the hands of the Curzonites" (203), who overlaid its Mughal design with that of an English park (206). Curzon kept the roses, though original species were replaced with modern hybrid varieties (203); yet in a case of wanton cultural obliviousness, Curzon conceptualized his Taj Mahal rose plantings as emblematic of English cultural superiority by suggesting that their presence "prove[s] the dominion of English ideas" (qtd. in Herbert 218). This brazen act of garden re-narrativization exemplifies a material process at play by which claims to the rose as an emblem of cultural-political power are continually reinscribed on physical and textual landscapes.

Bibi-ji's Vancouver Taj Mahal garden—stately, well kempt, floriferous—is weighted by these competing legacies of horticultural symbolism and place-making/taking, so palpable in the constructed landscapes of her homeland that mark her earlier experiences. As noted earlier, Mrs. Hardy's garden in Amritsar pairs roses with other archetypically "English" garden plants, positioning the rose as a cultural signifier of English gentility at risk from the violent heat of a foreign clime. It is tempting, given the way that Mrs. Hardy's teachings shape Bibi-ji's impressions of Anglo-Canadian culture, to read her front-garden roses as a further aspiration to English genteel taste; and it is worth noting that Bibi-ji's secret admiration for the "goras" includes the curiosity and compulsion to intervene or improve that underlay British imperialist ambitions (Badami 41). However, such a simplistic reading ignores the historical complexities embedded in the cultivated landscapes

of Badami's novel. Instead, I suggest that Bibi-ji's roses mark a more nuanced negotiation of conflicting and interwoven cultural inheritances with which she seeks to construct a diasporic domestic identity.

Like the original site from which it takes its inspiration, Bibi-ji's Taj Mahal rose garden is a material evocation of the temporal, topographic, and palimpsestic configurations of power on the Indian subcontinent that have shaped Indian cultural identities. But it is also an assertion of her own claim to land and cultural identity in the diaspora. Although roses have long played a major role in religious festivals and offerings in India (Pal 19), they do not appear to have a religious function in Bibi-ji's life; unlike Leela, who offers flowers and fruits to the gods in her basement shrine (Badami 237), Bibi-ji does not harvest her flowers for prayer. Instead, the roses appear to have an aesthetic function, their dazzling floral display giving pleasure and pride to their owner and indicating in their universal appeal an appropriate degree of cultural assimilation. In this sense, the rose garden is a domestic space that reflects Bibi-ji's own person: the roses are striking—brightly coloured (pink, like the lipstick Bibi-ji likes to wear [40]), heavily scented, and hybridized—and are highly visible to passers-by and visitors. They are an expression of her success and stand in stark contrast to both Leela Bhat's more modest back garden (an earlier assertion of Bibi-ji's diasporic self) and, more significantly, the cramped "compound" of Bibi-ji's niece, Nimmo, living in financial precarity in New Delhi (144). The identifiers used by Badami are key here, "garden" denoting a space of leisure and beauty in comparison to the "compound" evoking bald utilitarianism. It is Bibi-ji's success in her new homeland—materially expressed in the grandeur of the Taj Mahal and its front garden—that gives her the confidence (or arrogance) to pushily suggest that Nimmo's son Jasbeer return with her to Canada to receive a Western education, effectively robbing Nimmo of her son. The Taj Mahal is also, however, the site where Bibi-ji feels her own failure to acculturate Jasbeer and make him into a model of her own immigrant success (311). As Jasbeer turns increasingly to Sikh separatism to vent his frustration in the face of religious and racial discrimination, Bibi-ji clings to a photo of him taken in her garden wearing a pale blue turban that she has pushed him to swap out for his regular black one (276). The photograph is a falsehood, a reimagining of Jasbeer that strips away his anger and extremist political affiliations by

positioning him within a space of peaceful, beautiful domesticity.[4] In this way, the garden supports Bibi-ji's ongoing curation of the world she inhabits by allowing her to reconcile—at least superficially or temporarily—the irreconcilable differences between the future she had imagined for herself and Jasbeer and the future that has unfolded.

Bibi-ji's spatio-aesthetic negotiation of the contradictions that challenge her strong sense of identity and position within her community is equally apparent in her ongoing battle with the mailman who insists upon transgressing the boundaries of that garden. If we read Bibi-ji's rose garden as a personal and public display of successful diasporic domesticity, the mailman's continued disregard for the integrity of this display suggests a lingering threat to her sense of legitimacy and belonging within Canadian society. The Anglo-Saxon mailman, smug in his ability to cross the private thresholds of citizens on his route, "blithely" ignores Bibi-ji's demands that he walk around her garden to the neighbour's house, coming dangerously close to decapitating her roses as he leaps across the beds (197). While Bibi-ji holds the respect of members within her diasporic Indian community, the mailman's behaviour is a flagrant display of disrespect for her hard-earned position in society, and a reminder that preservation of the bounteous gentility of her property requires constant vigilance and work. At the same time, as the bearer of news—good and bad—from abroad, the mailman is a constant reminder of bad memories and residual guilt, of responsibilities left unheeded, and of sins left unabsolved, so that his transgressive appearance becomes symbolic, too, of the permeability of spatiotemporal boundaries that help to keep such burdens at bay.

While Bibi-ji's hybrid identity is to some degree a result of conscious action—an active seeking-out of a world beyond her village that ultimately demands a fracturing of her identity into conflicting parts—Leela Bhat, a South Indian Hindu woman whose story intertwines with Bibi-ji's own upon immigrating to Vancouver, inherits a "half-and-half" identity thrust upon her at birth (74), her liminality a shadow whose constant presence is, at various moments, either albatross or key to success. Born of a union between her Indian Brahmin father and "a casteless German woman of no known family" (77), Leela's precarious existence in her Bangalore family home, where she "hover[s] on the outskirts of their family's circle of love" (74), instills in her a

profound impulse to feel grounded in place. This impulse takes expression in young Leela's attempt to gain proximity to her grandmother against her cousins' jostling manoeuvres (75) and in the way she interacts with the domesticated landscape surrounding her family home. Leela's wanderings through the garden are tactile, her fingers actively seeking out the materiality of walls and trees by which she derives a feeling of contented belonging (75). Constantly reminded of her placelessness within the family and, as she is made to believe, within society at large, Leela gains fleeting solace from the immovability of man-made boundaries and groomed vegetation.

Leela's search for solace in the constructed landscape is a counterpoint to her mother's relationship to house and garden. Having been worn down over years of pointed ostracization and abuse by her mother-in-law, Rosa Schweers' interactions with her domestic surroundings are antipathetic. The environment of what to her remains a foreign country seems to be an allergen to her body, "everything mak[ing] her ill or nervous—the dust, the heat, the food, the old neem tree outside her window, which she had had trimmed so thoroughly that it listed to one side away from the house, as if in weary disgust" (79). As her name suggests, Rosa's identity, like that of Bibi-ji, is composite, multicultural, and multilingual by way of geographic transplantations: Germany, England, and finally, India. In description, Rosa is equally portrayed as a physical embodiment of her floral namesake. Her youthful beauty is voluptuously expressed in the "charming breasts threatening to spill out of a lacy nightgown," a garment for which, we are told, she has a particular weakness (77), and her later corpulence is fuelled by the forbidden pleasures of meat-based curries (81). In her excessive corporeality, Rosa is marked as immoderately beautiful and overly extravagant in body and effect. Yet, like so many imported hybridized rose varieties, Rosa is weakened by the climatic conditions of the Indian subcontinent, wilting in the face of competition from a mother-in-law whose well-established family histories and traditions root her strongly in place. Relinquishing any spirit of defiance that she had upon her arrival in the household, Rosa cloisters herself in her room and emerges only occasionally to wander into the backyard at dusk when no one is around to disturb her.

Rosa's garden wanderings mirror those of her daughter, her hands similarly grasping at the physical presence of vegetal life. Unlike Leela,

however, who craves proximity to (read: acceptance into) the house and the familiarity of cultivated fruit trees, Rosa's wanderings take her to the fringes of the property, where "the trees ended their shadowy guard" (85), and we are left with the impression of nature uncontained and unkempt. On the day she follows her mother and witnesses her death, Leela is frightened by the isolation of the pond that her mother actively seeks. Her primary emotional response to this liminal space would seem to be justified as she watches her mother drown in the scummy green pond, "this place full of shadows where everything shifted with the movement of the sun" seeming to confirm her worst fears of marginality (85). This episode is key in the development of Leela's carefully constructed identity. It is following her mother's death that Leela actively works to root herself within the household, despite her grandmother's best efforts to sideline her. It is worth noting, however, that this event prompts not a wholesale rejection of in-betweenness but rather its careful management and manipulation. Although Rosa's own ostentatious display of liminality would seem to spell her demise as a "casteless" and family-less undesirable in a strange country, a state of being mirrored by the isolation and overexposure of the pond at the end of the property, Leela understands that the albatross of her birth requires less a full casting-off than a shifting of its weight. The rest of Leela's life is a calculated negotiation of cultural in-betweenness, with her biracial appearance becoming her calling card as much as it remains a source of anxiety, and her university education working in concert with her belief in the gods as a means to marry rationalism and religious superstition (89). Through these negotiations, Leela works toward establishing a stable identity within society, seeking integration in the domestic spaces where her mother, ultimately, sought isolation.

The rootedness to which Leela aspires takes symbolic form in the same trees that dotted her family garden, the strength of their materiality and their easy familiarity providing the same sense of belonging that she experienced, however fleetingly, as a child. After her marriage to Balu, Leela again faces the spectre of death in the cultivated landscape. This time, Leela is in the company of her father-in-law who, approaching his time of passing, sees a figure in the garden outside his study window—an old friend, he tells Leela, coming to claim him at last (100). Leela, too, sees the figure "behind the mango trees, the neem trees and the coconut trees" (101). But in distinct

contrast to the shifting landscape that bore witness alongside Leela to her mother's death, the funereal presence of these well-known trees seems to offer tangible confirmation of belonging. Rather than conveying fear, her father-in-law exhibits a sense of happy acceptance, remarking upon the blessing of dying in one's home at peace and amongst family. Having escaped the marginality of life in her family home and become a member of the Bhat family, Leela decides upon this fate as the true mark of an established place in the world: "[S]he too would like to die in *this* home . . . to be heralded out of this world with the chop-chop-chop of the mango wood from her own backyard and the fragrance of a few drops of precious sandalwood oil" (101, emphasis mine). As Iyer notes, "Leela is determined to erase her foreignness/hybridity by emphatically embracing her husband's family history, family home, and rootedness in the ancestral home" (56). The mango tree—native to the Indian subcontinent and deeply significant to its histories and cultures (Yadav and Singh 1257; Fatima 108)—becomes for Leela a symbol of rightful inclusion, representative of Bangalore, the Bhat family home, and her established place in the Bangalore Hindu community. Iyer suggests that Leela's anxieties over racial hybridity can be attributed to British nineteenth-century colonial discourses on race, her fixation on Indianness indicating an absorption of colonial values perpetuated by her grandmother (57). Even in Leela's emblematizing of her Indian identity through the native mango tree, then, we see the spectre of India's colonial past.

But it is not just the material presence or tangible familiarity of the mango trees that mark Leela's assimilation into the Bangalore Bhat family. Rather, the trees' essentiality to Hindu funeral rites functions, for Leela, as both aspiration to and confirmation of spatiotemporal belonging within a societally prominent and devout Hindu household. Leela's wish to be cremated with wood from the mango trees behind their house in Bangalore (232)—even following their immigration to Vancouver—gives promise of ultimate fulfillment. Recurringly expressed in her longing to be back among the mango trees, Leela's determination to root her identity in the history of the Bangalore Bhat family challenges her move from homeland to hostland. As Leela notes later, "she had tried so hard to appropriate the world around her by renaming everything so that it would feel the same as Back Home. She had tried very hard to dislike Vancouver, to keep it at arm's length" (392).

Within this self-imposed disruption to Leela's successful diasporic subjecthood, the mango, instead of heralding the rootedness that Leela has always sought, is a reaffirmation of her liminality.

Yet, despite her years-long rejection of Vancouver as her true "home," as Leela departs on the fated Air India flight to go "back home" for the first time in years, she realizes that the notion of home has shifted without her knowing. Even while Leela continues to long for return to Bangalore, regularly reminding her children that she should be returned upon her death to Bangalore to undergo the appropriate mango- and sandalwood-scented ceremonies, Iyer notes that she and her family assimilate relatively well into Canadian life. She and Balu gain employment in traditional Canadian institutions (Balu as a professor at a college, Leela as a salesperson at The Bay) and her children grow up to be well-educated model minority citizens (Iyer 58). At the end of Leela Bhat's story, we return with her to the garden of her childhood home. As she settles into her seat aboard the Air India flight to Delhi, Leela hums a childhood song meant to describe the Shastri property, but to her surprise the words of the song have changed and with it, the landscape conjured by her imagination. The familiar has evolved to become "pine trees and hydrangeas, roses and clematis" ornamenting a house bought rather than inherited (Badami 392). As the plane takes flight, it is only from her high-altitude position in between her two homes—one actively sought and the other resentfully endured—that she becomes aware of how she belongs in each place. The plants adorning Leela's past, present, and future domestic spaces mark the shifting horizons of her belonging and suggest the attainment of a (purposefully unconscious and contented) liminality in which her ultimate advantage lies in being comfortable on both sides of the boundary. It is important to note, however, that Leela's death aboard the 1985 Air India flight also signals the great socio-political precarity of Leela's diasporic subjecthood and her increasing marginalization within the Vancouver South Asian community as a non-Sikh. Iyer argues that Leela's seemingly successful negotiation of diasporic identity places her in "an impossible subject position" among the Vancouver Sikh community and that her sacrificial death "seals her children's bond to the violent narrative of citizenship and belonging in Canada" (60). While Leela comes to accept her cultural in-betweenness while on board the flight, she does not get an

opportunity to test that sense of acceptance in daily life; instead, she "pays the ultimate price" as an othered member of the South Asian diaspora (60), denied both a return to her West Coast garden, and her dreamed-of mango wood funeral rites.

Speaking of the disruptive pedagogical work of literary historiography, Jill Didur writes, "[T]he fragmented character of historical memory suggests that the most accountable practices of remembrance do not rely on identification with the text but instead demand attention to the metaphoricity or indirectness of its 'telling'" (451). The power of literary historiography lies in its ability to attend to "the gaps between and within different perceptions of 'reality'" (448). Badami's novel is an exercise in comparative history at an individual level, allowing the reader to witness the traumas and ramifications of communal violence through the eyes of three female protagonists. In doing so, Badami draws attention to the intersections and divergences of individual experience and memory especially apparent in the gendered spatial, temporal, and socio-religious gulfs that separate family, friends, and compatriots. Inner thoughts and memories direct the narrative, and silences, gaps, and refusals signify the complexities of negotiating the effects of individual and collective trauma. This humanization of facts relies on a metaphoricity that leaves room for these gaps and silences without letting the narrative falter. Insistently dotting the landscapes of the protagonists' lives, plants are a medium by which Badami adds contour to complex negotiations of memory and identity that are always-already imperfect. As key elements in the home spaces that inform and are informed by the history and experiences of the book's lead women, plants such as the sugar cane surrounding Sharanjeet's village, the lavender of the soap imported from Canada, and the English flowers constituting Mrs. Hardy's Amritsar garden function as witnesses and presagers of the violence that shapes the lives of the characters, emblematizing the entanglements of colonial history and recurrent cycles of communal strife. Equally significant, the roses beloved by Sharanjeet-Bibi-ji in her Vancouver Taj Mahal garden are an outward expression of a carefully constructed and precariously maintained transnational diasporic domestic identity built upon the notion of immigrant success and belonging. Mango trees, culturally significant garden specimens in south India, are for Leela Bhat a symbol of

spatiotemporal belonging, a nostalgic link to the "back home" that she craves as she builds a new life in Vancouver, as well as a promise of return to that home, dead or alive. Yet paradoxically, the mango trees of Leela's past and imagined future are impediments to the building of a claimed domestic space in her diasporic home; while Bibi-ji embraces the contradictions and challenges of transnational existence in a way that roots her most firmly outside the boundaries of her birth country, Leela remains steadfast in her conceptualization of true home as the familiar domesticated landscape of Bangalore, unwittingly reaffirming the liminality she has long sought to overcome. If constructions of home are the setting for the protagonists' often painful and always challenging confrontation with the complications of diasporic life, plants contextualize these real and imagined spaces through metaphor, speaking to the power, complexity, and consequences of sensate memory and the struggle for belonging.

NOTES

1 In an author Q&A section included in the 2007 Vintage Canada edition of *Nightbird*, Badami states that her family moved regularly because of her father's job and that her parents made a point of establishing "large, intensively planted gardens full of flowers and fruit trees" in each new house (5). This childhood experience instilled in Badami a sense of the garden as a special place that functions in her life as an extension of her writing practice (6).

2 This statement is a paraphrase of Laist's argument in *Plants and Literature: Essays in Critical Plant Studies* (2013), a seminal work that the authors contextualize within the growing field of critical plant studies and the special issue's focus on plant-human relationships.

3 For more on the significance and function of the *Komagata Maru* incident in *Nightbird*, see Dean 205-07.

4 For more on Jasbeer and intergenerational trauma, see Iyer 58-59.

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Chantel Lavoie

Saskatchewan

The geese swarm overhead
while mosquitoes flock below.
Do you love or hate them
differently if I use new words?
Reverse the verbs: swarm, flock.
Can you make yourself feel otherwise
than the V cleaving the blue sky
and the buzzing penetrations
without your mind's permission
and just because they are?

Lakes are joining up now
farms losing fields to mud.
They will come back richer
silted, open to new seeds
for other generations and machines.

We might call all these things by other names.
They will remain beyond our narrow trails
of breath and ink, our puny trials and songs
our houses, barns, our tractors, fences, bones.

Morgan Cohen

"can you tell the rhetorical difference?": Foraging and Fodder in Rita Wong's *forage*

Throughout her oeuvre, Rita Wong critiques the mechanisms by which the capitalist system "by demon hand, demand" (*forage* 39) determines the market. She analyzes how individuals are caught within this system and therefore within polarizing tendencies to make "free trade or free will" (39). The latter is further complicated by Wong in *forage* (2007) when she poses the question, "can you tell the rhetorical difference?" (39).[1] The received axioms or "status-quo stories" (Wilson 12) are proposed as self-evident within free market economy narratives, because they exist to avow their situation. The "rhetorical difference" is thus derived by analyzing phenomena[2] to discern the diffraction[3]—it is dependent on how knowledge is situated.[4] In particular, *forage,* Wong's second collection of poetry, explores the subversion and lexicon of such "familiar" cultural narratives—that is, status-quo stories—with their less familiar affects.[5]

The definition of "forage" is to conduct a "wide search over an area in order to obtain something, especially food or provisions" ("forage"). By "forage," Wong largely means the process of scouring to locate the sources of cultural malaise. Forage, however, has another layer of meaning derived from its Germanic origin, also pertinent here: it means "fodder," that is, "a person or thing regarded only as material for a specific use" ("fodder"). The undercurrents of foraging (scouring) and fodder (material for specific use) run throughout the collection. Calling upon her skilful use of poetics, Wong challenges material interconnectedness by revealing how neoliberal ideology

supports and inextricably links status-quo stories to the socio-political and the cultural; that is, *identity* is not only surrounded[6] but also rendered by constructs of commodification that are determined through language and physical bodies. Foraging and fodder are in tension in Wong's collection. Therefore, in this essay, by invoking protean assemblages of mattering in relation to effectual identity, I explore the actant's search for sustenance as they become caught within a capitalist system's fodder—"status-quo stories"—for the functioning of neoliberal machinery.

Wong explores how methods of foraging bifurcate the meaning of agency depending on how it is situated through either "intra-acting" or interacting. Karen Barad, in *Meeting the Universe Halfway: Quantum Physics and the Entanglement of Matter and Meaning*, defines "intra-action" as "*the mutual constitution of entangled agencies*" in contrast to "'interaction,' which assumes that there are separate individual agencies that precede their interaction" (33, emphasis original). Barad argues that "*agencies are only distinct in relation to their mutual entanglement; they don't exist as individual elements*" (33, emphasis original). Her neologism aligns with Jane Bennett's theory of "distributed agency," which does "not posit a subject as the root cause of an effect" (31); rather, as Bennett writes, there is "always a swarm of vitalities at play" (32), and this paradigm differs from the empirical, linear causality of agency that positions action, or motion, as "willed or intended . . . where motion can only be willed or intended by a subject" (Mathews 35). These positions reveal how agency, in relation to foraging, differs depending on how it is situated. Fodder as "material for specific use" utilizes status-quo stories within the parameters of interacting, rather than intra-acting, and therefore does not consider the protean elements within the system; meaning is therefore defined by linear causalities in opposition to vibrant materiality.[7] Material interconnections and their limitless capacity for meaning are obliterated when an object, self, becomes a commodity—when it becomes contextualized as fodder.

Foraging, the processes of locating the source of the malaise, reveals the fodder of neoliberalism through status-quo stories. Neoliberalism is explained by Julie A. Wilson as an ideology that informs and shapes the way everything is perceived—from identity, to global social issues, to the organization of narratives that places "competition at the center of social life"

(2). The study of neoliberalism requires "conjecture" about the "world in its totality" to be able to make connections "between different processes, happenings, and people" (9). This approach aligns with New Materialism, as it "compel[s] us to think of causation in far more complex terms; to recognize that phenomena are caught in a multitude of interlocking systems and forces and to consider anew the location and nature of capacities for agency" (Coole and Frost 9). From a neoliberal perspective, the "market is no longer imagined as a distinct arena where goods are valued and exchanged; rather, the [capitalist] market is, or ideally should be, the basis for *all* of society" (Wilson 2-3, emphasis original). Within this framework, identity or the "self" becomes profoundly affected by a sense of malaise—the disconnection that a capitalist system promotes, that creates one's "subordination," and that facilitates what feminist theorist AnaLouise Keating calls "self-enclosed individualism" (Wilson 3). "Self-enclosed individualism" presupposes that the self is separate from the rest of the world: "It's me against the world" (Keating qtd. in Wilson 3). This is a misperception, however, since individual selves "alone cannot control their fates in a global, complex, capitalist society" (Wilson 4). Juxtaposing neoliberal notions of identity with New Materialist figurations of self is not characterized through distanced observations, but rather through agential notions of space. Space inhibits assemblages of matter, where to be part of assemblages, as described by Bennett in *Vibrant Matter*, is

> to mod(e)ify and be modified by others. The process of modification is not under the control of any one mode—no mode is an agent in the hierarchical sense. Neither is the process without tension, for each mode vies with and against the (changing) affections of (a changing set of) other modes, all the while being subject to the elements of chance or contingency intrinsic to any encounter. (22)

This reveals how the rhetoric *surrounding* identity differs when rhetoric is agential, and uncovers how meaning is intertangled with matter.

Competition, anxiety, and a rejection of interconnectedness—or "intra-action"—these are the effects of neoliberalism, which are perpetuated by what Keating calls "status-quo stories," a concept Wilson elaborates upon within the context of neoliberalism (12). These stories are framed as perennial, as an intrinsic part of life—yet they are not. They are a subjective element, an ideology that transforms with and over time. If they are not

challenged, the stories continuously avow existing dominant cultural notions—such as the free market economy—which are misleadingly reinforced as "ethical roadmaps" (Keating qtd. in Wilson 12). The process of unlearning these status-quo stories fuels the belief in a better world, a belief Wilson conceptualizes through Henry Giroux's notion of "educated hope" (qtd. in Wilson 16). "Educated hope" is unromantic hope which does not imagine a future that resembles the present, but rather creates a version of the future beyond a neoliberal framework (16). To attain this reality, neoliberalism's axioms need to be deconstructed, which is done by revealing, highlighting, and analyzing the material objects of status-quo stories.

These stories are difficult to identify because their "footprints" exist largely as ghostly traces. As Jeff Derksen observes in *Annihilated Time*, neoliberalism wears a "mask of the 'transparently self-evident'" (17). It functions because, at its core, neoliberalism is informed by neoclassical economic tenets. The foundation of this study of economics runs parallel to natural science, specifically classical mechanics, which consequently reduces "human motivation" and experience to static equations that are seemingly "objective"—"free" from "ideological or political prejudice" (Varoufakis 31, 34, 30). Without context, and situated as "fact,"[8] neoclassical economics measures individual, subjective experience and equates it with rationality, with specific use, to the maximization of utility—to pleasure. Yanis Varoufakis writes in *Foundations of Economics* that this notion of cultural objectivity is rationalized within an empirical argument: nothing can be known "without the benefit of experience" (336). The assumptions, however, are based in the belief in a constant environment and a rational (specific use) subject. Economists control the mechanisms by which experience is systemized, so "no observation can contradict them" (341). Neoclassical economics functions as neoliberalism's nucleus, issuing directions to the rest of the machinery, and without the provision of its normalizing axioms, that is, "the complex language of economics which is used to dress up those interests and keep us in the dark" (352). Varoufakis claims it is worthwhile understanding neoclassical economics, even if it does not contain "truth," because "it is the dominant ideology (or mythology) of our era" (376) and, therefore, immunizes against the "lies of economists and the deceptions of politicians who employ economists to weave their poisonous webs" (376-77).

Neoliberalism utilizes language to obscure material realities by issuing statements that are seemingly definitive or self-evident.

Some scholars have already done key work in relation to neoliberalism and Wong's critique of capitalist structures, including status-quo stories. Roy Miki's essay "Are You Restless Too? Not to Worry, So Is Rita Wong," for example, discusses the corporate deflection of responsibility and calls for accountability regarding capitalist society. Through the metaphor of two men fighting to the death while they sink in quicksand, Miki frames his essay around questions about why they are fighting each other instead of figuring out how to escape. He explains the logic for this tendency, as does Wong in *forage*, and particularly its formulation in response to environmental pollution, political entropy, and systemic racism (Miki 179). These inherited anxieties are displaced deliberately onto the body politic and are mediated by external and internal forces: "external forces that are internalized, even as we move to externalize what is internal" (181). The body politic is thus blindsided, as a tidal wave of misinformation leads to mass confusion. The individual becomes ensnared within "the vicissitudes of capital accumulation and the global struggle for power generated on its behalf" (182). Simultaneously, the ensuing instability gives rise to "surveillance technologies," "genetically modified foods," and "mass media with its hunger to spawn a profusion of information and images" (182). Miki, like Wong, analyzes how the market economy "trumps" democracy because of the mutually advantageous relationship between government and corporations. This relationship further solidifies identity as a commodity. Technology for tracking movement, paid for by taxes, has turned human experiences and intra-actions into data, which is sold to corporations, and which corporations in turn use to feed back into the free market system as the "demand" that they then must supply.[9]

In a similar vein, but with greater emphasis on environmental consequences, Laura Moss provides an analysis of Canada's platitudes related to "environmental awareness" and untold narratives revolving around seeds, corporate ownership, and commodities. Using texts such as Wong's *forage*, her essay gestures toward environmental issues, and questions "who owns biodiversity?" (73). For Moss, the quotation marks around "environmental awareness" are ironic. "Canada's natural beauty" (Canadian

Heritage qtd. in Moss 66) is a part of the national axiom, while Canada's leaders consciously damage the environment in order to participate in the global market economy of oil. Such apparent "environmental awareness," Moss observes, is just as disingenuous as the nation's commitments to a "*spirit* of reconciliation with Indigenous peoples" (Canadian Heritage qtd. in Moss 66, emphasis mine). She thus highlights the importance of recognizing "how stories come to us, how we sit in relation to them, and how they change over time" (76). These duplicitous narratives "forage" and use citizens as "fodder": they search for gaps within societal belief systems and redirect attention so that significant information, which should be illuminated, is instead able to slip through the cracks and become obscured. If these narratives never see the light of day, damage ensues.

Within *forage*, Wong develops the space to discuss the complex impetus of the free market economy and its nexus without naming the effects of the system she critiques. Instead, Wong explores its *affects*. She counteracts linear frameworks by reimagining the system and dismantling its banalities and euphemisms. Throughout *forage*, therefore, Wong attempts "to shift the syntax, trying to break it open, trying to make space for other ways of perceiving or structuring or organizing" (Milne 347). Within the form and content of the collection, Wong uses forage and fodder to extend discourse and to create space to challenge cultural elements, such as received histories and systems of value, without being inflexible in terms of ascribing them meaning. This is more generally what her poetic forms allow for and even encourage: connecting ideas and fostering understanding without being prescriptive, without limiting or containing possibilities. As Greg Garrard asserts in *Ecocriticism*, responsible humans have an implicit duty to let ideas unfold organically, intuitively, rather than "forcing them into meanings and identities that suit their own instrumental values" (34). My own investigative process of "foraging" in this essay shows, however, that paradoxically, a less organic, empirical methodology can be mobilized in order to understand Wong's poetical technique and render the connections she makes within her collection. I will do so by interweaving the frameworks constructs of identity, self-evident narratives, and agency to reveal how without situated knowledge of intra-actions within a space, processes become fixed, which solidifies status-quo stories.

The language in *forage* is comprised of a "parallax methodology, or a methodology that is more process-based than generative 'outcomes'" (Derksen 255), which contrasts with neoliberal valuings of ends instead of processes. In an interview with Heather Milne in *Prismatic Publics,* Wong explicitly states, "I don't like the way English has been used as a colonial force to limit perception or limit point of view, because I feel language, syntax, diction, all of it, enables different ways of imagining the world or being in the world" (Eichhorn and Milne 345). She adds that she uses poetry not to address issues, but rather as "a way of thinking through those issues" (344). In *forage*, Wong specifically questions form and inherited ideological constructs and tries "to figure out how and why the language is working the way it does" (Eichhorn and Milne 344). She gets to the core of *why and how* ideologies call upon language to uphold their hegemony. As she conveys to Milne, "Some of what is going on in *forage* is a sense of language itself being infected. It is spliced and respliced. I guess pushing around and questioning form as part of that process without necessarily knowing what's right or wrong but just trying to figure out how and why the language is working the way it does" (345). Throughout *forage*, the language Wong deploys embodies and critiques her subject in relation to its environment. She frames the attained meaning as "ought," rather than "is"—as ideal rather than real—by valuing what she is creating through the very language, which counteracts the "factuals" circulated by neoliberalism. More broadly, she runs against conventional literary forms of "the English tradition" of poetry to reflect how her subject works counter to its environment (Milne 352).

forage, as a whole, explores these interrelated and complex networks that support status-quo narratives through fodder. In the first poem of the collection, titled "value chain" (11), Wong introduces the links between cultural "enigmas," such as politics and the free market economy, and anthropogenic climate change—challenging dualistic, pragmatic thinking. By doing so, she creates her own "value chain" (11)—a set of actions performed to provide a service or product to the economic market—as an antidote: that is, this very collection of poetry. She forages, dismantling the system, by revealing its fodder. Each set of lines in "value chain" denotes elements within the neoliberal system that she then addresses further throughout the collection; while individual lines inform and support the

others, no line can be analyzed to the fullest extent independently. As one instance, there is a line in "value chain" that reads, "heaps of dolls burn for the sins of their owners" (11). Within the context of this cultural practice, the dolls apparently represent their owners' "sins" and are absolved by ceremonial burning for the price of three thousand yen. Wong elsewhere explains, however, that

> the sin part is my own poetic license or interpretation of a ceremony that may have many other meanings for the people who conduct it. More generally, for me it's about mulling over the fine line between making scapegoats or finding ways to release things that owners may need to take responsibility for instead of distributing out that burden. It's a rather messy process, not easily summarized or reduced. (Wong, "Re: From Dr. Linda Morra")

As Wong states, these ceremonies cannot be "easily summarized or reduced" because of the systematic interconnected structures that at once support and yet are also obscured by the said ceremonies. The intricacies of the relationship between identity and agency are occluded by static narratives that limit understandings of the elements of one's actions. Wong summarizes one of the many possible dynamics in a previous line that calls upon the "internal frontier" (11). The latter is a political concept that constructs polarizations—the "us" and "them" within society—and prevents hope by constructing a new identity, as one's "former" identity has no place in the future. The perpetuation of these myths undergirds an identity that is based on a limited value—specifically economic—within the specified neoclassical economic, or neoliberal, system. Foraging, acting within the system, reveals the relationships between objects and the enforcement of the subject(s) within status-quo narratives.

Throughout *forage*, Wong endeavours to shed light on the complexity of the elements that uphold the system within status-quo narratives. As one example, in "the girl who ate rice almost every day" (16), the opening lines are juxtaposed with factual data about genetically modified food patents. "the girl who ate rice almost every day," through its structure of parallel columns with factual prose on the left and a poem on the right, showcases the division between what we think we know of food as it has been informed by the industry and as it has been disseminated by status-quo stories. Miki observes how Wong uses a similar structure within another poem, "domestic

operations," for a similar purpose: she "juxtaposes two voices, one in roman type and the other in italics," with "[t]he former in a state of heightened apprehension . . . whereas the latter assumes a critical edge" (189). Within "the girl who ate rice almost every day," however, Wong uses the perspective of "slow," the poem's young heroine, to contrast the subject of the poem and her cyber scavenger hunt by which she outlines in detail how to obtain information regarding patents on different types of food, such as soybean, rice, corn, tomato, potato, wheat, and cauliflower. In doing so, Wong exposes readers to different types of second-order intentionality persuasive strategies that obscure daily material realities.

As part of the processes of reclaiming agency—that is, understanding neoliberal rhetorical strategies by foraging—slow counters the fallacies imposed by status-quo stories. Her becoming through agency occurs when she is offered and accepts a "free sample" (16) from the manager who has a "drosophilic glint in his melanophore eyes" (16). *Drosophila*, a fruit fly and an agriculture pest, is used for genetic research because of its many species. The manager, who is responsible for organizing the place where one obtains food, is thus symbolic of and instrumental to monoculture farming: the process of genetically engineering foods reduces the amount of variety in possible genes and that, in turn, reduces the number of species produced and leads to a monoculture farm. This monoculture farm requires a significant number of herbicides and insecticides. As a result, nature eventually adapts—pests become resistant, so a new form of resistance is required. That need sends scientists back to recreate another "pest-resistant" genetically modified food. This constant disruption and then adaptation of nature continuously fuels the chemical industry and increases the likelihood of no return.

The fodder is disrupted when slow eats the "free sample" (16), beets, and gains the ability to see the "corporate magic" surrounding her (17). This is unusual because beets are known as an aphrodisiac; their chemical composition contains tryptophan and betaine, which promote a feeling of well-being. In this instance, the beets, which are offered to her by the snake-like manager, are a symbol of temptation and original sin: once she has eaten them, however, her awareness disrupts her disenchantment with reality. Likewise, the aphrodisiac effect which beets are supposed to produce is

counteracted by their genetic cross with "not cabbage but cows" (16).[10] This reveals not only the outrageous crossing of elements of nature but also the geneticists' lack of awareness of (or concern about) the *affects*[11] of altering DNA. slow's own ambivalence toward the unnatural cross of beets with cows, moreover, conveys the normalization of, and her disconnection from, the violations of nature.

In actively countering the fodder, slow departs thereafter to connect with nature; she solidifies her connection with her environment by neither idealizing it nor ascribing to it negative consequence, as humans and nature are intrinsically linked. Garrard discusses the link between humans and nature, and how this relationship has created values based on exploitation of the human environment—a relationship that slow challenges. Garrard reads culture as rhetoric and delineates how nature has been converted by capitalism "into a market commodity and resource without significant moral or social constraint on availability" (Plumwood qtd. in Garrard 69). slow endeavours to reconnect mind and body to prevent herself from becoming distracted by the spectacle and marvels of genetic engineering—being seduced by capitalist machinations. She seeks comfort from the "roots of their bach-flower" (17), which reputedly restores the link between mind and body and reaffirms a connection to nature. She thus seizes on the capitalist disconnection from its exploitation of nature, and acts using the insight she gains from the deconstruction of status-quo stories, whereby she confronts her own apathy.

The maintaining of narratives through fodder is what Wong unpacks within this poem and elsewhere in the collection. In "domestic operations" (42), for example, the mass media engages in deception to solidify status-quo narratives. The repetitive, distracting, and irrelevant information of such narratives reinforces a sense of hopelessness and confusion. As Wong shows in this poem, the invasion of mass media—"being invaded by CNN"—is "in the hands of the arms manufacturers / running the commercial breaks" (42). The inundation of commercial breaks means that crucial information is lost in the translation of "nuclear spectres" (42): "the corpse 'democracy' won't see in that unblinking stare" (42). Unfortunately, sensationalized rather than situated rhetoric reinforces domestic operational patterns of exploitation. The space in which these narratives are promoted is "as fractured as the

globe"[12]—by which Wong refers not only to the planet, but also to the human eye, the act of seeing and acquiring insight (42). That space fractures the sight of interconnectedness with invading narratives that invoke "us" vs. "them" paradigms and that perpetuate emotions of combat and distrust; eventually, these narratives fracture the ability to not only see such interconnectedness but also to feel it. Eventually, the mechanisms by which the media inundates its recipients with mass amounts of irrelevant and disconnected information create both this *decontextualization* and a kind of apathetic "hypnosis" by which "the walled mind becomes a coffin" and "guises the very ground it violates" (42). Bombarding these recipients with distorted information ("war-torn era, warped shorn blare on" [42]), ultimately undermines critical thinking; what is left is a "glazed look . . . the screen, strident with what it excludes" (42).

Wong is hyper-aware of the tactics of decontextualization, and how the ambiguities of poetry can both limit and heighten nuance, since preconceived beliefs may condition what is perceived; still, she uses poetic language itself as a tool to elicit thinking. Wong does this through irregular rhythms, syntax, representational language, poetic style, and diction, which exhibit the many ways that self is manipulated as fodder. In *Poetry Matters*, Milne suggests, following Megan Simpson's argument in *Poetic Epistemologies*, that innovative poetry "can make thinking visible, and by extension, can make social and political engagement visible" (11). In *forage*, Wong destabilizes our assumptions about language; she makes conventional usage of language discernable, and, in so doing, makes the effects of free market capitalist interventions in human life and anthropogenic climate change equally observable.

One of Wong's strategies for doing so is her use of capital or uppercase letters—or, rather, the lack thereof. Wong's writing suggests that poetry has no capital, with the pun fully intended: its value is not dependent on economic or specific usefulness. When she does make use of capital letters, they are deployed against the neoliberal system—for emphasis. Throughout the whole collection, "capital" or majuscule letters are only used in abbreviations and in relation to economic capital. In "the girl who ate rice almost every day," for instance, capitals exist within the factual information in italics, which contrasts with and slackens the narration, where no capital

letters are used. In "damage," it is "ATM" (45); in "23 pairs of shoos," it is "ARPANET"[13] (38); and in "trip" it is "NO" (15). Each of these instances denotes its identification within a capital(ist) system, whereas in other poems the capital letters are abbreviations, such as "BMW" (32), "DNA" (49, 56), and "UV" (70)—often highlighting how fragmented language limits thought. That limitation also explains why, as characterized by Giroux, America is "at war with itself": mass media and corporate culture have fostered "a repugnant escalation of intolerance and violence. . . . [T]he conditions for totalitarianism and state violence are still with us, attacking multiculturalism, criminalizing protests, smothering critical thought, ridiculing social responsibility" (qtd. in Milne 238-39). By encouraging the act of "foraging," Wong attempts to push the discourse beyond limiting polarizations.

To extend perception, many of Wong's poems within the collection include handwritten quotations or accounts of experiences by others written at the margins of and around the poems themselves. These accounts provide additional context to the poem at hand, therefore allowing for the broadening of interpretation. One such poem, "nervous organism," contains a quotation by the influential Canadian critic Northrop Frye. Frye proposed the importance of understanding beyond the words of the author by emphasizing the need to understand a poem in context. The quotation from *The Anatomy of Criticism* included by Wong challenges the belief that the specific use of a poem—the poem as fodder—is a source of emotional release. If a poem

> does not describe things rationally, it must be a description of emotion. According to this, the literal core of poetry would be a *cri de coeur*, to use the elegant expression, the direct statement of a nervous organism confronted with something that seems to demand an emotional response, like a dog howling at the moon. (qtd. in Wong 20)

Frye, however, does not believe that poetry is exclusively a "description of emotion." "nervous organism" diffuses Frye's quotation, because it lacks "rational" descriptions or evocation of emotions. It does not contain sentences but instead dashes in between each presumably separate line of thought, which generates the sense or image of everything connecting, while not explicitly providing concrete understandings. Poetry resists being used as emotive fodder: Wong counteracts a linear, singular story by providing a

broader context, and, in so doing, disallows the imposition of a definitive or prescriptive identity onto vibrant matter.[14]

Wong also demonstrates how language might impose meaning and identity onto an object. In "damage," for example, she outlines the effects of prescribed value through a market economic lens, illuminating the different manifestations of damage that afflict the body politic. She does this by using the language of power. Varoufakis explains that language was once tied to the power of religion, but is now tied to the power of neoclassical economics. He writes that in the past, "the ideas forming the web of beliefs which acted as the glue holding together society's institutions, [which] gave priests and leaders power over their subjects and determined the capacity of society to hang together," were "religion, mythology [and/or] witchcraft," while "[i]n today's society, religion has been substituted by neoclassical economics" (Varoufakis 376). Wong provides an example of the language of power at work in "damage." As indicated in the footnotes, this poem is inspired by "FTAA protests in Quebec City 2001" (45). The Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA) was a proposed trade agreement that would have expanded NAFTA. It was rationalized and legitimized by the axioms related to "bolstering the economy," although this rhetoric was a facade. Like NAFTA, the FTAA would have commodified the damage engendered by the reduction and elimination of labour, and the diminishing of environmental standards in the Americas. This proposed "trade" agreement fundamentally increases corporate rights and profit by reducing public rights. Since limiting rights and high profit margins become interdependent, *value* is determined through commodification of land, labour, and capital—the neoliberal form of identity.

Wong displays how, within this system, the only thing perceived as worth losing is thus defined within and by the terms of financial discourse. The first line of "damage" links personal identity to harm: "people walk around in various states of damage" (45). People are rendered through the terms made available by discourses of capitalist economy: "damaged goods. mismanaged funds. poverty rampage in corporate attire" (45). They are exploited and then dehumanized because of this discourse. Identity and commodity are thus systemically fused together. Bankers and corporations absolve themselves of the responsibility of creating this damage, displacing it onto the individual. When there is a loss because of the law being "mowed,"[15] there is a significant

amount of "moaning" for performance's sake, from the ones who "mowed the law" and aided in the loss (45). Profit, as Wong shows in this case, is far more important than laws that govern those who are not wealthy enough to own, control, or shape the system. But, even as this economy continues, Wong stipulates by the insertion of "last *financial post*" (45, emphasis original) that this economic model is not indefinite and cannot sustain itself for much longer: it will eventually crash or be overturned. She also uses the "last *financial post*" as a partition. The whole poem, especially the beginning, contains quick and succinct lines, mimicking a fast-paced, for-specific-use environment. After "the last *financial post*," the straightforward language of capital develops undertones that are not as forthright, which denotes a change in embodied perceptions of capital. Whereas once economic doctrines were merely a part of a whole society, they have become its core—the only *damage* within this system becomes economic damage.

Wong thus brings the discourse of the market economy into focus, isolating the different ramifications and identifications of commodities when she asks, "when did i become a commodity? a calamity? indemnity?" (45) that "facilitates fascism" (45). Here, Wong locates the malaise: the lowercase "i" (45) has no value to society. This mechanism of identity through worth that is based on monetary wealth creates a world in which democracy can be bought through political transactions. It also limits change, since the only action within this society that has value is that of economics. "ATM" (45), incidentally the only capitalized word in this specific poem, is also the place where one apparently withdraws money—and identity. It stands for "automatically tracks movement" (45), the apparatus of capitalism's surveillance. This form of capitalism is an assault on agency, because it solidifies movement. Capitalism functions through tracking consumers' whereabouts and "experiences." It thus translates intra-actions into a static notion of identity and sells that movement and its corresponding data to industry. It does so in order to sell it back to the consumer formulated as a commodified experience. This connects to the "totalitarian market" (45), which is a means by which power is claimed.

Whereas "damage" explores the "source"[16] of the malaise, "23 pairs of shoos—a response to Kathy High" is one of the poems that uncovers its "sink"[17]—that is, how we become fodder, or how corporations assume control

over the human body. Wong alludes to High's work because they share similar ideas about or attitudes toward nature; through art, High challenges culture's perceptions of animals—specifically the rat, an animal that is depicted as a carrier of disease and yet is also typically a *resource* that is used to find cures for disease. High is not against animal research, but, as her art suggests, she believes that kinship bonds between humans and animals should be principled. This kinship reinforces the notion that these animals are not expendable resources or commodities, but rather a part of our existence as relations. High also alludes to the fact that a parallel exists between individuals in Western society and rats in a maze. When we are subjected to corporate conditions, which render us too anxious to be aware of what is really happening, we become fodder, like the rat.

Wong explores the question of agency within such material relationships—how indeed can we resist the commodification of human bodies? In "23 pairs of shoos," she examines how neoliberal actors have been able to manipulate psychological, emotional, and genetic behavior, which Wong expresses through the lines, "child of ARPANET / resides on my fingertips" (38). In other words, control over knowledge is facilitated by the Internet: it allows one to access an indeterminate amount of knowledge at one's fingertips. The technical coding and the tracking data of the Internet is in a similar format as the "code" to life, the sequencing of DNA. This Internet data is used to predict users' actions—which are then commodified—and then to impose identities upon users. All this information, which the Internet supplies, is apparently prescriptive, limiting who one might be, and yet it attributes such information to biology: "analyse the fingernails / to find out if she's queer" (38). These codes instead provide enough information to produce an individual as a commodity, not as vibrant matter.

Wong emphasizes the distinction to be made between individuals as commodities ("fodder") and persons capable of "foraging" through poetic structure. In "23 pairs of shoos," a human's twenty-three pairs of chromosomes are reflected in the poetic lines to suggest the importance of understanding how information is traded in the modern world. By the third set of lines, there is a break at the end of the line. When the third chromosome in living organisms actually breaks, the genes at the end are deleted and "the chromosome cannot copy (replicate) itself normally during cell division"

("Chromosome 3"). Since chromosomes are only visible within the cell's nucleus when they reproduce, this pair becomes immaterial—a burden within the system. Wong's poetic structure thus serves as a stand-in for what is overwhelmed by the numerous neoliberal influences: "overdetermined and undermined / she nonetheless navigates with a 'ripped-up, ragged map'" (38). Although the map is "ripped-up" and "ragged," it is still a map, a colonial tool of power, of "navigation." Wong shows that colonizing, corporate practices are inescapable in contemporary society, as they continue to encroach and subvert power, and even have a direct bearing on the fundamental biology of human beings. With the appropriate critical tools, however, it is possible to reclaim agency by understanding the system.

In spite of the ills of free market capitalism, therefore, Wong offers an alternative based on "educated hope" (Wilson 16). She asserts that we are the translators of our own intra-actions or identity; the latter does not need to be imposed onto us. So, she enjoins her readers to regulate "self-sovereignty over our genes" (Wong 39). Mimicking the system, Wong poses a question in the form of a false binary: "free trade or free will" (39)? Ultimately, she claims it is neither. Why? Deceit within second-order intentionality is "at work": there is an inability to "tell the rhetorical difference" because of the lack of self-recognition. Humans have been indoctrinated to see themselves as unidimensional and detached. So, in "23 pairs of shoos," "she [the subject] walk[s] right past her offspring" (39); she does not even recognize them as part of herself within this "fly-by-night / fetuses inc" (39), because it is an unreliable and evasive system that thrives on uniformity. Those who see beyond the system's deceptive framework are told it would be better to "give it up" or put it up "for adoption" (39), because no one wants to take responsibility for the prevailing cultural issues, and because it provides excuses for why others should inherit them instead. The naive "child" (39), and, more broadly, members of society, can "refuse" (39) the system by fighting it. So how does one navigate this world? "[H]ow do we measure emotional crops?" (39). So much of nature has been altered by corporations, and what is still considered authentic is based in fallacies. The next line, "wombs / unite," suggests that by uniting and fighting the system together, by having agency, by protesting and facilitating important discussions, "the unconscious rises in my throat" (39). That unconscious will "drag the child

along / despite itself" (39)— kicking and screaming, protesting and railing against the system that would do it harm.

The fragility of the system is described in "domestic operations 2.0" (43), following the violation of communicative space in "domestic operations" (42). Wong writes that "the eagle will plummet" if discourse is limited, "if one religious wing refuses to hear the other religious wing" (43), because of unyielding sacred beliefs in a narrative that contains value and therefore identity. The poem meanders around the discourses surrounding the change that needs to take place to go from "apathy to anarchy . . . locating hope in the unpredictable and the shared" (43). The different themes in the poems within the collection direct the reader to different modes of critique, while the one thing that is constant is the need to challenge modes of thought. It is an ongoing process of becoming whereby identity is reformulated by locating self within space.

The importance of foraging, Wong shows in this collection, must be vitally contextualized in order to understand the undercurrents,[18] to counterbalance the fodder, that is, the status-quo stories, within society. The apparent "truths" generated by neoliberal culture are embedded in status-quo stories that call upon seductive rhetoric and notions of stability. So, Wong uses poetry to reveal and take apart such stories. She states that for her, at a young age, "language was a place where I could question and also reflect on what was going on in my life," and she continues to use it to "think through" issues such as "justice and human rights" (Milne 344).[19] Throughout *forage* and her other works, she emphasizes the importance of interconnectedness, which is why she focuses on poetry: "[W]ords teach you where you can take your actions, and what you might do, and they may help to guide you towards a world that we need to build together" (Wong, "on the journey").

In *forage*, Wong deconstructs these narratives by drawing out and upon critical thinking skills. She thus offers us a map—through her life, through her writing—of how to navigate this world and protest against free market capitalism through "educated hope," while pointing toward solutions to these problems. As Wong suggests throughout *forage*, critical thinking is crucial to the undoing of neoliberal status-quo stories, and will provide new-found insight, new possibilities, and new and productive avenues to being in the world and being accountable to it.

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NOTES

1 Rhetoric is often generally depicted as a seemingly innocuous strategy that actually defrauds by persuasive tactics. Kennedy, in "A Hoot in the Dark: The Evolution of General Rhetoric," writes that rhetoric is a "phenomenon of public discourse in which cultural and political values find expression" (105). He further outlines three different orders of persuasive intentionality in reference to expression. The first is "'zero order' intentionality on the part of the organism, which gives off a sign"; the second is "'first order' intentionality" where the organism can choose to give a sign; while the third is "a 'second order' of intentionality that involves a conception of their own and another animal's beliefs" (111). Kennedy claims that rhetoric "begins" with "zero order" intentionality. So, Wong's question "can you tell the rhetorical difference?" has a multiplicity of answers depending on the qualifications of rhetoric within this framework. It is largely dependent on the situating of the situation.

2 In "Posthumanist Performativity," Barad relays Haraway's juxtaposition of diffraction and reflection in *Modest_Witness@Second_Millennium. FemaleMan_Meets_OncoMouse: Feminism and Technoscience*. Whereas reflection is a direct reproduction of difference, diffraction analyzes the effects of difference through relations of space.

3 In "Posthumanist Performativity," Barad juxtaposes diffraction and reflection. Barad situates diffraction in opposition to the meaning derived from reflecting difference. Diffraction analyzes, instead of observes, how the difference, or the notion of difference, is constructed.

4 Donna Haraway's essay "Situated Knowledges" analyzes how "translating knowledges" (580) differ and argues that it is important to explore how "meanings and bodies get made, not in order to deny meanings and bodies, but in order to build meanings and bodies that have a chance for life" (580). Here she emphasizes the importance of understanding space by asking the question "[w]ith whose blood were my eyes crafted?" (585). Haraway denotes that it is important to understand the circumstances that precede the present that form physical and figurative modes of sight.

5 Sara Ahmed in "Happy Objects" writes about "thinking through affect as 'sticky.' Affect is what sticks, or what sustains or preserves the connection between ideas, values, and objects" (29). She continues to form the connection to emotive responses, specifically happiness, and how happiness is not something that just "happens" and does not "depend on outside events, but, rather on how we interpret them"—that is, "[t]o be affected by something is to evaluate that thing" (30-31).

6 On the idea of being "surrounded," Gregory Ulmer analyzes how choric invention lies in recognizing fault lines between the underlying assumptions and subject positions offered by different institutional discourses. It is a mode of self-discovery meant to reveal the ways

in which the subject is composed (rather than surrounded) by these discursive networks. To be surrounded would mean the subject precedes contact with these networks, that she is a coherent whole perhaps interrupted by the overflow of these networks. But, to recognize that the subject is constituted by these networks means both recognizing our debts to such networks and forgoing the fantasy of an original coherence. (qtd. in Santos and Browning)

7 Bennett in *Vibrant Matter* writes about how matter is conceptualized as "passive or mechanical [and] under the direction of something nonmaterial, that is, an active soul or mind," as opposed to "materials as lively and self-organizing" (10).

8 Although the principles of neoclassical economics are in constant flux, reflecting the society they fortify, their crux remains constant because its discourse is definitive. Edward Schiappa explains in *Defining Reality: Definitions and the Politics of Meaning* that "no definition is inevitable" (xii) and that "definitions can be understood more productively as involving claims of 'ought' rather than 'is,'" which bridges the gap between "facts and values" (5, 6).

9 Miki claims that "favorable," or capitalist-induced Western principles, which Wong explores in *forage*, usually include military force in order to safeguard order and security. The apparatus of globalization and militarization has been obscured by "the so-called War on Terror" (196). Ultimately, Miki argues, Wong sees how "we consume what the suits [neoliberal system] serve up with their imperial hardware" and observes that we should no longer wait to be told what to think, and what to do, but rather "circumvent the language of ownership and commodities" (200).

10 This is an example of how Wong tries to understand "what . . . it mean[s] to take that [genetic modification] apart and put it back together in unexpected ways" (Milne 345).

11 "Affects" instead of effects because in this situation linear causality does not provide further insight. The affects cannot be described through empirical data, as empiricisms do not notice intra-actions.

12 Globe rupture is "an extreme eye injury . . . where the eyeball can split open. This can be due to trauma directly on the eye or around the eye" (Porter).

13 ARPANET, or "Advanced Research Projects Agency Network," is a product of the US Defence Department in the 1960s predating the Internet. Its supposed purpose was to link networks without a "base of operations," such that if the base were attacked the network would still be whole (Featherly).

14 A reference to Jane Bennett's *Vibrant Matter*.

15 This expression has curious reverberations elsewhere: "The relentless siege and savage attacks are punctuated by episodes of 'mowing the lawn,' to borrow Israel's cheery expression for its periodic exercises in shooting fish in a pond as part of what it calls a 'war of defense'" (Chomsky and Pappé 160).

16 Source (ecological): A process that puts the gas into the atmosphere or transforms one kind of gas into another.

17 Sink (ecological): A way of removing a substance or energy from a system.

18 Wong, throughout her works, constructs an alternative way of mapping experience though poetry by addressing undercurrents. In *perpetual* (2015), co-published with Cindy Mochizuki, she linguistically integrates herself and the reader into the "hydrological cycle; this planet's crucial circulatory system" (1) by situating embodiment with one's interaction with water. Her work with Fred Wah, *beholden* (2018), contains meandering juxtaposed lines of poetry which follow a mapped narrative, a mapped body of water: the Columbia

River. This highlights how narratives are mapped: "keep the language and the story honest, don't call a reservoir a lake . . . don't naturalize the hubris, don't hide the arrogance of destroying what you don't understand. listen for what's underneath the narrative of convenience" (27-29).

19 In an interview, she observes that she does not mind being called an "activist," even though her mentor warned her "not to let people call you an activist because you have to do all the work and they don't." Wong feels compelled to do the necessary "housekeeping" or "homework" because, she argues, it is part of her responsibility living on Indigenous "unceded . . . territory." But she concludes by saying that this activism will look different to each person, because people "carry different gifts and different skills" (Wong, "on the journey").

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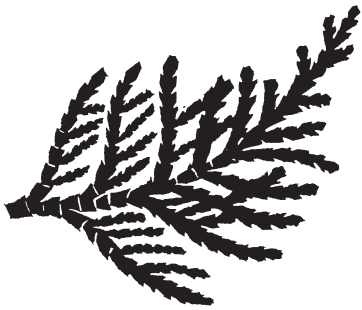

Ayo Okikiolu

Stand with You.

A Mother stood in public
With Her kids in tow.
She tried Her best to line them up
All in a row.
They were rowdy, wonderful kids,
One of them even wore a bow.

he stood up.
A tall, strong, black man stood up.

No one noticed,
Very few cared.
People stand,
It's what they do.

"Take my seat", he motioned to Her.
"No. Thank you." She replied.
But he couldn't sit back down.
he insisted. And She refused and refused.

he spoke to Her daughter, the one with the bow,
"Seat's all yours."
The Mother spoke in another tongue,
Presumably saying something about not taking the seat.

So, the black young man, not yet twenty, stood.
Then, he left.
Then, She sat.
Then, from a little distance away, he smiled.

he didn't smile because he got his way.
he didn't smile because She did what he wanted Her to.
No.
he smiled because he understood perfectly.

You see, where he's from
The Mother is the most important piece.
A black Mother possesses an air of rarified dignity.
It's simple. She's never wrong.

But also, where he's from
A Mother of little children is respected.
Why?
Because that Mother was once his Mother.
his Mother had to stand for hours with him on Her back.
his Mother had to walk miles with him in Her mind,
Having no refuge from Her newfound responsibility.

his Mother had to carry the burden of a child in the Womb
And carry the burden of the child after it.

he understood that
If a Mother stands,
no one else must sit.
he understood Her sacrifice.
he understood Her pride.
he understood the truth of a good Man
At such a young age.

he understood that
If You stand, we must all stand

With You.

Keah Hansen

Getting to Resurgence through Sourcing Cultural Strength: An Analysis of Robertson's *Will I See?* and LaPensée's *Deer Woman*

In this paper, I analyze two recently published graphic novels, *Will I See?* (2016) by Swampy Cree author David Alexander Robertson and *Deer Woman: A Vignette* (2015) by Anishinaabe/Métis author Elizabeth LaPensée, which depict their Indigenous female protagonists heroically fending off systemic violence by sourcing communally- and culturally-derived strength to act-out against aggressors. Using Michi Saagiig Nishnaabeg scholar Leanne Betasamosake Simpson's thinking that sourcing strength from within community and culture enables Indigenous resurgence, I argue that these depictions encourage resurgence rather than reconciliation with the colonial settler-state; the reality of violence against Indigenous women is confronted by the Indigenous female protagonists, who turn inward for the strength to fight back rather than outward to the limited support of the Canadian state. In order to further think through how resurgence materializes as a response to trauma in these texts, I turn to settler scholar Dominick LaCapra's work to suggest that both graphic novels reinforce narrative and graphic depictions of "acting-out" to overcome

violence rather than "working-through" violence. I suggest that resurgence is practised through graphically and narratively depicting complex "felt" knowledges of violence (Million), and through restorying the texts with the spirits of Indigenous women who were murdered, to convey the complexity of resurgent responses and the reality of the resilience of Indigenous life. That these gestures are action-oriented, I argue, enables them to circumvent the reticence of the Canadian government to act on the recommendations of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (NIMMIWG), which was concluded in June 2019, and which itself faced numerous delays in its completion. These graphic novels stand in contrast to general media and graphic novels that portray Indigenous peoples by way of reductive or harmful tropes. The themes of these graphic novels expand and elaborate on those of other Indigenous-authored graphic novels that focus on Indigenous histories and are situated within the canon of Indigenous-authored comics[1] that envision Indigenous people as heroes. I write this piece as a white female settler residing in the traditional territory of many Indigenous peoples and nations including the Mississaugas of the Credit, the Anishnabeg, the Chippewa, the Haudenosaunee, and the Wendat peoples.

While there has been an increase of Indigenous-authored graphic novels published in Canada, there are so far limited critical considerations of these texts. LaPensée and Robertson are among the many Indigenous authors who currently produce comics, authors who include, among others, Katherena Vermette (Métis), Michael Nicoll Yahgulanaas (Haida Nation), Cole Pauls (Tahltan First Nation), Gord Hill (Kwakwaka'wakw Nation), Jennifer Storm (Ojibway), and Nahanni Shingoose (Saulteaux). Most of these authors depict empowered revisions to settler narratives of Indigenous history, systemic issues facing Indigenous peoples today, and strong, capable Indigenous protagonists. Indeed, in 2019, a landmark Indigenous-authored graphic novel anthology was published, *This Place: 150 Years Retold*, which portrays Indigenous perspectives on the colonial project and the strength of Indigenous peoples today. Despite the contemporary proliferation of Indigenous-authored graphic novels, two recently published anthologies of criticism on contemporary Canadian graphic novels, *The Canadian Alternative: Cartoonists, Comics, and Graphic Novels* (2018) and *Canadian Graphic: Picturing Life Narratives* (2016), each limit engagement with

Indigenous-authored graphic novels to a single contribution. In the closing of the introduction of *The Canadian Alternative*, editors Dominick Grace and Eric Hoffman write that the essays in the anthology "address the problematic treatment of aboriginal peoples, themselves as marginalized within Canada as Canadian comics have been within the larger comic world" (xvii), thus acknowledging the ongoing limited Canadian scholarship on Indigenous graphic novels.

Reflecting the themes explored by *Graphic Indigeneity: Comics in the Americas and Australasia*, Caddo scholar Michael A. Sheyahshe observes that many settler-authored comics depict Indigenous peoples as "pan-Indigenous," therefore ignoring the diversity of Indigenous cultures (44). Settler scholar Derek Royal further suggests that recent representations of Indigenous peoples in comics have reinforced harmful tropes, such as the "generic Indian, complete with loincloth, feathered headdress, and truncated vocabulary" (1). In her essay "Under the Shadow of Empire," Sandrina de Finney engages in a participatory research study with Indigenous girls to consider how they think they are portrayed in media. All report feeling ignored or portrayed negatively, with one participant saying, "Hello, there's a problem here, there's a lot of violence against us First Nations girls and women. A lot. It's a problem, hello. We're NOT shown to be strong, or beautiful, or even worth much" (20). LaPensée emphasizes in her essay "We Are the Superheroes We've Been Waiting For" how it is important to depict Indigenous women as strong and capable in order to create positive role models for Indigenous women and girls. She notes the canon of Indigenous artists who are imagining Indigenous women as heroes and writes, "We are at a critical point for recovering from and halting this violence. . . . [S]uperheroes are a beautiful way for us to imagine ourselves and then bring ourselves to a position of empowerment" (1). While LaPensée consciously situates her protagonist in *Deer Woman* within the category of Indigenous female heroes, Robertson's protagonist in *Will I See?* can also be positioned among these figures. Indeed, Robertson has published other comics with a focus on Indigenous heroism, such as the *Tales from Big Spirit* and the *7 Generations: A Plains Cree Saga* series, as well as a YA fiction series, *The Reckoner* trilogy, that positions an Indigenous teenager as a superhero. Many of the graphic novelists mentioned above also

focalize warrior and hero themes in their works, reflecting the growing canon of Indigenous hero texts.

In *Will I See?* and *Deer Woman*, respectively, Robertson and LaPensée home in on the issue of missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls. Both the graphic elements of the texts and their subversive, dynamic plotlines articulate creative interventions and alternatives to the federal government's passivity in investigating and responding to the disproportionate occurrences of violence experienced by Indigenous women and girls, and also defy the harmful gendered tropes of traditional media representation. Each author states their motivations for creating their comic clearly in their opening. In the introduction to *Deer Woman*, LaPensée writes that there are over one thousand missing and murdered Indigenous women in Canada, and that her piece calls upon readers "to take a stance to change the fact that Indigenous women are the most likely to experience sexual assault on Turtle Island and to recognize the[ir] lack of rights" (3). Similarly, Robertson writes in his dedication that his comic is "[f]or the over four thousand Indigenous women and girls we have lost and for my daughters, that they grow up strong and in a safer place."[2] While *Deer Woman*'s audience seems to be the general public (the comic is a free download from its publisher Native Realities, and their website urges that the comic "be read by all who care about the experience of Indigenous women throughout the world!"), LaPensée also published the text in partnership with Arming Sisters, an organization that teaches self-defence techniques to Indigenous women, and the comic itself features a page outlining instructions for self-defence techniques (20); the comic therefore seems to be directed both at the general public to change public perceptions of Indigenous females being perpetual victims, and at Indigenous women themselves to help them learn self-defence. Correspondingly, Weshoyote Alvitre, illustrator and co-editor of *Deer Woman: An Anthology*, states in an interview that the digital mode of the text evades censorship of Indigenous issues typical in traditional media, and that their comic is meant to "bring awareness" but "[m]ore importantly, it is giving voice to these indigenous [*sic*] women" (Bras). LaPensée also explains that "there is a lot of hurt and a lot of broken feminine ideals in Native culture, especially currently," and that she believes that "deer woman teaches us self-strength" (Bras). Robertson states similar goals for *Will I See?*, describing to the CBC

his wish that it effects change and helps resolve the issue of missing and murdered Indigenous women over the long-term and spurs action ("Winnipeg Artists").

The goal of increasing awareness and empowering Indigenous women mirrors the overarching objectives of the NIMMIWG, which engaged in a truth-gathering process of the realities of violence against Indigenous women and aimed to "[help] Indigenous women and girls reclaim their power and place" (*Interim Report* 3).[3] This inquiry had been demanded by Indigenous leaders for forty years prior to it being initiated in 2016 (Murphy). Further, there were multiple delays in its completion after it was launched. The final report of the NIMMIWG notes that the ongoing process of colonization is genocide, and that the implementation of its 231 Calls for Justice "must include a decolonizing approach" (170). However, in outlining how the Canadian government and other institutions and services within Canada can respond in ways that reflect the reality of violence against Indigenous women, the report clearly reinforces the concept of negotiating the protection of Indigenous women within the parameters of the Canadian state. While the NIMMIWG was concluded in June 2019, the Canadian government has yet to release an action plan with concrete steps to implement any of the recommendations of the report, which has earned the government criticism from the Native Women's Association of Canada (NWAC), the most prominent Indigenous women's organization in Canada. As NWAC president Lorraine Whitman (Glooscap First Nation) has recently stated, "We need to have some action. The families of the missing and murdered women and girls and two-spirited [individuals], we're tired of talk. If you're going to talk the talk, walk the walk. And I'm not seeing that" (qtd. in Wright). In *Will I See?* and *Deer Woman*, the Indigenous female protagonists themselves are proactive in defeating systemic violence directed towards them. Both narratives suggest an alternate plan of action for Indigenous women that is not reliant on the Canadian government.

May and Deer Woman, the respective protagonists of *Will I See?* and *Deer Woman*, fend off systemic violence by sourcing strength from within their communities and cultures—this enables them to act heroically. Leanne Betasamosake Simpson suggests that accessing strength from within Indigenous practices is essential for Indigenous resurgence. She writes that

"we need to rebuild our culturally inherent philosophical contexts for governance, education, healthcare, and economy. . . . We need to do this on our own terms, without the sanction, permission or engagement of the state" (23). Simpson distinguishes Indigenous resurgence from reconciliation in her book *Dancing on Our Turtle's Back*, wherein she likens the process of reconciliation to an abusive relationship in which the abused is being encouraged to reconcile with the abuser.

The dynamic responses of the protagonists in *Will I See?* and *Deer Woman* could also be read as instances of what LaCapra terms "acting-out" in the framework for processing trauma that he elaborates in "Acting-Out and Working-Through Trauma"; by acting-out in response to the violence, the characters are pulled further from the possibility of the reconciliatory notion of working-through trauma, towards resurgent politics. Acting-out action that is dynamic and enacted against wholly evil characters can also be read as characteristically heroic, in contrast to working-through action that is diplomatic and benign. LaCapra writes of the difference between working-through and acting-out in the context of traumatic reactions to another incident of genocide, the Holocaust. He argues that acting-out is an impulsive repetition of a traumatic event whereas working-through is a process of progressing beyond the initial trauma to achieve healing (2). LaCapra acknowledges the issues of recursiveness and binarization in the acting-out approach and suggests that a working-through approach is more democratic and achieves more ethical outcomes (7). In *Will I See?* and *Deer Woman*, however, the female protagonists are made to continuously face violence against themselves and other Indigenous women. As they come to know the reality of violence against Indigenous women, they are not granted time to process the violent events. In being continuously called on to act-out to defend themselves against violence, while simultaneously understanding the realities of systemic violence, the characters are understood as being forced to dismiss the possibility of successfully working-through violence against Indigenous women. The confidence and skills they gain when successfully acting-out against known violence represents a rupture from the failed utopia of Indigenous-Canadian reconciliation and enables the possibility of resurgence.

May in *Will I See?* sources strength from within her community and her culture to fight against an attacker. May is a Cree teenage girl residing in an urban environment. At the beginning of the comic, panels show May finding small personal items like rings and keys, belonging to Indigenous women, which are overlaid with bloodlike smears and faded images of Indigenous women being attacked (Robertson 13). May's grandmother helps May transform the unease she feels about finding the items into self-assurance. May's grandmother suggests that they turn the items into a necklace that May can wear and affirms May's plan to name a cat that helped her find the items Chipiy (ghost in Cree) (22), implying that she is increasingly comfortable identifying with and accessing the strength of the lost women. Later, when May is attacked, her self-assuredness and her community-derived strength enable her to fight back. The necklace is featured prominently as May repeats "no" to her attacker. When he lunges at her, May acknowledges that he is "just a person" (42). May, in contrast, is a person who has spiritual connection to many other women in addition to herself. As she transforms into Chipiy to injure and defeat her attacker (40), she embodies and identifies with both herself and all of the other Indigenous women who had been attacked. After the attack, May and her grandmother source their shared and cultural strength to deal with the events. This strength allows them to decide that they will share the necklace and its stories with others, to honour the deceased and protect other women (51).

May's connections with elements of Indigenous spirituality also become a source of her strength in Robertson's text. After finding the items, May is told by her grandmother that lost Indigenous women turn into animal spirits who create flower blooms with each step they take. The spirit animals featured in the story are described in the endnotes of the comic for the virtues they embody which enable Anishinaabe understandings of Mino-Pimatisiwin, or the good life (51-52). After May defeats her attacker, her medicine pouch containing the items she found is opened; a sparrow carries seeds that root and blossom, while the spirit animals which May's grandmother says are murdered Indigenous women walk through the landscape (47-48). Knowing the spiritual proceedings of what happens when Indigenous women disappear seems to help May process the violence enacted against other Indigenous women and gives her strength. As she picks

flowers to give to her grandmother, May is further empowered, as it is said earlier in the text that the flowers, when picked, allow animal spirits to share their strengths (22).

In *Deer Woman*, the protagonist Deer Woman similarly gains strength through understanding the enduring power Indigenous women have long demonstrated to overcome the gendered violence of colonialism. LaPensée writes in her introduction that the opening panel sequence depicts her own story of sexual assault. She states that the sequence is rewritten to determine what would have happened if "in that moment [of sexual assault], as a young Anishinaabekwe, I had transformed into the Deer Woman from the Sault that my mother told me stories about? What if . . . I had realized the Deer Woman in myself?" (LaPensée 3). Therefore, by transforming into Deer Woman within the comic, LaPensée answers her own invitation in the introduction and uses the power derived from the figure to know what she had not known about her own experience of sexual assault. Deer Woman is a character present in the mythologies of many Indigenous nations and peoples across North America including the "Sioux, Ojibwa, Ponca, Omaha, Cherokee, Creek, Seminole, Muskogee, Choctaw, Oto, Pawnee, and the Iroquois," and is known for luring men away and stomping them to death (Russow 1). In the comic, Deer Woman is depicted doing just that, killing perpetrators of violence against Indigenous people—there is a sequence when she kills a police officer attacking an Indigenous man (LaPensée 16)—and serving as a symbol for the power within Indigenous people to resist violence. LaPensée also suggests that part of knowing the truth of violence is understanding its ongoing legacy from colonialism. She first imagines a different reality in a panel sequence presenting an out-of-plot reverie that relays, "there are days where . . . I remember what it is to be innocent again" (10). This feeling is fractured by a new perpetrator, and followed by a text bubble stating that "[the feeling] never lasts." However, her wholeness is restored on the following pages, which state that "in that darkness, who are we to look to but ourselves . . . you become the light" (11). Therefore, akin to May's flourishing through aligning with cultural and community-derived strength, Deer Woman illustrates thriving within the enduring spatial-temporal parameters of systemic violence, through *feeling* and *identifying* her own inherited strength as an Indigenous woman with spiritual knowledge.

As LaPensée aligns herself with the mythic figure to stave off attacks, she also invites other Indigenous women to do the same.

That May and Deer Woman gain strength to fight off systemic violence through identifying with their selves, communities, and spiritualities can be considered resurgent with respect to Simpson's theorization. The concept of connecting to Indigenous values to gain resiliency is evidenced in a quantitative study by Shanley Swanson Nicolai and Merete Saus, which compiles findings from interviews with people who work with Indigenous youth to gain insights on how young Indigenous people best cope with trauma (Nicolai and Saus). May practises Indigenous resurgence in her self-determined refusal to die at the hands of her attacker, in moments when she connects to her culture through discussions with her grandmother, and through simply existing. Similarly, Deer Woman acts as a resurgent force by connecting to her culture and perpetually deflecting attacks. Neither character chooses to reconcile with their abuser; indeed, both choose to destroy them. These acts align with Simpson's vision of the toxicity of reconciliation, and suggest that LaPensée and Robertson support resurgence. Both characters, in identifying with Indigenous community and knowledges to grow more resilient against systemic violence against their personhoods, illustrate the concept of resiliency through identification with Indigenous values as described in the study of Nicolai and Saus; these narratives could thus help presence the lived experiences of many Indigenous readers who have survived and moved beyond violence.

Will I See? and *Deer Woman* also include design elements that convey an experience of acting-out. The form of the graphic novel, however, enables readers to witness acting-out while also always giving the reader a degree of control over the way in which they process and witness the violence. Though acting-out might be the necessary or only response for the Indigenous protagonists in these texts, leading to a politics of resurgence rather than reconciliation, the event of reading instances of acting-out could also be difficult for the reader witnessing the unfinished worlding of resurgence. Debra Dudek, in "'Good Relationships Mean Good Lives': Warrior-Survivor Identity/ies in David Alexander Robertson's *7 Generations*," argues that Robertson uses the structure of the graphic novel, in which the past, present, and future of the narration is always evident and connected, to iterate how

the Indigenous protagonist in his *7 Generations* series finds healing through understanding the continuity of his life and relations, regardless of time (40). She also argues that the "sense of the graphic novel generally and the page specifically as continuous wholes" enables a conceptualization of an Indigenous worldview. In *Will I See?* and *Deer Woman*, the narrative wholeness of the graphic novel form defies potential discomfort, because the reader can glimpse at future action, therefore making the violent episode known to the reader before the event occurs. The Indigenous female reader could follow the process of Deer Woman and May coming to understand the systemic violence impacting Indigenous women and their strength as Indigenous women, through both reading the violent panels and simultaneously having full control to skip ahead or jump back to panels that affirm the control and power of the protagonists. These recursive violent instances would therefore be read as moments that require acting-out, which can be compartmentalized and understood within a broader narrative of strength. As mentioned, LaPensée asserts that it is important to depict Indigenous women as superheroes or powerful in media to reinforce an understanding of the strength of Indigenous women.

The acts of worlding, of bringing about resurgence that happens through women connecting to culturally-derived strength and acting-out in response to violence, are initiated through conveying complex felt knowledges of strength and anger to the reader rather than transmitting merely a felt knowledge of victimhood. Eve Tuck (Unangax̂) in "Suspending Damage: A Letter to Communities" critiques damage-centred criticism because it can create a one-dimensional narrative that hinders and neglects the strength and success of Indigenous peoples (1). In "Felt Theory: An Indigenous Feminist Approach to Affect and History," Tanana Athabascan scholar Dian Million also iterates this idea, saying that expressing a feeling other than victimhood to settler-colonial publics is important for the healing process of Indigenous peoples and can also be subversive to the policing of emotion by colonial governments (who first ignore Indigenous complaints and then expect performances of victimhood). She writes of the trauma of residential schooling that

> Native scholars, communities, and individuals were fairly in agreement that this pain that had the power to destroy them, individually and communally, would not be

> silenced any longer. It became their *story*. Feelings, including their anger, would and must reenter their accounts, which would be incomplete without them. . . . The successful struggle to rearticulate the colonial residential school experience as abuse was not a move to articulate *victimology*, it was a move to ground a present healing. . . . In court, Canada came short of officially narrating any historical culpability. So, if Indians captured public opinion, even momentarily, a case can be made that, for once, their own felt knowledge did speak itself. (Million 73, emphasis original)

Thus, for both theorists, part of the healing process for Indigenous peoples involves articulating all of the emotions experienced after a traumatic incident.

Both graphic novels convey very minimally narratives of damage, and instead express complex felt knowledges of temerity and anger to illustrate how Indigenous peoples can act-out and resurge; characters can experience violence, feel anger, and then move through to strength. The complexity of these narrations distinguishes the comics from the tragic storylines of Indigenous women typical in Canadian media. The emphasis on resilience in the comics also departs from the tone of the NIMMIWG. The inquiry predominantly focused on registering and responding to trauma narratives, with community narratives that were streamed live for the public and emphasized attending to the difficulties of reopening wounds for those speaking of their past experiences with sexual assault and violence.

In her work, Million expounds the importance of expressing anger for healing, particularly due to the tendency of settler-colonial academics to balk at the sentiment (labelling it polemic) while simultaneously perpetually imagining Indigenous peoples as victims (63, 67). While Deer Woman and May do not convey anger in responding to the attacks on their persons, graphically, both texts convey a sense of wrath. In *Deer Woman*, LaPensée has Deer Woman unleash violence on the attackers to supplant the expectation of victims being overtaken, narrating the sudden and staccato deaths of the attackers from the hooves of Deer Woman. While it is unclear if Deer Woman is acting in anger (it seems as though her actions are rooted more so in a sentiment of grim necessity), the illustrations are explicit, and in their gory detail, convey a sense of remorselessness akin to that witnessed in real-life accounts of violence against Indigenous women. This ambivalence is similar to that reflected in Canada's justice system, with its lack of convictions for perpetrators of violence directed towards Indigenous peoples, as evidenced by the recent acquittals in the cases of Tina Fontaine and Colten

Boushie. The painful deaths in *Deer Woman* are perhaps therefore a form of retaliation. The red hue of the blood puncturing the black and white panels further connotes shocking violence (and perhaps Indigenous-achieved justice, as the colour red symbolizes Indigeneity), and its inclusion seems to suggest the lack of care readers should have for the murdered attackers, who can be understood in the context of the comic as wholly "bad guys." While in *Will I See?* May does not respond in anger to the attacks against other Indigenous women (her response is distress), when she herself is attacked, she responds with temerity that permits her to fight off her attacker. As her cat draws blood when scratching him the statement in the panel below is affirmed, that these attackers are "just people," and therefore as susceptible to injury as the victims they pursue (Robertson 42). That panel is the only instance in which red is used to denote violence against a non-Indigenous woman, suggesting that May is healing from her belief that people like her are victims to a larger unassailable force.

The action in each comic is dynamically illustrated, which conveys power and anger simultaneously. In *Deer Woman*, the frame layout during sequences of Deer Woman killing men is laid diagonally, furthering the sense of action-to-action movement that is depicted in the panels (LaPensée 9, 13). In *Will I See?*, May is represented as possessing immense strength to defeat her attacker (with the help of her animal spirit, a domesticated cat). The panels mutate constantly in size and scope-of-focus, which provides an intensity to the entire narrative (Robertson 40). Both stories, in their form as graphic novels, serve as accessible entry points for a wide range of literacy levels into narratives of violence against Indigenous women, and *Deer Woman* further reduces barriers to access in its availability as a free download. All of these elements enable the transmission of felt knowledges of empowered Indigenous women who confront systemic violence. That the graphic novels present their protagonists systematically acting-out in response to violence, within graphic illustrations that convey felt experiences of rage, suggests that beside the panel-by-panel or moment-by-moment experiences of resurgence through rage, there exists a parallel reality where resurgence is also occurring through connection with culturally-derived strength.

In *Deer Woman* and *Will I See?*, resurgence is also demonstrated as the protagonists access power by aligning with the missing Indigenous women

that people the graphic novels. The texts account for Indigenous women vis-à-vis the failures of accountability of the settler state's system of justice by including these missing women and granting them the power to empower the protagonists; the resurgence illustrated in these texts thus nods or strives towards fuller justice outside of the texts. In "Affective Economies," Sara Ahmed discusses the concept of the absent presence of history, which enables historic affects to bind within subjects (119-20). Correspondingly, in *Will I See?* and *Deer Woman*, a historic absence of justice enables ongoing hatred to inhabit the bodies of the Indigenous female characters, perpetuated by misogynistic and racist aggressors. However, instead of erasing these bodies from the narrative (as is the case with the systemic crisis of missing women), Indigenous female bodies are re-presenced and reimagined as figures of strength in the spirit representations of missing Indigenous women in *Will I See?* and in the numerous potential victims in *Deer Woman*. Ahmed also discusses the affective economies that are produced through this continual sliding and sticking of affects within subjects along the contours of an absent history to reproduce the procession of events (120). Similarly, in *Will I See?*, May becomes a target for violence because she is an Indigenous woman, as do the Indigenous characters in *Deer Woman*. The graphic texts themselves, through their circulation, counter felt knowledges of hatred, an emotion which contributes to perpetuating the cycle of absencing Indigenous female bodies and centring disdain within existing Indigenous female bodies, and of victimhood, which would have the effect of centring powerlessness within understandings of Indigenous female existence.

The absent presence of history that determines the affects residing in different bodies seems to relate to LaCapra's concept of structural absence versus individual loss when applied to the history of insufficient justice for violence against Indigenous women. In "Trauma, Absence, Loss," LaCapra defines absence as transhistorical, and loss as historic (701). He warns against movements to view historical loss as structural absence because it inhibits necessary mourning processes and impedes healing (712). As documented in *Will I See?* and *Deer Woman*, the normalization of Indigenous women's disappearances engenders emotions that further promote the disappearance of Indigenous women. The expectation of this absence then overrules opportunities to mourn and investigate individual loss. The perceived

structural absence therefore inscribes absence on the bodies of Indigenous women, a perception and repeated occurrence that is dialectically sustained through the sticking of racist and sexist hatred onto Indigenous women and that is maintained through the failures of the Canadian justice system and the Canadian citizenry to adequately address the crisis of missing and murdered Indigenous women. Robertson and LaPensée illustrate the absent presence of justice for Indigenous women and the problem of perceived structural absence that results in passivity. Robertson achieves this by illustrating in multiple instances the traces of Indigenous women, first individually during moments of assault, and then together as ghostly figures (6, 8, 9, 27), and also with the naming of the cat Chipiy. An attempt to resolve and properly mourn the disappearances of these women is alluded to at the comic's end when May's grandmother asserts to May that they will share the necklace comprised of the items of the missing Indigenous women, so that they may be remembered. Similarly, in *Deer Woman*, the sites of would-be assault are remembered and presenced through the visits of Deer Woman (LaPensée 9, 13, 15, 17).

I have argued that these acts of peopling the graphic text with reminders of the struggles of Indigenous women to defend themselves against violence can also be read as instances of resistance, which could then engender resurgence. Tuck and Klamath scholar Angie Morrill, in "Before Dispossession, or Surviving It," theorize the dispossession of sovereignty of Indigenous peoples and consider how the presence of Indigenous women "haunts the map drawn by his hand" (1). Morrill and Tuck write that "when I told you that I will probably haunt you, you made it about you, but it is about me. The opposite of dispossession is not possession. It is not accumulation. It is unforgetting. It is mattering" (2). The inclusion of the spirits of women who went missing in *Will I See?* and the sites where women were attacked in *Deer Woman* can be read as acts of mattering, or unforgetting. The concept of haunting as being not for Canadians but rather for Indigenous peoples themselves could be understood as promoting resurgence, rather than a reconciliatory politics. In this scenario, Indigenous communities and women would focus on healing and growing after a history of violence against Indigenous women rather than focusing on ensuring adequate reactions from settler Canadians to violence against Indigenous women. In *Will I See?*, the link between the haunting of the texts and strength is made explicit

through Chipiy; as May transforms into Chipiy to defeat the attacker, she draws upon the strength of all of the other Indigenous women illustrated in the text. In *Deer Woman*, when Deer Woman assumes her form of strength to attack aggressors, she is similarly attuned to the strength of all of the women represented in the story, who can access the same Deer Woman for strength.

In "The Impossibility of a Future in the Absence of a Past: Drifting in the In-Between," settler scholars Sonja Boon and Kate Lahey draw on the writings of postcolonial scholars to theorize the concept of drift. They suggest that drift can be understood as resistance to colonial gestures of capture and containment, and that it "reveals the artifice of the worlds we currently inhabit, in the process of making new worlds possible" (32). *Will I See?* and *Deer Woman* can be understood as texts that reside within the drift of Indigenous writings that aim to re-world through retelling stories that resist the one-dimensionality of non-Indigenous media that depicts Indigenous experiences. These texts move towards re-worlding by illustrating graphically and narratively their protagonists as heroes who source strength from within their cultures and communities to act-out against systemic violence, in order to support resurgence. Resurgence is further practised within these narratives by conveying complex felt knowledges and peopling the stories with missing and murdered Indigenous women to incite reader responses that recognize the strength and anger of Indigenous women, and to pivot them towards justice and accountability. These turns to resurgence in *Will I See?* and *Deer Woman* counter the focus on reconciliation of the NIMMIWG, while the dynamism of the stories counters the languorous pace of the inquiry and the lack of real action thus far on the part of the Canadian government towards ending the crisis. As we follow May and Deer Woman through their stories and lives fighting off systemic violence through gaining support from their communities and sourcing cultural wisdom, we witness Indigenous joy and success that is accessed from within, and that everberates outwards to readers—working a resurgence that exists and accrues irrespective of settler intervention.

NOTES

1 I use the terms "graphic novel" and "comic" interchangeably within this paper because David Alexander Robertson calls his piece a "graphic novel" and Elizabeth LaPensée calls her work a "comic."

2 The disparity in estimated numbers reflects the historic failure of authorities in accounting for the violence. For further reading, please see www.nwac.ca/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/Fact_Sheet_Missing_and_Murdered_Aboriginal_Women_and_Girls.pdf.

3 The NIMMIWG cannot attempt to solve outstanding cases of missing Indigenous women, nor provide monetary compensation to families. This process is different from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, which was able to provide monetary compensation to survivors of residential schooling.

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Ulrike Narwani

Mistaking Nike for Niobe

In the Louvre's spectral light
seen from a distance
I thought it was you,
Niobe,
stranded perilous
mid-stride.

Perched high above the crowd
headless
armless
sight, touch, severed.

Arms now wings
half bird
your body
a beak that pecks
the breakable air.

Numberless your losses.
Your sons and daughters killed.
Gods counted it justice.
Too proud she was
of her many children.
Pride now
the flightless feathers in your wings.

In the Louvre's dusky light
each day each night
the sound of their feet
running up the pedestal stairs,
tremors triggering
hairline fractures in your heart.

*The sculpture mentioned in this poem is that of Nike, the Winged Victory of Samothrace.

Daniela Janes

"The Clock Is Dead": Temporality and Trauma in *Rilla of Ingleside*

L. M. Montgomery's First World War novel, *Rilla of Ingleside* (1921), is a text preoccupied with time: with characters' growth through time, with their sense of temporality and duration, and with their attempts to organize their experience of time in narrative form, via diaries, letters, and oral narratives.[1] Montgomery charts the experience of modernity through the industrial warfare of the Great War and through modern interventions into the pastoral Prince Edward Island community of Glen St. Mary. The Blythe family buys a motor car, observes planes flying overhead, and feels the impact of their own situatedness within a transitional historical moment. One of the most explicit interventions into their experience of time is the Canadian federal government's introduction of Daylight Saving Time in the spring of 1918, which occurs toward the end of the novel. Susan Baker, the housekeeper at Ingleside, argues the matter theologically with Dr. Blythe, wondering whether he thinks it proper to "meddle with the arrangements of the Almighty," and she insists to "Mrs. Dr. dear" that her own personal clock "shall go on God's time and not [Prime Minister Robert] Borden's time" (Montgomery, *Rilla* 309). Susan's faith in "God's time" belies the history of the development of Coordinated Universal Time, a system that is implicated in nineteenth-century imperialism, enmeshed as it is with "national ambitions, war, industry, science, and conquest" (Galison 38).[2] However, Susan's resistance to Daylight Saving Time reminds us that if time is political, it is also experienced as profoundly personal.

Rilla of Ingleside paces through the harrowing years of war along a horizontal axis, chronologically following its young heroine from youth to maturity. Its structure, though, illustrates the gap between two modes of experiencing and representing time: standard time (which includes calendar time and clock time), a system of measurement that is external and objective, and autobiographical time, which is wrapped up in the personality and perceptions of the experiencing subject. Adam Barrows notes that while time was "intrinsically politicized" in the modernist period, "bound up . . . with the problematics of imperial control and global conceptualization" (263), novelists like Joseph Conrad, James Joyce, and Virginia Woolf "resituat[e] temporal processes within more meaningful, contextually determined, and variable social patterns" (263). In *Rilla of Ingleside*, the tension between the chronological imperative of Rilla's narrative of maturation and the novel's exploration of autobiographical time challenges the form of the *Bildungsroman*.[3] The novel's shifts between third-person and first-person narration, presented in the excerpts from Rilla's diary, emphasize multiple temporal registers. The omniscient narrator possesses the historical long view, and the knowledge of the war's outcome that the implied reader of the text also shares,[4] while Rilla's diary, produced and embedded in its specific historical moment, maps an autobiographical experience of time as personal, subjective, and limited. The diary, as a site of self-fashioning, marks its author's individual experience of time through its treatment of event, sequence, and duration, and through its strategies of narrative compression and omission. Montgomery's novel juxtaposes standard time and autobiographical time to capture the individual, subjective experience of war, and to reflect the war's private traumatic impact.

The disjunction between public and private time in *Rilla of Ingleside* demonstrates the slipperiness of temporality as a human experience, emphasizing its abstract, individualized nature in the context of wartime trauma. Examining *Rilla of Ingleside* in relation to contemporary texts like Virginia Woolf's *Mrs Dalloway* (1925) and Katherine Mansfield's "The Garden Party" (1922)—narratives that engage either directly or obliquely with the trauma of war—frames Montgomery's representation of time, memory, and trauma comparatively, and illuminates patterns across the texts that speak to the imperative to create meaning out of the chaos of violent death. Locating

Montgomery in relation to her contemporaries invites a consideration of her engagement with modernist themes (including temporality and mortality), and of her formal strategies that challenge the constraints of the *Bildungsroman*. I argue that through characters' processes of organizing and understanding time in *Rilla of Ingleside*, we witness their ongoing battle to make meaning out of the war.

"Cut in two by the chasm of the war": Temporality and Rupture

In Montgomery's journal entry for March 11, 1919, she describes commencing work on the book that would become *Rilla of Ingleside*, which she intended at the time as the final instalment in the *Anne* series.[5] Montgomery expresses a keen desire to "end *Anne*—and properly," knowing that Anne "belongs" to a different world—the "green, untroubled pastures and still waters of the world before the war" (*CJ 1918-21* 128). Her sense that Anne belongs to a world that has disappeared is echoed in the character's own reflection in *Rilla* that "[i]t seems hundreds of years since those Green Gables days. . . . They belonged to another world altogether" (199). The trauma of war has produced a subjective experience of temporal rupture, leading Anne to assert that "[l]ife has been cut in two by the chasm of the war. What is ahead I don't know—but it can't be a bit like the past" (199). Even the form of Anne's sentence—with its dash midway through—syntactically represents fragmentation. For Anne, existence is split along a temporal axis: the time before the war and an after-time that can only be imagined. Wondering whether "those of us who have lived half our lives in the old world will ever feel wholly at home in the new" (199), Anne echoes Montgomery's own reflection in a journal entry from June 17, 1916 that the "old world is passed away forever," and her "fear that those . . . who have lived half our [life] span" in the old world "will never feel wholly at home in the new" (*CJ 1911-17* 231).[6] Anne opens up speculative space in which she imagines herself and her contemporaries as chronotopic castaways, straddling two irreconcilable worlds.[7] Her interlocutors in this scene are the older generation of Ingleside—Gilbert, Susan, and Gertrude Oliver[8]—and their regular visitor, Susan's dour Cousin Sophia; none of the younger generation are present to witness the conversation.[9] Indeed, the youthful family members who come of age during the war could be imagined, in Anne's construction, as immune to the trauma of the adults

who feel their expulsion from the charmed "pastures and still waters" (Montgomery, *CJ 1918-21* 128) of the old days. Anne's image of a "life . . . cut in two" (*Rilla* 199) stresses discontinuity and the subjective experience of time. While the public world is governed by the stable registers of calendar and clock time, Anne expresses a private sense of autobiographical temporal fragmentation that reflects her traumatic experience of the war.

Despite Anne's sense of the remoteness of the garden-like world before the war from the world of wartime, *Rilla of Ingleside* is filled with references to that earlier life which convey its continuing significance and its capacity to generate meaning through contrast and juxtaposition. E. Holly Pike notes that the *Anne* series is "recalled" (81) throughout *Rilla of Ingleside*, as characters remember and reflect upon their pasts, and as plot details recall to readers' minds episodes from earlier books in the series.[10] For example, Anne recalls incidents from her youthful days at Green Gables, such as when she broke her ankle after Josie Pye "dared [her]" to walk the ridge-pole of the Barrys' kitchen roof (*Rilla* 11) and when she disastrously dyed her hair green (198). Both of these episodes from Anne's past are raised in the context of her awareness of her own aging—the ache in her ankle "when the wind is east" (11) and the discovery of her first grey hair (198). Characters' acts of recollection produce deep structures of connection; however, the novel complicates any simple relationship between the past and the present. For example, as Cousin Sophia complains about the weather towards the end of *Rilla*, she remarks, "I'm afeared we're going to have an airly winter. . . . The muskrats are building awful big houses around the pond, and that's a sign that never fails" (336). This sense of the significance of the "sign" confirms her belief in the meaning and experience of all her lived winters. But the reliability of the "sign that never fails" is cast into doubt as she then equivocates, noting "the seasons is altogether different now from what they used to be" (337). Whether Cousin Sophia is correct and the seasons are "altogether different now," or whether it is her perception of the seasons that has changed, both scenarios emphasize flux and transition. The past is no bellwether for the future.

Montgomery's structures of recollection in *Rilla* invite comparison with Virginia Woolf's *Mrs Dalloway* (1925), the great single-day novel of the postwar milieu. Woolf's novel possesses a similar sense of the chasm that

looms between the prewar and postwar worlds. Woolf creates complex temporal effects through Clarissa Dalloway's repeated return to memories of her youth at Bourton, which break upon her in waves, juxtaposed against the chiming of Big Ben (and assorted other clocks), which marks the passage of the hours on that Wednesday in June of 1923 as Clarissa prepares for her evening party. Just as the image of Big Ben looms over Clarissa's London, the house of Ingleside is regulated by its clockworks—not simply the habits, routines, and rituals of the household, but the literal clocks that are wound on schedule and that set the pace for family life and work.[11] The presence of personal alarm clocks in *Rilla of Ingleside* (both Susan's and Rilla's are mentioned) reflects their affordability and ubiquity. Rilla records in her diary the reaction of her young ward, Jims, who awakens on a Wednesday in November of 1917 to the sight of Rilla's stopped alarm clock: "Jims bounded out of his crib and ran across to me, his face quite aghast above his little blue flannel pajamas. 'The clock is dead,' he gasped, 'oh Willa [he lisps], the clock is dead'" (288).[12] The mechanism has stopped, as Rilla records, because she "had forgotten to wind it up" (288), but the three-year-old Jims captures an almost uncanny quality of dread that time itself could be stopped if the clockworks ground to a halt. In *The Culture of Time and Space, 1880-1918*, Stephen Kern observes that "as every child quickly learns, there is only one time" (11), flowing incessantly in a single direction. Jims has yet to learn the lesson of time's inexorable forward march, independent of the functioning or failing of little personal alarm clocks. However, in the shelter of his protected toddlerhood, some dawning realization has reached him that time is beyond human control. In the same diary entry, Rilla records little Jims plaintively wondering, "Why can't yesterday come back, Willa?" (288). Jims grapples with time in a way that recalls the elegiac treatment of time past offered by the adults at Ingleside. Yet he also unwittingly leads the reader into a philosophical morass as it becomes clear that although clock and calendar time move on, there are critical ways in which the Blythe family will be stranded in the timescape of the war years forever.

In Woolf's novel, Clarissa Dalloway constructs a simple, factual claim and then freights it with contingency when she reflects,

> The War was over, except for some one like Mrs. Foxcroft at the Embassy last night eating her heart out because that nice boy was killed and now the old Manor House

> must go to a cousin; or Lady Bexborough who opened a bazaar, they said, with the telegram in her hand, John, her favourite, killed; but it was over; thank Heaven—over. (*Dalloway* 4)

Even as she insists that the war "was over," her parenthetical insertions undermine her claim, as those whose lives have been irrevocably altered by the wreckage of the Great War find themselves living within its long shadow. Similarly, as Anne and Susan prepare to set the table for Christmas six weeks after the Armistice of November 1918, the Great War is officially over; however, for these chronotopic castaways, the war is never over. Setting empty chairs for all the boys who will not be home in time for the holiday, as well as for the middle son of Ingleside, Walter, who was killed in action at Courcelette in 1916, Anne proclaims, "We'll set chairs for all, Susan, as you did our first war Christmas,—yes, for *all*—for my dear lad whose chair must always be vacant, as well as for the others" (343, emphasis original). The empty place at the table is a visual articulation of the presence of loss; the space marks an absence that will continue to be felt in the long years after the war. The gesture links space and time, and also speaks to meaning-making: in order for the survivors of the catastrophe of war to experience consolation, loss must be made meaningful.

The longing to attribute meaning and coherence to untimely death links *Rilla of Ingleside* with another contemporary text, Katherine Mansfield's 1922 short story "The Garden Party." Mansfield, writing about her narrative in a March 11, 1922 letter to the novelist William Gerhardi, describes her teenage protagonist Laura Sheridan's desire to make sense of the collision of life and death on the day of her family's party. Mansfield proposes:

> The diversity of life and how we try to fit in everything, Death included . . . is bewildering for a person Laura's age. She feels things ought to happen differently. First one and then another. But life isn't like that. We haven't the ordering of it. Laura says, "But all these things must not happen at once" and Life answers "Why not? How are they divided from each other." And they *do* all happen, it is inevitable. And it seems to me that there is beauty in that inevitability. (*Collected Letters* 101, emphasis original)

Like "The Garden Party," *Rilla of Ingleside* emphasizes mutability, change, and the imperative to make meaning, as a teenage protagonist is initiated into the special knowledge of violent death. While Mansfield's story is set in

the bucolic New Zealand of her youth before the war, "The Garden Party" has been read in relation to the author's traumatic experience of the loss of her brother, Leslie Beauchamp, during the First World War (Darrohn 519). Christine Darrohn posits that the body of the lost brother, destroyed when a grenade accidentally exploded in his hand, is reconstituted through the narrative, both in Laura's warm, empathic, idealized brother, Laurie, and in the body of Mr. Scott, the dead carter. Scott's body is made profoundly meaningful for Laura in its beauty and integrity, a figure of sublime "happ[iness]," "content[ment]," and "peaceful[ness]" (Mansfield, "The Garden Party" 51). Similarly, Clarissa Dalloway ascribes meaning to the death by suicide of Septimus Warren Smith: "The clock began striking. The young man had killed himself; but she did not pity him; with the clock striking the hour, one, two, three, she did not pity him, with all this going on. . . . She felt somehow very like him—the young man who had killed himself" (Woolf, *Dalloway* 158). His death becomes a source of affinity and meaning-making, timed to the tolling of a clock. As Rilla's beloved brother Walter prepares to board the train that will spirit him away to war, the narrator uses temporal metaphors to describe the anguish of parting: Rilla "would not see him again until the day broke and the shadows vanished—and she knew not if that daybreak would be on this side of the grave or beyond it" (Montgomery, *Rilla* 164-65). In the aftermath of Walter's death, he is an absence: an empty chair; a body consecrated to burial overseas; a figure outside of time, perpetually young while others age; a blank space in which meaning must be inscribed. In these stories written in the aftermath of the war, Woolf, Mansfield, and Montgomery foreground the process of making meaning out of traumatic death. The processual gestures of grieving emphasize the links between time and trauma.[13] "We haven't the ordering of it" says Mansfield of life and death, but a diary is a space to exercise control over the narrative representation of lived experience.

Building Temporal Structures

The *Bildungsroman* is a diachronic narrative mode that emphasizes the protagonist's development through time; however, *Rilla* is not only a novel of maturation but is also presented, in part, as a proto-autobiography as expressed through Rilla's diary entries. The novel shifts frequently from

the third-person omniscient narration of the extra-diegetic narrator to the first-person narration of Rilla in her diary. Colin Hill describes Rilla as a "compulsive diarist," and notes that her diary entries increasingly "reflect the intellectual seriousness and practicality she has acquired as a result of her war experience" (66). Rilla's emerging identity is being formalized through her diary, allowing us to approach the embedded text as both a dynamic record of her maturation across the years of war and as a writerly apprenticeship, as Rilla the diarist gives narrative shape to her lived experience. H. Porter Abbott contrasts "clock time," which "always relates to itself," and "narrative time," which "relates to events or incidents" (4-5), noting that "[i]n narrative . . . it is the incidents that give shape and that dominate our sense of time" (5). While Rilla's diary is not marked by editorial retrospection—she does not return to earlier entries to edit, revise, or recopy—her writing over the four years of war is informed by her developing awareness of her representational capacity. For example, in the early winter of 1916, Rilla notes in her diary that she has "got into the habit of giving things a comical twist" in her letter-writing, hoping "to make [her readers] laugh" (Montgomery, *Rilla 195)*, and has replicated the comedic mode in her diary account of Miranda Pryor's amatory frustrations with Joe Milgrave. Like her poet-brother Walter, Rilla creates (not simply records) her narrative world, peoples it with characters, controls the incidents included or excluded, and builds temporal structures. Rilla's diary becomes a staging ground for self-representation that privileges the individually meaningful experience of autobiographical time.

Montgomery infuses her novel with references to texts, readers, and writers: newspapers arrive filled with war news and are devoured and debated by eager readers; letters from the war, written by the boys of Ingleside and the Manse, are "read to pieces" (333); overseas cables bring news of good or ill; Walter's poem, "The Piper," is published in "the London *Spectator*" and sent home to Rilla (215), and through it all, Rilla keeps a diary. Her diary predates the start of the war, and is initially evidence of her youthful immaturity. Callow fourteen-year-old Rilla laments to Miss Oliver early in the novel that Walter "thinks I'm not grown up enough to understand" his secrets and notes that she "tell[s] *him* everything—I even show him my diary" (20, emphasis original). The diary reinforces the *Bildung*

structure of the novel, becoming a space in which Rilla's maturation is signalled. Montgomery emphasizes the diary's therapeutic function for Rilla during the early days of the war, as Rilla "reliev[es]" her "feelings" (79, 110) through the act of writing; however, as the war continues, Rilla's thinking about the diary transforms as she anticipates its future function as an archival document of the war years. In "Stories to Remember: Narrative and the Time of Memory," Jens Brockmeier proposes that "[n]arrative discourse is our most advanced way to shape complex temporal experiences, including remembering" (118). Rilla's diary, as her written record of her war experience, offers a prescription for how these events will be remembered in the future.

Rilla's diary entries provide calendar dates, the names of battles, and references to newspaper accounts that correspond to the war's real timelines. Indeed, Susan R. Fisher observes that Montgomery's novel is unusual among other "girls' stories" (213) about the war in its attentiveness to dating, a feature that is reflective of Montgomery's own meticulous diaries of the war years. Elizabeth Epperly notes that "Montgomery used passages from her own diaries to recreate in *Rilla of Ingleside* the impact of European news on those who waited at home" ("The Fragrance" 113). Rilla's diary conveys a clear awareness of the external world, with its measurable dates and times, in contrast to the inner world of the character, in which time and event are experienced more subjectively. On August 4, 1918, Rilla reflects on the years that have passed since the war began, writing in her diary, "It is four years tonight since the dance at the lighthouse—four years of war. It seems like three times four" (327). Here, Rilla's experience of time appears to stretch out; four years feels like a dozen. This is not simply youthful hyperbole; it is the language of autobiographical time used to express her "meaningful" and "contextually determined" (Barrows 263) sense of the passage of time and of the meaning of this time. Rilla's experience of the disjunction between standard time and the autobiographical experience of time echoes a moment early in the novel, in which the erstwhile Anne Shirley expresses surprise that her children are grown up: "When I look at those two tall sons of mine," she says to Miss Cornelia—still called so by her "old friends" (Montgomery, *Rainbow Valley* 1) in stubborn resistance to the fact that she has been Mrs. Marshall Elliott for many years—"I wonder if they can possibly be the fat, sweet, dimpled babies I kissed and cuddled and sang to slumber the other

day—only the other day" (Montgomery, *Rilla* 11). Repetition here heightens Anne's sense of temporal estrangement; time feels loose, slippery, and subjective. In one example, the years stretch; in another, the years seem to telescope or foreshorten. Not bound by clock time but rather by autobiographical time, memory reflects the individual's sense that temporality and duration are elastic, variable, and subjective. As Rilla records her experiences in her diary, the dated entries signal the standard measures of time; however, her representation of time breaks from the objectivity of standard time to explore the individuality and temporal eccentricities of autobiographical time.

Rilla's diary is her life shaped into narrative form, and events are elaborated upon or elided at her discretion. The diary's selection of events is another way in which the variability of autobiographical time and experience is flagged. While attending to the major developments in the war effort over a period of four years, Rilla also uses her diary as a space in which to reflect on the small experiences of domestic life. Virginia Woolf makes the case for the value of the everyday in her essay "Modern Fiction" (1921), celebrating the achievement of writers like James Joyce who "come closer to life" (9) in their fiction. She proposes, "Let us not take it for granted that life exists more fully in what is commonly thought big than in what is commonly thought small" (9). In the same spirit, Montgomery's narrator in *Anne of Green Gables* reminds the reader that "[a]ll things great are wound up with all things little" (115). Montgomery's contrapuntal structure in *Rilla*, contrasting the quotidian details of childrearing and housekeeping against the larger tide of geopolitics and currents of national feeling, locates within the diary a space of authentic, individual creative production. The significance of a diary as a textual object of historical value and interest is rooted in a sense of the importance of the small details of ordinary people's lives. Rilla's diary privileges the personal and the daily, particularly in the context of her initiatory experiences as a teenager managing complex social relationships, and her synchronous experiences of adoptive mothering, as the food, clothing, and care of her war baby, Jims, are all detailed here. Jims himself epitomizes the novel's emphasis on small things: the minute, the insignificant, and the undersized are all reflected in the newborn infant who is carried back to Ingleside in a soup tureen after the death of his mother in

August 1914.[14] Rilla's process of organizing time through the events she records in her diary suggests some measure of agency and control. As a daughter of Ingleside, Rilla is consigned to the task of waiting on the home front as the war rages on at a distance; in her exercise of autobiographical agency, Rilla claims the power of the writer to shape how that story of waiting is told.

Early in the novel, Rilla imagines a para-literary role for herself, enthusing to Miss Oliver her ardent wish that "some day I shall be to Walter what Wordsworth's sister Dorothy was to him" (21). Her diary takes her beyond this literary-adjacent role, into the realm of creation. Indeed, Melanie J. Fishbane positions Rilla as "the observer, the record keeper, of grief" (135), drawing attention to Rilla's agency as a writer. Rilla writes with an awareness that her diary may be a valuable personal archive, citing her father's opinion that "a diary of the years of the war should be a very interesting thing to hand down to one's children" (227). While Dr. Blythe and Rilla conceive of a limited domestic audience for Rilla's diary, Emily Woster notes Montgomery's consciousness of the "certain literary value" (Montgomery qtd. in Woster 151) of her own diaries, which is reflected in "the care with which she copies and types them" (Woster 151).[15] Rilla's sense of her own diary's archival value is not undermined by its focus upon the daily details of life at Ingleside. At the same time, the diary is marked out as a space of private self-discovery and authorial self-creation. Rilla's war diary reminds us that "identity is a diachronic construction" (Brockmeier, *Autobiographical* 53). Through her acts of "autobiographical remembering" and "retrospective reconstruction" (Brockmeier 52), she reflects upon her subjective experience of living through the war years and shapes this experience in narrative form. Rilla's autobiography is bound by timetables, and Coordinated Universal Time provides the date-stamp; but the linear form of the *Bildungsroman* is challenged by the idiosyncrasies of autobiographical time.

Montgomery's narrator notes that Rilla's diary is marked by deliberate acts of omission. Indeed, Rilla's strategies of recalcitrance or withholding mark the diary as a partial or fragmentary record. After Walter departs for the front, the narrator notes that "Rilla spent an hour in Rainbow Valley that morning about which she never said a word to any one; she did not even write in her diary about it; when it was over she went home and made

rompers for Jims during the rest of the day; in the evening she went to a Junior Red Cross committee meeting and was severely business-like" (165). The impactful event of Walter's departure and Rilla's non-narration of it result in a representational lacuna—the diary does not simply document or record, but rather is shaped by both what the writer shares and what the writer withholds. Her traumatic experience of parting from Walter evades narration, and it is left to the third-person narrator to supply the details that Rilla cannot record in her diary, emphasizing both the unspeakability of traumatic experience and its existence outside of standard temporal registers.

Return to the Past

Trauma and time are inextricably linked, as Cathy Caruth argues, because "the impact of the traumatic event lies . . . in its belatedness, in its refusal to be simply located" (Introduction 9). Similarly, James Berger proposes that "the effects of [a traumatic] event may be dispersed and manifested in many forms not obviously associated with the event. Moreover, this dispersal occurs across time, so that an event experienced as shattering may actually produce its full impact only years later" (572). If Rilla's diary, and the novel's form as a *Bildungsroman*, emphasizes the diachronic mode, in which Rilla's development is traced along a single axis, the language of trauma reconceptualizes the dynamics of temporality. In place of the diachronic, we have the achronic, in which trauma is experienced as timeless in its intensity and irremediable grief. Caruth describes the "paradox" of trauma: "that the most direct seeing of a violent event may occur as an absolute inability to know it; that immediacy, paradoxically, may take the form of belatedness" (*Unclaimed Experience* 94). In death, Walter steps outside of time, and for the friends and family who survive him, grappling with the reality of Walter's loss necessitates repetition and return to the past, a burrowing into time.

Rilla of Ingleside emphasizes its heroine's maturation and growth across the long years of the war, but the final scene of the novel, in which Rilla is reunited with her sweetheart Kenneth Ford, tracks backwards to remind us of a moment that precedes the novel's own chronological starting point: Rilla's earliest childhood. Kenneth asks her, "*Is* it Rilla-*my*-Rilla?", and Rilla, after a pause in which she experiences "[j]oy—happiness—sorrow—fear—every passion that had wrung her heart in those four long years," lisps her

affirmative, "Yeth" (350, emphasis original).[16] The novel's closing anachronism, the resurrection of Rilla's childhood lisp, is associated as we learn earlier in the novel with "stress and strain" (41), yet the return of Kenneth Ford from the battlefields of France and his declaration of devotion seems to set Rilla's future life upon a happy course. Paul Ricoeur suggests that "[r]ather than being predictable, a narrative's conclusion has to be *acceptable*" (150, emphasis original), inviting us to consider in what sense Rilla's lisped "Yeth" may be "acceptable" or fitting for the conclusion of the female *Bildungsroman*. Susan's earlier resistance to Daylight Saving Time reminds us that while standard time regulates, conventionalizes, and makes homogenous the time shared by a community, the experience of autobiographical time is capricious, unequal, variable, and inherently individual. The novel's chronological organization belies its complex thematic treatment of time. Montgomery invests Rilla's *Bildungsroman* with tension through her temporal strategies of fragmentation, the most disruptive of which is her reversal of the conventional romance structure; in Rilla, she reverses the ordering of the roles of wife and mother, allowing Rilla to become first a mother and then a wife. Elizabeth Abel proposes that Virginia Woolf "evade[s] the tyranny of sequence by reshaping time as depth" (xvi). Montgomery, too, "reshap[es]" time, continuing her disruption of the romance chronology by tunnelling back to Rilla's childhood and to those earlier moments in the text in which her lisp reasserted itself. At the end of a novel that concludes conventionally with a romantic resolution, Rilla's lisp can be read as an articulation of her separateness from Kenneth—a separateness that is informed by the characters' individual experiences of trauma. The tension between Rilla's maturation and the resurrection of her childhood lisp may be a final reminder of the novel's temporal discontinuities and subversions.

While *Rilla* focuses upon the war years, ending with Kenneth's return in the spring of 1919, the romance structure of the ending also gestures towards the years that come after. Walter predicts Rilla's future happiness before his death in the fall of 1916, writing:

> I've a premonition about you, Rilla, as well as about myself. I think Ken will go back to you—and that there are long years of happiness for you by-and-by. And you will tell your children of the *Idea* we fought and died for—teach them it must be *lived for* as

> well as died for, else the price paid for it will have been given for naught. (246, emphasis original)

Walter's prediction anticipates the romance resolution of *Rilla of Ingleside,* looking to a future in which Rilla's work and happiness will be found in domesticity, marriage, motherhood, and making meaning out of the sacrifice of the Great War; but Walter cannot adequately anticipate the lingering trauma resulting from his own death. While the tone at the end of the novel is optimistic, Walter's seat at the table remains unfilled. The trauma of the Blythe family's wartime experience will be marked in the after-time.

Conclusion: "As if there were never a clock in the world"

For eighty-eight years, *Rilla of Ingleside* stood as the chronological final text in the *Anne* series, until the 2009 publication of Montgomery's last completed text, *The Blythes Are Quoted*. This generically experimental text is woven out of short stories, poetry (ostensibly written by Anne and Walter), and vignettes featuring the commentaries, critical interpretations, and private thoughts of Anne and her family that are formally presented as dramatic verse, with speech acts indicated and without a narrator. The book is divided into two parts: before the war and after the war. The formal division of the novel echoes the language in *Rilla of Ingleside* of lives divided in two by the upheaval and trauma of the Great War. Strategies of fragmentation, polyvocality, and recalcitrance in *The Blythes Are Quoted* connect the form of the book to the theme of postwar trauma.

Montgomery's final text can be considered an example of what Philip D. Beidler calls "the literature of aftermath" (1). The term describes the "spectral presence of the war, its continuing role in the memory culture of everyday life" (3) in the literature of the interwar period.[17] Beidler notes that "the landscape of popular memory" in modernist novels like *Mrs Dalloway* and *The Great Gatsby* is "haunted by the wandering ghosts of Flanders, Gallipoli, the Izonzo, the Argonne" (4). Similarly, the after-war Part Two of *The Blythes Are Quoted* is haunted by Walter, the "wandering ghost" of Courcelette, who is bidden to walk again through his poetry and through his family's memories of him. Walter's final poem in *The Blythes Are Quoted*, titled "The Aftermath," is a visceral description of the burden of memory. The speaker of the poem recalls a moment of moral horror: the exuberant killing in battle of

an enemy soldier—a "boy" who "might have been my brother" (509). The speaker thinks with envy of the "forgetfulness" (509) of the dead who, in dying, "have purged their memory" (509). His insistence that *"We must remember always"* (510, emphasis original) conveys the inescapability of traumatic remembrance.[18] In the vignette that follows, Jem positions Walter as a witness of violence rather than an agent of violence ("he saw . . . he saw . . ." [510, ellipsis original]) but then pivots away quickly from a biographical reading of the poem.[19] In the closing lines of the book, Jem urges his mother, "let us talk of something else. Who was it said, 'We forget because we must'? He was right" (510). Jem's reflection on the necessity of forgetfulness returns the reader to a moment from the prewar Part One of *The Blythes Are Quoted*, in which Dr. Blythe notes that people "forget because they have to. The world couldn't go on if they didn't" (93). Yet memory persists.

Walter's "spectral presence" (Beidler 3) makes clear that while the war, to return to Woolf, "was over; thank Heaven—over" (*Dalloway* 4), for the Blythe family the trauma of the war remains open and unresolved. Walter's poem "A June Day," read aloud by his mother early in Part Two, celebrates the spirit of "June-time adventurers" who cast aside worldly cares, schemes, and duties in pursuit of "dreaming," "wander[ing]," and "loiter[ing]," "as if there were never a clock in the world" (*Blythes* 369). In the vignette that follows, Susan Baker privately observes, "I wish, too, that there was never a clock in the world" (370), while Jem Blythe, and his wife, Faith, reflect on literature as therapy as Faith constructs Anne's act of rereading as "help[ing] an old ache" (370). Throughout Part Two of *The Blythes Are Quoted*, it is clear that the autobiographical timescape of the Blythe family continues to be impacted by loss and by imaginative acts of reconstruction that continue a long-term process of coming to terms with, and making meaning out of, the ravages of the war. Christine Darrohn, reflecting on Katherine Mansfield's process of meaning-making in "The Garden Party," proposes that "we can think about the ways survivors of war employ imagination and language to represent and recuperate from the costs of war" (517). The reflections of the Blythe family members throughout *The Blythes Are Quoted* emphasize this dual process of representation and recuperation as necessarily partial and incomplete. Susan reflects to herself, "I do not often question the purposes of the Almighty. But I should like to know why He makes a brain that can write

things like that and then lets it be crushed to death" (Montgomery, *Blythes* 374), while Dr. Blythe thinks of Anne's writing as "some outlet for the pain we feel when we think of [Walter]" (375). These private thoughts reflect the failures of temporal synchronization. Left behind by standard time, and by a world that has moved on from the Great War, Susan Baker and the Blythe family exist in their individual, autobiographical timescapes where the trauma of Walter's death continues to reverberate. In her last work, Montgomery extends the elegiac mode of the adults' reflections in *Rilla of Ingleside* through acts of incorporation; the young people who were imagined as immune to the trauma of a life divided in two are shown not to be exempt. There is dignity, privacy, and necessity in the family's ongoing and individual processes of mourning and meaning-making that locates them both in and outside of time.

NOTES

1 "Time," notes Paul Huebener in *Timing Canada: The Shifting Politics of Time in Canadian Literary Culture*, "is the most frequently used noun in the English language, relegating the word 'person' to second place, and the words 'year,' 'day,' and 'week' all make the top twenty" (7). The word "time" (or "times") appears approximately 230 times in *Rilla of Ingleside* (not including its appearance as part of compound words like "sometimes").

2 Huebener summarizes the development of standard time, noting that it

> was not a single event, but a process that occurred gradually, first through a national standardized time system in England in 1848, then through a partial system of 'time belts' created by railroad companies in North America in 1883, and finally through the slow adoption around the world of the familiar twenty-four global time zones in the years and decades following the 1884 Prime Meridian Conference in Washington, DC, which established Greenwich as the prime meridian of the world. (42)

Huebener observes the central role of standardized time as "a landmark in the shaping of modern time consciousness, as well as a source of significant controversy" (42).

3 As Gregory Castle argues, "it is precisely the breakdown of traditional forms of identity and of normative, harmonious socialization that gives the *Bildungsroman* a new sense of purpose" (5) in the early decades of the twentieth century.

4 Montgomery bridges the gap between the temporal omniscience of her narrator and the limitations of her characters by presenting several characters with prophetic ability. Walter's vision of the Piper, leading the boys away at the end of Montgomery's *Rainbow Valley* (1919), is revisited in *Rilla of Ingleside*, lending credence to his predictions about the outcome of the war and Rilla's future life. Gertrude Oliver experiences a series of symbolic dreams that become increasingly uncanny as her friends realize that her dreams have predicted future events.

5 In his introduction to *The Blythes Are Quoted*, Benjamin Lefebvre notes that *Rilla* was "in the planning stages as early as 1917," although Montgomery did not begin writing it "until four months after the Armistice was signed, meaning that, as she wrote, Montgomery had full knowledge of the war's outcome" (xiii).

6 Montgomery reiterates this idea in a journal entry from February 7, 1919, which focuses on the life and death of her beloved cousin, Frederica (Frede) Campbell MacFarlane, to whom *Rilla of Ingleside* is dedicated: "I have lived one life in those seemingly far-off years before the war. Now there is another to be lived, in a totally new world where I think I shall never feel quite at home. I shall always feel as if I belonged 'back there'—back there with Frede and laughter and years of peace" (122-23).

7 Mikhail Bakhtin uses the term "chronotope" "(literally, 'time space')" to describe "the intrinsic connectedness of temporal and spatial relationships that are artistically expressed in literature" (15).

8 Gertrude Oliver is twenty-eight years old at the beginning of the novel. While closer in age to the young generation, her private "struggle[s]" (Montgomery, *Rilla* 19) have given her a gravity that links her to the older generation.

9 It is possible to date the conversation with precision, as Gilbert bursts into the peaceful kitchen at Ingleside with news of "the burning of the Parliament buildings in Ottawa" (Montgomery, *Rilla* 196), which occurred on February 3, 1916.

10 Readers are invited to recognize narrative patterns that link the series across its chronology. For example, Miss Cornelia's adopted daughter, Mary Vance (first introduced in *Rainbow Valley* as an orphan taken in by the Meredith children) arrives in time to save Jims from a potentially lethal attack of croup, recalling young Anne's gallant rescue of Minnie May Barry in *Anne of Green Gables*. It is a case of repetition with variation, however; the episode in *Anne* unfolds with narrative suspense, and the resourceful orphan is treated with esteem by the doctor who declares to the Barrys that Anne "saved that baby's life" (119), while the episode in *Rilla* is narrated retrospectively in Rilla's diary, with the opening assurance that "Jims had got better" (252), and with Dr. Blythe undercutting Mary's resourcefulness by "scornful[ly]" dismissing what he calls "old wives' remedies" (258).

11 In contrast, Joy Alexander notes that "[c]locks scarcely feature in *Anne of Green Gables*, and the story does not go by 'clock time'" (45).

12 Jims' lisping pronunciation of Rilla's name echoes Rilla's own childhood lisp that recurs throughout the novel at times of "stress and strain" (Montgomery, *Rilla* 41).

13 There are a number of other resonances between *Rilla of Ingleside*, *Mrs Dalloway*, and "The Garden Party," including a preoccupation with inappropriate hats. Clarissa feels "oddly conscious . . . of her hat" when chatting with Hugh Whitbread (Woolf, *Dalloway* 5); Laura declares, "Forgive my hat" to the body of Mr. Scott (Mansfield, "The Garden Party" 51); and Rilla, too, has hat problems after buying an expensive and "conspicuous" (Montgomery, *Rilla* 111) green velvet hat, which she vows to her mother she will wear for "for three years or for the duration of the war if it lasts longer than that" (112).

14 The upbringing of Jims also dovetails with the novel's attention to timetables. Rilla begins by raising him according to a guidebook called "Morgan on the Care of Infants" (Montgomery, *Rilla* 114) and is concerned when Jims doesn't reach certain milestones on time (the phrase "schedule time" recurs twice in the novel in reference to Jims' care [89] development [134]).

15 In the introduction to *L. M. Montgomery's Complete Journals: The Ontario Years, 1918-1921*, Epperly notes that Montgomery "had begun re-copying her old journals into uniform-

sized ledgers" (x) after her beloved cousin Frede's death on 25 January 1919, a period that coincides with her composition of *Rilla of Ingleside* (begun in March 1919).

16 Laura Robinson notes the "deliberation that went into that one small word," as the manuscript reveals that Montgomery "scrawled the 'th' over the 's' of the original 'yes'" (123).

17 *The Blythes Are Quoted* was completed in the early years of the Second World War. In his introduction, Benjamin Lefebvre notes that "Montgomery included the term 'Great War' on the title page, but crossed out 'Great' and added 'First World' in ink, almost a reluctant, last-minute admission that the new world she had once predicted would emerge out of the ashes of the Great War would not materialize after all" (xvi).

18 Lefebvre notes that Montgomery "crossed out ["The Aftermath"] and omitted the final pages of dialogue in the copy that she submitted to McClelland & Stewart, but she retained those pages in her personal copy" (xvii), suggesting her "ambivalen[ce]" (xvii) about the ending.

19 The poem's punning reference to the "blithe" (510) wind of yesterday gestures towards Walter Blythe's surname, inviting the very biographical reading that Jem rejects.

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Forum

Reading and Teaching Canadian Auto/biography in 2021

On Eternity Martis' *They Said This Would Be Fun: Race, Campus Life, and Growing Up* and Samra Habib's *We Have Always Been Here: A Queer Muslim Memoir*

Sonja Boon, Laurie McNeill, Julie Rak, and Candida Rifkind

The following is an edited version of a conversation recorded on February 17, 2021. We decided to do this book review as a conversation, because we are the co-authors of the forthcoming Routledge *Volume on Auto/biography in Canada*, the first volume to be written about different forms of life writing in what is currently called Canada, also known as Turtle Island. Doing the work for the volume has made us very aware of the role we have as editors—and as teachers—not only to think through the importance of personal non-fiction in Canada, but also to consider carefully the role auto/biography plays and has played in struggles against racism and colonialism. Since we work as a collective, and because we don't think the same way about everything, we also feel that it is important to bring multiple voices into conversation; after all, there is more than one way to read the story of Canadian non-fiction. Because we are located in four different time

zones, from the Pacific to the Atlantic coasts, this conversation took place on Zoom. We transcribed and then collaboratively edited the resulting text.

CANDIDA RIFKIND: Since the four of us are working together on a guide to auto/biography in Canada, this forum is a great opportunity to assess where we are right now in terms of life writing in this country. Memoir and other kinds of personal non-fiction are popular right now, especially because so many titles—particularly by Black and Indigenous writers—speak to the present moment's concerns about racism, sexism, and colonialism. Looking at the 2020 Canadian bestseller list, it's not surprising to see the top two titles are Jesse Thistle's *From the Ashes* and Desmond Cole's *The Skin We're In*, both highly personal and searing indictments of systemic racism and the Canadian justice system. The two books we discuss, Eternity Martis' *They Said This Would Be Fun: Race, Campus Life, and Growing Up* (McClelland & Stewart, 2020) and Samra Habib's *We Have Always Been Here: A Queer Muslim Memoir* (Viking, 2019), give us the opportunity to consider both how millennial women of colour are writing about their lives, and how we see these life narratives fitting into Canadian literature more broadly.

We should note that while we are discussing the print books, both are also available in e-book and audiobook formats, and in August 2020, CBC News reported that *They Said This Would Be Fun* will be adapted for television. Also, *We Have Always Been Here* won a 2020 Lambda Literary Award and was the CBC *Canada Reads* 2020 winner. So there is clearly a big appetite for these stories in Canada. If we start by looking at how they are marketed (both Viking and McClelland & Stewart are imprints of Penguin Random House Canada), it's interesting to note the cover of Habib's book announces it as "a queer Muslim memoir." The inside jacket of Martis' book, meanwhile, describes it as a "powerful and moving memoir"; however, "memoir" does not appear in the title. Nor does the book itself necessarily conform to that genre label. So let's make sure we discuss how these books fit into the existing generic expectations of memoir, but perhaps we should start by using them to measure the state of the field in Canada today.

Question: What can these two books tell us about the current state of memoir and life writing more generally in Canada?

JULIE RAK: Particularly in the United States, there has been an uptick in the publication of memoirs by women of colour that are to do with experiences of racism and also sexual assault. The best-known version of that is Roxane Gay's *Hunger: A Memoir of (My) Body* (2017), and she even references some of these things in *Bad Feminist* (2014), too. But *Hunger* is by no means the only book. There are quite a few and they are getting a lot of traction in the United States. I think that you could understand particularly Eternity Martis' work in this way, but even Samra Habib's, because some of her book is about her work as an activist in the United States.

I actually think it would be helpful to think about these books not just as books in Canada, but to think about them as part of a larger movement around doing memoir work, particularly by BIPOC authors (so that's Black, Indigenous, and People of Colour) who are writers. Alicia Elliott's *A Mind Spread Out on the Ground* (2019) is another one that would fit into this movement. There's quite a few that have appeared. For obvious reasons, they're primarily aimed at a younger demographic than the memoirs of the 1990s. I think they're written differently too, and they're responding to live political issues. Because both Eternity Martis and Samra Habib are journalists, I think that they're topical on purpose and this is why even though these are both first books, they're by experienced writers who are used to responding to political issues. In other words, while they might be marketed as memoirs, they're meant to be thought pieces, I think, as well as life stories. This is another reason why I think it's really important to understand them in the Canadian context.

LAURIE MCNEILL: As you point out, Julie, both authors' identities and professional ways of knowing come through journalism, and this is crucial to thinking about what they're doing and how. Their training is not literary training and as writers they're not participating in the literary tradition; that's not the circuit they're travelling in. There's a lot to unpack from that background in relation to how they shape their

texts, their research practices; maybe they are producing new instances of memoir that intersect with long-form journalism. I would say that's more true of Eternity Martis' text than Samra Habib's, which is shaped more traditionally like a memoir.

I agree with Julie that, as journalists, both Martis and Habib are used to making these sorts of public interventions. They are used to getting the message out and participating in communities of speakers across a variety of platforms. If we think about production and reception, these authors have a series of platforms—for example, Martis has a blog and has published shorter pieces in online outlets such as *The Huffington Post*—where they have been in conversations with the public about their own and others' experiences. They have that facility with multiple platforms simultaneously. These books are just maybe the most traditional way that they are entering that public discourse.

SONJA BOON: *They Said This Would Be Fun* definitely feels like it comes out of blogging discourse. Reading it linked me also to books like Jessica Valenti's *Sex Object: A Memoir* (2016) and Mona Eltahawy's *The Seven Necessary Sins for Women and Girls* (2019), and both of these writers have strong social media personalities. Valenti's and Eltahawy's books are located in the personal, but so strongly within a larger political context. The political is very important to their understandings of self. All of this said, it may also be part of a generational shift where the original impetus comes out of blogging and that informal space of asking, "Who am I in relation to all this stuff that's brewing around me in various ways?"

LM: Would you say that this is a kind of citation that's not literary allusion? It's more like a set of shadow hyperlinks that signal community in the ways that you would do if you were linking in your blog posts?

SB: Martis pulls from a lot of American examples and draws on American college culture. To me, it feels like I'm reading that informality of blog posts, where hyperlinks allow you to dive both more deeply and more broadly into things to create this bigger picture.

JR: What I think it reminds me of when I hear you two talking about this is Kai Cheng Thom's *I Hope We Choose Love: A Trans Girl's Notes from the End of the World* (2019), because she says that book is based on her blog

posts. It's very similar in form to a blog entry: the essays in here are very short. Alicia Elliot also has said similar things about her own, I'll call it memoir work, but she has also said she's writing essays. A lot of them were part of online writing of various kinds. I think that you're right to say that the form of particularly Eternity Martis' work is influenced by this online world.

But it's also this case where the paper book is still an anchor. It's still a really important moment in their lives as writers and it's a way that they reach other audiences, but it isn't the only way. It's part of an ecosystem where ideas circulate across platforms and are going to continue to do so. These two authors are also particularly active on Twitter and understand themselves as Twitter essayists and use the forms very knowingly.

Question: How are we reading these books as academic women and from a particular generational stance?

CR: I am interested in how we read these books specifically from our positions, the four of us. We are not from this generation and we are not necessarily the target audience. We come to these with an academic interest in memoir, but maybe even that needs to be questioned.

JR: I certainly myself think about these books as a teacher and I think about each of them differently. I think that's something that the audience who teaches and reads Canadian literature are going to want to know. Do they teach well?

Another issue for me is generational. Samra Habib is writing a coming-out story that is quite different from the one that I would know better from earlier. It's not just that she's a queer Muslim of colour. It's also to do with changes in gender politics, changes in ideas about what gender identity is and what sexuality is. These ideas were simply not available to people in my generation in the way that they are available today. I sense very much that these books are not for me, but that's okay. We're critical readers, too, and so we're interested in things that aren't always for us or about us so I think that it's a worthwhile thing to think through a little bit.

CR: One thing that both books share is descriptions of multiple forms of violence. Thinking about *They Said This Would Be Fun* in particular, as women working in universities, I think we need to discuss campus life in her book.

SB: I started first-year university in 1987 and honestly, I was struck by the fact that nothing appeared to have changed in the years between 1987 and 2010, when Martis started her undergraduate degree. The campus space, the amount of violence—that is, the violence of language, sexual violence, racialized violence, physical violence—was there when I was an undergraduate. And I hear similar stories from undergraduates now, too. Students who don't come to class because they've left an abusive partner and they're in a shelter. A student whose mother was murdered by her partner. Students who experience racist abuse. Students who are harassed, assaulted, raped. Violence surrounds every aspect of the campus experience. This struck me immediately about Martis' work. Reading *They Said This Would Be Fun* was like being right back in first year again. Whereas in *We Have Always Been Here*, it's the violence of the religious repression, both within and outside Habib's faith community. And this repression results in layers and webs of secrets and silences. Although the violence—psychic, emotional, physical—is there, it's very different from what's going on in Martis. Martis was like a magnifying glass on university experience offered in a very upfront, in some ways confrontational, way. Because Habib writes in a more traditional memoir structure and form, this violence is not as confrontational; it's not that the violence is not there but it's articulated in very, very different ways.

JR: It was 1985 for me, and yes, nothing's changed. There was that same racism the way that she says there is. There's still the threat you're going to be assaulted. In the 1980s, that was just the world you lived in. It was the air you breathed. I always wanted to believe that policy would make things better and that's why some of us did that work because we wanted to make things different, and it isn't different. The only thing that's different is that Eternity Martis can actually talk about it. Because she came out of that and she has the platform to do it and that wasn't true thirty years ago. But other things are the same. I found that book really hard to read because I went through a lot in university,

without saying anything about everyday racist and sexist violence. I was reminded of that when I was reading. I think we're still in this cycle of racism and violence in universities and I feel like we've failed to stop all that. I wanted to give up reading at one point. I thought, "Oh my God, are we ever going to make it better?"

SB: It was definitely a hard read. What's also striking is that Martis doesn't position herself as a "good girl." This is more common in "white lady" memoirs, but it's much riskier to do this as a racialized woman. To give just one example, Martis references the SlutWalk movement, but observes that "Sexual liberation is different for [Black women]" (150).

Question: How would you teach either of these texts?

SB: I would teach Martis as part of our first-year critical reading and writing course in identities and difference. There's so much in there to chew on: it's not just personal, but it's also political, it's also social. It's everything, and so I can immediately envision a broad range of thinking and writing prompts. It would also fit well in a broad "Intro to Gender Studies" course. It takes up a range of relevant topics (gender, race, class, misogynoir, among others) and references some key thinkers (Patricia Hill Collins, bell hooks, etc.). It's a very approachable text, particularly for students who may not have much exposure to scholarly or academic writing. I would assign Habib in an upper-level class or seminar, mostly because of the complexity of her queer Muslim identity. I think that would be very hard to work through with first-years, largely because of rampant Islamophobia in society. I don't think I would be able to get at the complexities of her identity in the context of the two first-year courses offered in our department.

CR: I'm wondering about teaching Habib and problems of exoticization. The arranged marriage and the flight from persecution seem to have been readily consumed by Canadian audiences and I worry about that.

SB: That's why I would be worried about teaching it for first-years. I don't think I could situate it effectively enough in a first-year class because I think it would be very challenging to get beyond those problems of exoticization. I would love to have a big conversation with students

about the embodiment of queer identity, for example: how it feels for Habib to have the word "queer" inside her mouth but be unable to speak, write, or fully articulate it. To me that was such a moving part of the book. It's in her body, her head, and her heart, but until she's preparing for her trip to Japan, she is unable to write it on her own terms (143). But I don't think I could get to these conversations with a first-year class, because they'd be derailed by the "exotic" factors.

LM: I wanted to bring this line in from Habib because I think it's central to both how and why we might teach both texts and also these questions of audiences. Habib writes, "Representation is a critical way for people to recognize that their experiences—even if invisible in the mainstream—are valid" (176). For me as an instructor, that's one of the things that would make both of these texts appealing, how they make visible experiences and subjects that otherwise may not be found in a traditional course or memoir, and they need to be seen and heard as well. Our students need to see themselves in our courses.

Going back to Martis, I think that book flags for us that there are multiple imagined audiences that this text is reaching out to. Some of those audiences need education that these bodies and issues exist. For Martis, I think her family acts as a shadow or stand-in audience for people who need to learn about the experiences of being mixed race and identifying multiply in ways that they may not be identified by others. Elsewhere, she does all of the research work, including statistics, for example, to situate and verify experiences of sexual violence as well as racialized violence. And, as we've just talked about, in other places she situates herself in a Gender and Women's Studies syllabus, introducing her readers to the texts that made her experiences make sense to her, such as Audre Lorde, Brittney C. Cooper, and Ntozake Shange (225-26). In these moments, she's building a reading list for her audiences so that they can also find these touchstones. At the same time, I think she is saying, "Hey, I see you, other young women of colour," with what I see as "we" moments that hail other women of colour who have sat in the classrooms and been what she calls the "token" brown or Black body. I think there's quite a complex series of audiences being hailed simultaneously, and she's making space for them in different ways.

CR: Can I talk about teaching these books in terms of CanLit? Because I regularly teach survey and topics courses. Rather than first-year courses in life writing or women's and gender studies, I think *We Have Always Been Here* would be the better fit in a CanLit survey course, because it works with other diasporic, postcolonial, and immigrant feminist texts. I can see teaching those, especially alongside South Asian Canadian writers, in a module. In a way, some of Habib's childhood memories are very similar to those appearing in other works; I'm thinking also of Shyam Selvadurai's *Funny Boy* (1994), because there are queer South Asian Canadian writers who have written about these families, and we've seen similar families before. I think students would be interested to then see what happens to them when they come to Canada, and from a queer point of view. I'm also interested in how these books have skyrocketed in popularity in relationship to CanLit.

Question: How can we understand the popularity of both of these books and the interventions they are making into CanLit as a formation?

LM: Well, I think there's a kind of *kairos*, an opportune moment for these books: they are the right books at the right time. *Canada Reads* plays a major role in making some texts "right" for a time, in ways that serve particular interests and that also might shape a book's reputation as mainstream or "middlebrow" so that it ends up being rejected in/by CanLit as "popular."

SB: What constitutes literature and what constitutes CanLit? And who decides? Are these books pushing too hard against CanLit boundaries? I think they are. Both books ask readers to read differently, but they also, and this is important, invite readers to write their own stories. Both Martis and Habib lay down a challenge, and deliberately so.

JR: Canadian literature circles have had a long allergy to thinking about popular texts past and present. For years, no one even wanted to think about that, or the fact that Harlequin romances are among the bestselling books of all time in this country and we act like they don't

exist. We think the critiques of them in Margaret Atwood are what we should teach.

CR: At the same time though, there's a long history of engaged political writing. Putting on my Canadian literary historian hat, we could go back to the 1890s or earlier with social reform novels like Agnes Maule Machar's *Roland Graeme: Knight*, then you get to social gospel writing, labourite poets, and then the 1930s literary left, who have always been dismissed as overly political and polemical.

JR: To my mind, this is a way of saying we don't need to have canonicity in the same way that our forefathers, mothers, and others might've thought we needed. Maybe we can just say, "No, we don't have to read the same things all the time." We have to think laterally. I think that these kinds of books task us too, and they always have. But ever since Susanna Moodie said that the Montreal *Literary Garland* wasn't going to do sentimental fiction, we've had this problem in CanLit about what we're supposed to read. I'm really over this way of thinking, obviously. Because I think that asking whether something's more complex than something else doesn't actually get at what the issues are.

CR: For me, *We Have Always Been Here* would work well alongside fiction, poetry, and drama in a CanLit course, but I also wanted to speak to the citational practices of *They Said This Would Be Fun,* because one thing that frustrates me is how Martis writes herself into racialized, sexualized Canadian spaces without citing others who have been or are there, too. On page five she writes, "I was Black, I was a woman, and I was out of place. I didn't identify as Black until I got to London." That statement brought to my mind Katherine McKittrick's work on Black women's geographies, and the way that Martis' book is as much about London as it is about her. It's about that space and the racialized, sexualized version of herself she encounters in that space. But what frustrated me is that the majority of her feminist coming to consciousness is American. She's writing herself into a Canadian space, but doesn't have access—I think largely because of the limits in her university education—to other Black women who have tried and sometimes been challenged in writing themselves into those spaces. The citational practices to bell hooks and others seem to do what Black

Canadian scholars like Rinaldo Walcott talk about a lot, which is the erasure of Black Canadian history in this space.

I would have loved it if she had encountered Makeda Silvera, NourbeSe Philip, or Afua Cooper, and had a sense of herself as a Black Canadian woman in that space. But I don't think that's a critique of her. I think that's a critique of the framing of Blackness in that institution and in that space. But if I taught it, I would need to supplement it and say, okay, we've seen Dionne Brand writing about rural Ontario and the whiteness of that space. I guess to me, maybe the market for this book is less national than we want to think of as Canadian literature scholars. Maybe she is writing to that community Julie was talking about that includes Roxane Gay and others.

JR: I also think that it's about something else in CanLit and the way we think about Canadian writing that is siloed. I actually think that if you study life writing, you have to be more transnational when you're thinking about it. For instance, social media and newer media forms do not respect national boundaries. But I am concerned at the same time by the erosion of Canadian-based literary forms and Canadian-based media access, where there are fewer opportunities to figure out what is going on in Canada than there were when I was the same age as Samra Habib or Eternity Martis.

I would challenge the people reading Habib to think about how many texts by clearly queer-identified authors they have taught in the past two decades. There is not a lot that gets taught. That is a silence inside of the formation. There is good work that people like Terry Goldie and others have done, but LGBTQ2S+ authors still aren't taught as much as they should be. I think that the life writing that we're looking at here is part of the way to stop that from happening. To me, life writing can be an intervention into those larger Canadian literature formations and can say, "Hey, these are experiences. These are ways of thinking about things that have not been part of what it means to do CanLit." We have to ask why. As Laurie pointed out earlier, "Our students need to see themselves in our courses."

There's been quite a lot of intervention recently around racism and sexual assault and other things in the CanLit formation, and this is one

way to push back against it—to look at stories that are not, as Laurie said, necessarily literary. Or not by people who would understand themselves to be literary writers. That may have an advantage. There might be an intervention that can be made.

Question: What do these life writers additionally teach us about life writing and representation in CanLit?

JR: I did see some social media discussion between some major writers of colour about how the awards for non-fiction are being discontinued right at the moment when they start writing non-fiction. To me there's a politics around this way of talking about experience and a way of changing things, even of making Black lives matter. If they're going to matter, we should teach and read their memoirs. To me, I think that's more important than what some colleagues might've said in the past about the enduring nature of Canadian literature or worrying about whether it's "good enough."

CR: If we look at the epilogue to *They Said This Would Be Fun*, Martis actually says exactly this right on the very last page: that personal writing by marginalized groups has often been treated as lazy and self-indulgent by the same critics that would praise white male memoirs. There's a couple of interesting self-reflexive moments in this book where she also lists white addiction memoirs when talking about her own alcoholism. She's very much writing, I think, to this tradition. But what's interesting to me is it's explicit at the end that Martis wants her memoir to inspire other people to write theirs. She actually says, "write and live your truth. Speak up. Rage. Because the time for silence has passed" (238). And that's also the tenor of the end of Habib's memoir. So going back to the representational politics, I feel like both appeal to a larger collective. It's almost like a manifesto for life writing: "I've written mine and now you should join this community as well through telling your story." I feel like this manifestary moment in both of them also would make them seem less literary in a conventional, very traditional way.

JR: You know what? I just want to add Habib's comments into this very excellent discussion about the political valence of this question. She says, "Not everyone is equipped for activism in the traditional sense—marching, writing letters to officials—but dedicating your life to understanding yourself can be its own form of protest. Especially when the world tells you, you don't exist" (214). That statement, which is about her activism, is also about this book. To me, it's exactly what you were talking about and it's very similar to what Martis is saying about what the worth of these things is, what they're for.

LM: If we think about bringing our colleagues along to teaching these texts, if we can think that the point of teaching Canadian literature is to talk about what Canada looks like, then I see part of an ethics of pedagogy in a Canadian context is to make sure that your reading list doesn't always look back, but also looks around, looks to who's in your classroom. Because in some ways you're answering the hail that both writers are doing to say, "We have voices that also need to be heard. We have hands that need to be raised and experiences that need to be accounted for as part of literary, cultural, political policy," all those conversations they're not at or are marginalized or tokenized at.

JR: I think you're right about that, Laurie. So how are those voices heard? One of the reasons why Habib's book has become bestselling has to do with the fact that it was the winner of the 2020 *Canada Reads*. But *Canada Reads* brings winning books into a very specific frame. It creates this pedagogical way to read so that it's understood in the show that these books aren't necessarily the best ones; they're the ones you can learn from. The theme of *Canada Reads* is almost always, "What book is going to make Canada a better place?" That places a lot of ideological freight on a book like this. As I think Candida mentioned early on, having "queer Muslim memoir" in giant letters on the cover, readers are supposed to know what that means. This is identity in a book and you're going to consume it. But I think Sonja's right too. There's lots more to this book than that and there are ambiguities in the book that are worth thinking through.

Question: How do these books intervene in or resist dominant literary conventions and political representations? Are they filling CanLit's desire for "trauma porn"?

LM: I don't think Habib triumphs at the end of *We Have Always Been Here*. I don't think she would put it that way. It's complicated: she does find an identity as a queer Muslim and is still part of her family, but it's not an assimilationist narrative, like she finds herself by "becoming Canadian." She's made space for herself in Islam, in her family, in Canada, yes, but possibly by queering those spaces. And it's not complete: there is still longing, she recognizes and speaks to loss, too. I think that's true for Martis' text, too. They are both still standing at the end, they're resolute, sure. But also they're saying, "This is messy and it's complicated and it's not perfect, but it's mine and it's on my terms." In that way, I think that they push back against the forces that Vivek Shraya describes in "How Did the Suffering of Marginalized Artists Become So Marketable?", her fabulous essay on the commodification of marginalized artists' trauma, that appetite in the market for trauma porn that limits the kinds of stories that are or can be told. Both of these texts could easily be shelved literally and figuratively under those kinds of trauma narratives but there are elements of resistance in them that we could think about as refusing the kind of wounded traumatized narrative that those bodies are supposed to perform.

CR: I went to the *Goodreads* reviews, which are always really interesting to me versus academic reviews, and several Muslim readers were disappointed that Habib doesn't give us insight into her relationship to Islam. That might be another kind of resistance, as she keeps her spiritual and religious life private from the reader. What we do know is that she comes to identify as a queer Muslim, but I can see how maybe a Muslim reader, and especially a queer Muslim reader, would want to know, "How do I do that? How do I negotiate that?" She doesn't actually go into her religious identity very much at all. Maybe we can read that as a resistance as well to our desire to know the most intimate thing, which is the conventional promise of memoir. She refuses that on that level at least with religion.

SB: When I've taught memoirs, some students have felt that they have a right to the "whole story." They feel like they have a right to know everything about a memoirist's life. Thinking through memoirs—as genre—is important in this regard. Memoirists have stories to share, but they also have stories they don't want to share. They have a right to privacy as well. They are consenting for you to read a specific part of their story, but not the "whole story." I think sometimes students imagine memoir as "I'm vomiting my life; here it is for you." But what do we, as readers, have a right to? And why do we think we have these rights? And further, what stories do memoirists themselves have rights to? What choices do memoirists make in terms of what they feel they do and do not have a right to tell? In Habib's memoir, for example, there's a noticeable shift in the writing style. The first part of the book is much more like reportage. She takes a journalist's eye to observe her life, but I don't get the sense that she is really inside that life. I wonder if this might have something to do with the fact that the first section of her story is much more intimately linked with her family. When she starts writing about her adult life, she's much more inside it than she is earlier on.

As racialized writers, both Martis and Habib have to think more carefully and more consciously about what those boundaries might look like, especially given Candida's earlier observation about problems of exoticization. The choices memoirists make about what they don't tell are sometimes almost more important than what they do tell.

LM: There is resistance in both books in ways that we might not have initially been attending to. Particularly for two writers who already have very public identities in many ways, and who also tell us all kinds of things that may be surprising or titillating or scandalous, but then refuse to be public about other things.

In her acknowledgements, Martis says to her grandfather, "Sorry it's not a PG as you'd like" (244). She does make a choice to tell stuff that's shocking, though if we think about some of her addressees, other millennial women, maybe that stuff is not all that shocking to them. I think she's less discreet than Habib, who carves out a very particular space for things she will speak to.

CR: For me, what's been so helpful about this conversation is how we've moved from the ways these two books have been marketed and received, to how they work within the genre of memoir and as life writing more generally, to the kinds of work they could do in the classroom, to this final point that we need to pay attention to what Martis and Habib don't write about, and the stories they either won't or can't tell. I think this is where both *They Said This Would Be Fun* and *We Have Always Been Here* make powerful interventions into CanLit as well as popular and public discourses around race, sexuality, gender, and age in Canada. We have two millennial women writers of colour whose texts are presented as memoirs, as tell-alls about their specific experiences and identities as they came of age, and whose voices are certainly taken up as activist and empowering for their readers. But, ultimately the resistances these texts present occur as much within the life narratives as in the ways they are, or could be, deployed in anti-racist and LGBTQ2S+ struggles. And that is super interesting, because it shows the value of reading life narrative *as* narrative rather than as a pure index of experience, and highlights how bringing books like these into more mainstream CanLit conversations could help bridge scholarly and popular interests, as well as encourage students to read both popular texts and memoirs more critically.

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Leavings Just Source

Sarah Dowling
Entering Sappho. Coach House $21.95

Sonnet L'Abbé
Sonnet's Shakespeare. McClelland & Stewart $21.00

Reviewed by Stephanie Burt

If the past, as L. P. Hartley writes, is a foreign country, and if literary traditions and inherited forms are ways to consider the past, it follows that literary traditions—Shakespeare's sonnets, say, or Sappho's lyric—are themselves another country. We can try to map it, to learn how it felt to live there, or construct new lands in the shape of the old, a New World literature in Old World forms: sonnets themselves, and other old forms, are themselves ways to map the present onto the past. We can also—as both Sonnet L'Abbé and Sarah Dowling do—push back against the erasures, the injustices, the oppressions that come to us along with that past: working against it even as we acknowledge it as part of our literary selves.

Founders and builders of settler colonies, among them the various states and provinces now called the United States and Canada, wanted to make the past theirs too. No wonder, Dowling's *Entering Sappho* reminds us, settlers and so-called founding fathers named their new towns after classical sites and authors. The US alone holds "seventeen Atticas, / seventeen Cincinnatis, seven- / teen Euclids" (76), "seven Mount Idas" (39), "five Galens / Five Hannibals" (39), but just one Sappho, now uninhabited, a point on a map attested largely by old newspapers in Washington State (39). "Entering Sappho is addressing history and its daughter colony, the present," by rearranging and replicating Sappho's—and the old geographers'—terms (91).

Entering Sappho is not a sonnet sequence, but it can feel like one. Dowling's compact book consists of roughly sonnet-sized poems, rarely rhymed, interspersed with repeated phrases from maps and street signs: "You Are Now Entering," for example, over and over. (The obvious sexual pun in the title does not seem to come up.) Some of those sonnet-like poems imitate and translate, over and over again into different English, the same phrases from Sappho's Greek. The seven-page "Ornament," for example, simply rings changes on one line from fragment 98: "If someone had hair bound with purple instruments / If someone had hair bound with

beautiful practice . . . If someone had hair bound with the asking moon" (65). "Soft Memory" includes ten versions of Sappho 31: "so soon as I see you I become / still"; "as soon as I see you, a sweat / of agony bathes me"; "OK this trembling seized me—your / laugh" (31-33). "Us" comprises seven ways to adapt Sappho 147 combined with Achilles Tatius' pseudo-Sapphic "Song of the Rose."

Many of Dowling's pages—like many previous versions of Sappho—emphasize their status as fragments, pre-distressed, classically already broken. This version of "Sappho is want // ing everything," the feminine absence at the centre of lyric as of masculine desire (84). The lyric poem, the love poem, is never finished. By the same token (according to this line of thinking), true lovers are never satisfied, Sappho herself is never knowable, and Western thought requires a masculine knower-possessor-pursuer chasing a feminine unknown: "our minds // worked overtime on what we would like to have" (57). We can find that paradigm throughout Anne Carson's verse and prose, as well as in Yopie Prins' profound, influential 1999 study *Victorian Sappho*: "Sapphic fragments," Prins writes, "are reconstructed as texts that we read as an invitation to song" (24).

The fragments and gestures, the repeated names from far-flung atlases, the stacks of repetitions-with-variation emphasize the lack of fit between Old World figures and so-called New World sites, as if Dowling wrote the book to demonstrate that dissonance. Dowling does have other arrows in her quiver. "Oral History" looks at the bloom and the decline of the village named Sappho: "Well did they have the hotel at the same / time as they had the store?" (23). Other Sapphic entries give the effect of proverbs, apothegms, meant to be quoted: "After a great / deal of breathing, we lay silent and called for a / little future" (62). "The grass is wet. The grass grows / back. All we have is this thicker becoming, all // we are is this tangled perhaps" (87). So devoted to its project, with its lists of names, Dowling's spare volume rarely feels fleshed-out and personal, and that absence of apparently personal stakes sets it apart from—and, to be honest, below—such outwardly similar projects as Juliana Spahr's *Well Then There Now*, or C. S. Giscombe's travelogues. Most of the time it feels more like a map than like a place.

Sonnet L'Abbé's *Sonnet's Shakespeare*—for all its conceptual armature—feels very much like a place: a populous land you can visit, with cityscapes, flora, fauna, domestic interiors, and its own debatable histories: it belongs next to Terrance Hayes' *American Sonnets for My Past and Future Assassin* (2018) as a recent book-length meditation on sonnet practice. Where Hayes adopts the sonnet as scheme, as container (fourteen-line unit with decasyllabic lines), L'Abbé—who puns on their first name repeatedly—takes Shakespeare's sonnets as starting point, as antagonist, as trope. Each of their 154 prose poems incorporates, in order, all of the individual letters in the Shakespeare sonnet that bears the same number. Shakespeare's sonnet 151, for example, begins "Love is too young to know what conscience is": L'Abbé's poem CLI begins "**Lo**ok, **ev**erything **is** fire. You're not **too young to know wh**y c**au**t**i**on is, to know how its **conscience** h**i**d**e**s the bab**y** from the pr**e**da**t**or" (153). "Will's leavings were just source," L'Abbé recalls, when they started writing, but the poems "complied more baroquely" in responding to Shakespeare's originals (74).

Poem CVI, like a few others, prints Shakespeare's letters in red, the rest in black, so readers can see how the method works. And it does work: Shakespeare's poem about lust in action becomes a poem about Canadian, and US West Coast, responses to climate change and accelerating forest fires. The topics aren't the same, but they're not unrelated. Each sonnet from the distant, prestigious, white European past—the past that literally gave the poet their first name (a portmanteau of their parents' first names)—becomes not a brick in a wall, nor a mere excuse for a verbal experiment, but a resource with which L'Abbé can build a new livable space, a new page, a new land.

Often L'Abbé asks who owns, or can own, the land, and how injustices of ownership, capital, and racial hierarchy made possible the language through which they write. "I pay my bills without decolonizing everything that touches me" (152), "unsure how to carry my settler heritage, as I pen an unwhiteness" (135). The Canada where L'Abbé dwells makes its vaunted friendliness into a cloak for a winner-take-all mentality not so different from that of the US: "Who, realizing what the Indian Act is, wants such country?" (12). Formal tradition, for L'Abbé as for Shakespeare, may also represent property and inheritance. Shakespeare's first eighteen sonnets urge a young man to marry and beget a son; L'Abbé asks whether citizens of a white-settler nation can ethically leave anything for our descendants.

Who owns the history of the sonnet, of the language, of the land, and how can contemporary writers, or people of good will, or Afro-diasporic peoples in particular, take it back and give it back? (L'Abbé identifies as multiracial, Guyanese Dougla and part-Francophone Canadian—not, importantly, as Indigenous.) How are the projects of life on this land, in this time, in this Metro Vancouver "real estate horrorshow" (137), working out for this hyperliterate, witty, wary "kid métisse franco-indo-afrikain qui body Canadian truth" (106)? The questions aren't new, but L'Abbé's ways to raise them can be, even if they repeat: L'Abbé goes to the topic of "whitewashed" settler history (100) so often that we know it's coming, even if they make their outrage elegant each time.

L'Abbé intersperses these questions with others of lesser moment, such as how to play *Pokémon Go*, or Toronto's war on raccoons. Poem LV pays simple homage to a friend named Priscila—the writer Priscila Uppal, who died in 2018—"gifted social doer," "badass livestream" (56). Poem LXXII remembers early 1990s rock: Hole, Nirvana, Sleater-Kinney, Riot Grrrl ("Olympia's revolutionary sluts were acutely pale" [73]); poem XLIX pays e. e. cummings-ish typographical homage to the singer Tanya Tagaq. And poem XCVII takes up, wryly, our addiction to Internet-delivered cuteness: "charming baby capybaras wrestling celery from bunnies, kittens in furry costumes . . . Tiny human babies are also effective" (98) (another inheritance there). Humans in general treasure distractions, but some years, some eras, require more than others: we need a ton. Public events of 2016 show up in this collection like cherries in fruitcake, and like those cherries most are sour, or hard. Poem CXVII remembers Leonard Cohen; poem XCIII, David Bowie. Several late poems react to the US vote: "Something elected this: something tribal and scared" (108); "For days afterwards, my face burned: my classes saw real fear" (116). Milton's sonnets, too, react to headline news.

Shakespeare's sonnets, however, focus on romantic, erotic, and fraternal love: how it arises, how it feels, how it fails. L'Abbé can do that, too, crafting a handful of poems around a bad romance: "Here is a guy who says dailiness, who says Sonnet and touches me . . . the oxytocin urging me toward him" (148). "I don't think courtship is wrong . . . But for this sweet marriageability there is no hero" (90). Shakespeare's own problematic English, early modern attitudes towards race, blackness and whiteness, masc and femme, pop in and out of L'Abbé's daily Canadian life in scenes of biting comedy: "Le professeur francophone que j'ai rencontré on Bumble blanks at my imaginary stresses: okay, your poems are about race, but we don't have to think in black and white over dinner, do we? Somebody doesn't. This situation suits some bodies just fine" (Bumble is a dating app) (128). L'Abbé responds here to Shakespeare's sonnet 127, "In the old age black was not counted fair." There can be no ownership, no claim on someone else's body, no doctrine of discovery, and no implication of blackness or darkness as moral turpitude, in any erotic life this "franco-indo-afrikain" poet would want.

L'Abbé wrote in 2017 about their "new kind of poem," an "overwriting" designed "to surround what has surrounded me," inspired by Ronald Johnson's erasure poem *Radi Os*, and by their awareness of non-European languages "in conversation with my colonized/colonizing tongue," such as "Island Hul'q'umi'num' and Lekwungen" ("Tree"). L'Abbé's goals and methods, like Dowling's, have other prominent precedents, among them Harryette Mullen's *Sleeping with the Dictionary* and Claudia Rankine's *Citizen*. L'Abbé addresses Rankine's success directly: "How gracefully Claudia confided her being mad! someone effused to juries" (*Sonnet's Shakespeare* 46). How to express black rage without commodifying it for white observers? How to present the reality of a life always inflected, but not always controlled, by white supremacy, by racialized violence, by a history we should (but may not) know? How messy, how incomprehensible, does this particular black poet want to be? Is the poet obliged to be messier? Or calmer? "There, I've done it again. Disqualified my brand. No sonnet market expands" (46).

L'Abbé's procedure-inspired form also looks to more rigorous and single-minded rearrangements within Canadian letters: the erasures of M. NourbeSe Philip's *Zong!*, for example, and the monovocalic stunts of Christian Bök's *Eunoia*. Like Bök, L'Abbé tends to omit articles, to dwell in the habitual present tense rather than the past, and to construct sentences that sound neither like AI-generated text nor like things real people, off the cuff, would say. L'Abbé thanks Philip in their notes. To Bök, however, they offer a poem: "Vowel-slower, crystallographer, Asperger rubber-shoulder, you're a brother who hangs with racist muthas . . . And yet your triumphant grappling with language is not made more or less breathtaking by your interpersonal antipathy" (124). He may be, with Shakespeare, one of poem XXXVII's "frenemies" (38).

For all their engagement with procedural poetics, and with *Kulturkritik*, L'Abbé looks back just as often to another tradition of prose, one that we might call ineluctably lyric: this tradition comes from seventeenth-century English prose stylists, from Romantic essayists, from Emerson, as well as from Baudelaire. These prose

poems are dramatizations of sensibility, making the sentence do the work done elsewhere by verse line. Consider L'Abbé's poem CI, about a child (perhaps a foster child) they could not keep: "I'm still learning not to be the tragic heroine. What I don't have, I can't give. Now my office is the room that I used to think you'd take . . . Raven, sometimes on long drives I still hear you in the back seat, singing Lukas Graham's 'Once I Was Seven Years Old,' because you were" (102). Here they sound not so much like Rankine, or Bök, as like the superb California prose poet Killarney Clary.

As much as they can accomplish historically inflected critique, as much as they can accomplish lyrical voicings, L'Abbé stands out most when they bring them together. When they write, in poem LXXXI, "I sound brown where breath most breathes, and intervene in the green mouths of men" (82), they're putting a racial gloss on Shakespeare's epitaphic couplet "You still shall live—such virtue hath my pen— / Where breath most breathes, even in the mouths of men" (sonnet 81). They're looking (the whole poem looks) at the apparent whiteness of environmental movements. But they're also claiming, accurately, to dramatize a voice, to animate something that would not sound without them. Dowling makes—however mediated—such claims too: when she writes, or translates, or transcribes, "come— / I'm greener than grass— my heart beats / faster, my tongue is broken" (38), she's asking us to imagine a modern poet imagining an ancient one, a voice inside a voice inside a broken tongue that began long ago and ended up here.

And if Dowling does so fitfully, L'Abbé does so constantly, telling us that they hope to reanimate their various words and letters from Shakespeare's sonnets in order to "sound an unhierarchitecture; as if I might make soft space . . . inside practical heads" (39). Writing against white supremacy, in and over literary history, their script is not wholly public and not wholly private: instead, it exists—as Shakespeare's sonnets also exist—in constant dialogue with an "abstract listener": "you're listening, and I'm barely noticing I'm heard" (104). Resplendently personal, delightfully varied, certainly too long, the collection stands out for all the ways that its lyric exceeds its project. And yet the project stands. Shakespeare's sonnet 76 defends the poet against claims that he's been repeating himself: "Why is my verse so barren of new pride?" L'Abbé asks instead: "Why is my verse? . . . All my argument with sonneteering, all my best effort, is in redressing old words' indifferent power, suiting paternity in unrecognized skin, regenerating England's Canadian, brownish, phantom limb" (77). "Will those who like a pretty sonnet fathom these takeovers?" (119). To put it in Shakespeare's own words: "I do; I will" (*I Henry IV* 3.1.439).

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Dis-Ease in Lyric and Fragment

Sadiqa de Meijer
The Outer Wards. Véhicule $17.95

Erín Moure
The Elements. Anansi $19.95

Sachiko Murakami
Render. Arsenal Pulp $18.95

Reviewed by Jessica MacEachern

Trauma nestles into the body and the subject quivers in unease. If a daughter, she looks for the hold of parental grace and finds a shadow substance. If a mother, she looks for the unloved child and finds want in the staring face. Language is little comfort for illness or loss, but it is a balm of sorts, confirming that the subject of our dis-ease has pre-existed and will outlast our inability to speak its name. We have an obligation to the subject of which we are not speaking. That subject has its existence confirmed through our avoidance of its name. In prayer or poetry, the cipher of the difficult subject is "not produced" in the speech act, but rendered "productive" of new speech (Derrida 76). The space opened up by difficulty or absence is divine: "It is written completely otherwise" (74).

Three recent collections from Canadian women poets take up Derrida's divine charge to write it "completely otherwise" by rendering the difficulty of speaking—about trauma, grief, or illness—through the lyric and the fragment. In Sachiko Murakami's *Render*, Erín Moure's *The Elements*, and Sadiqa de Meijer's *The Outer Wards*, the clock is set ticking on the recovery of the speaker and her subject from the paralyzing grip of not speaking.

"Would you take a look at this," our first voice inquires (Murakami 11). "Encounter" is the title of the opening poem in Murakami's *Render*; it is also the form of relation by which the book operates, for *Render* establishes multiple encounters between the speaker and her fragmented recollections. When the reader assents to looking, what unspools is night, absence, fault, need, addiction, death, and (inch by inch, fist by fist) recovery. Murakami asks readers to forge their own encounters with trauma and healing, varying the forms and means by which the voice grasps the threads of its self-fashioning narrative.

Throughout the collection, the title reappears to reorient and, more likely, disorient the reader along this narrative thread of recovery: "regarding the end of here" (15), "surrender" (50), "re-enter the rendered" (95). The process is not tidy, not linear, but rendered as a dreamscape, a breath, a barely recalled memory. In "Acknowledgements," for instance, there is the survivor's testament to the difficulty of distinguishing "between *then* and *now*" (37). In alternating single lines, couplets, and triplets that span the horizontal plane of the page, Murakami creates a visual representation of the ways in which trauma disrupts the present self. The ever-surfacing past is a cutting voice in italics: "*I'm too fucked up / to drive home*" (37) and "*you'll never know if you gave*" (38).

It wages battle against the tide of a difficult present and an unimaginable future. The poem is a battlefield, and the war between multiple times ends on an ambiguous note: "whoever lived here // still lives here" (39). Is this an articulation of the self's survival, or a damning confirmation that trauma has successfully transgressed the boundaries of memory and dream to become a permanent fixture?

This ambiguous refrain returns in the final two poems: "Still, Here" and "#stillhere." As is apparent in these titles, wordplay is rife in Murakami's writing. It smacks of the pleasure the poet takes in rendering this language her own, while also gesturing toward the difficulty of articulating the harm that this same language bears on the self. The voice of these poems struggles to get at something whole and cogent, at times in full-bodied prose, and at others dissolving, in fragmented lyrics. At the end, the reader is left with a voice that is diminished but, persistently, "*still here*":

> *of* and *against*
> *of* and *against* and
> if you can describe this it means you can
>
> breathe through it
>
> just like you did before[.] (124)

In *Render*, Murakami demonstrates the fruitful result of pairing formal invention and emotional fervour. Both poet and reader are still here in the final pages, a testament to the tenacity of the human spirit and the nurturing potential of inviting another to look and listen.

In Moure's *The Elements*, the difficulty of articulating pain and memory belongs not only to the grieving speaker, but also to the speaker's recently deceased father. The poems name the process of losing names to dementia, such that the various sections enact the paradoxically productive speech acts that result from losing language. What is elemental in the noise of not speaking is the ancestral tie to a multi-generational fight for existence here and now.

As a touching tribute to the lost father, Moure's collection begins with "Introjection," a series of prose poems that combine a historical account of the Napoleonic Wars with a theoretical examination of the role of "the body" in language. If readers are already acquainted with Moure's challenging oeuvre—for instance, the "citizen trilogy" of *Search Procedures* (1996), *A Frame of the Book/The Frame of a Book* (1999), and *O Cidadán* (2002), which, through a series of love poems and theoretical documents, investigates the institutional and bodily borders that constitute human life—they will have been prepared for this ontological focus, this insistence on the involvement of flesh and limbs in structures of thinking. Arguably, what Moure presents in *The Elements* is even more jarring, even more disjunctive, than these previous challenges. Against the historical backdrop of an early-nineteenth-century battle on the plains of Medina de Rioseco, a contemporary speaker problematizes gender and translation. What is the role of this theorizing

amidst the frenetic descriptions of the retreating Galicians? The speaker answers, "Politics and ontology need each other to emerge; Being is chronogenetic. Pain felt by the body is thus a task for history" (5).

The battle is materially and affectively felt by the speaker, the daughter of a father who is losing his capacity for language and memory. Both father and daughter are the descendants of one of the Galicians. The catastrophe of warfare is not separate from the catastrophe of Being itself; the speaker and her father, in a twenty-first-century battle with cognitive disease, are not separate from their distant ancestor in a battle between nations. As the separation between centuries and generations dissolves, the next section of the book, "The Voice," investigates the material effect of ancestral memory on language:

> my own father in the stutter of time
> time's gloss multiple in clocks
>
> when time means nothing, it is revelation
> or dementia[.] (17)

Moure's collection narrates the puzzling occurrence of the father, suffering with dementia, keeping time: each clock records a different (and incorrect) time of day. This symptom of the father's disease is a symbol of society's dis-ease with an individual's passage through the cycles of life and death. As with the earlier poems, in which the speaker problematizes language's relationship to the body, here the speaker problematizes the subject's relationship to time.

These concerns (language, time) are married by the disease/dis-ease in the subsequent section, "Dementia," as the speaker adopts the language of her father in order to establish a hold on the passing days: "We will be there for you, we are remember" (23). This is a caring act of translation: not dismissing the uncanny language use symptomatic of the cognitive disease, but opening up the possibility for the family not only to enact remembrance, but also to inhabit remembrance through the father's speech act. In estranging the grammar of care and kinship, Moure, a poet and translator, reminds us that every language is a foreign language: "I am already speaking to you in / translation, in a foreign tongue, slowly, / so I can be translated to you, all" (25). Readers of this dizzying collection of history, theory, and lyric poetry transgress the boundaries between autobiography and fiction, transposing the lessons of ontology to the foreign body of the speaker and the archival traces of the poet-translator's ancestors.

Alongside this query into how to speak is the question of "how to avoid speaking" (Moure 27). This is a return to Derrida, whose investigation into negative theology, Moure writes, is "unreadable, un-avoidable, un-a-voidable" (27). To "*not-speak*" is to ask about the underlying nature of speech itself, "to unvoid it, remove its void" (27). The father's disease/dis-ease is not communicated in silence but in a multiplicity of languages as the speaker seeks to trace this cognitive retreat back to the battle retreat: "Portuguese, Castilian, Guaraní, across a colonial border in western Brazil" (27).

Retreat, in this formation, is productive of a new opportunity, of multiple languages colliding within the generations of a migrating family tree.

The book concludes with "F;-/ old." In its very title—that is, the interruption of the word by the punctuation—the ending is reached with difficulty. Our speaker has not, after all, come to a definite conclusion in regard to the problematics of time, body, and language. These are, instead, productive areas of tension which the speaker—and the poet throughout her oeuvre of poetry and translation—will continue to revisit: "I am thinking of thinking and unthinking under the / currently thought / circumstances of thinking" (94). The book is a document of the "struggles of thinking" as shared between father, daughter, and distant ancestor (99). One of the final poems, "A Walk on Jasper Avenue after the Death of My Father," follows the speaker along a street on which she encounters a stranger with "the mouth of my father" (103). This touching misrecognition of a stranger is at once a searing reminder of the recent loss and an affirming reminder that the memory of the father is alive. The language of the father still circulates in the multiple times of past, present, and future, the clock he set ticking now named by the mouth of another. Moure's speaker finishes the sentence spoken by those before her—not only the father but also the Galician ancestor, for whom the lasting legacy is "*revolt*" (106).

In de Meijer's *The Outer Wards*, the speaker answers to the catastrophe of coinciding illness, motherhood, and personhood. The sickbed here, as in *The Elements*, is a disruption of passing days. Time moves in multiple paths, such that memory makes the demands of the past as fervent as those of the present, yet the subject in bed is rendered as nothing, no-thing, undone by the separation from the time that circulates among the healthy.

In the portrait of time as it slips between the hands of a mother, a writer, a woman, the reader is reminded of Sylvia Plath's mid-twentieth-century injunction that "a woman has to sacrifice all claims of femininity and family to be a writer" (qtd. in Olsen 9). De Meijer renders this claim through a new prism of disruption. The speaker does not abandon mothering to write, but her body is given over to illness and she is stripped of the possibility of being either mother or writer, while being always and simultaneously both. Plath is an uneasy figure with which to begin an investigation into motherhood, but the book's opening epigraph is from Plath's "Letter in November":

> I am flushed and warm.
> I think I may be enormous,
> I am so stupidly happy,
> My Wellingtons
> Squelching and squelching through the beautiful red.
> (Plath 45; qtd. in de Meijer 9)

De Meijer's reclamation of Plath for contemporary mothers is a cogent reminder of mothers as individual beings, paradoxically separate from and infinitely tethered to the children they have borne or raised. It is possible to conceive of *The Outer Wards*

as a singularly lyric version of the lyric-conceptual project of Sina Queyras' *My Ariel* (2017), which writes through the interweaving layers of trauma inherited from Plath and the contemporary speaker's own mother and mothering. In de Meijer's collection, the clear lyric "I," with her roving gaze, is a mother who has fallen ill; consequently, her responsibilities to the child are, for the moment, waylaid by her responsibilities to the worn-out, exhausted maternal body.

In the beginning, however, before the onset of illness, the mother's attention is still on the child. For instance, in "Bind," de Meijer writes,

> When you're with me, my attention
> is your nourishment, its remnant
> molecules diffusing in the murk.
> When you're not, I wear the imprint
> of your absence like a bruise. (15)

The relationality of these lines is complicated: it is not simply that the mother pays attention to the child, not simply that the mother nourishes the child, but that the attention of the mother *is* the nourishment passed from mother to child. On the one hand, this leaves no room for attention to be paid to anything but the child. On the other, it suggests that the mother's wide-roving gaze and interest in the world are nourishing features of the child's life with her mother.

It is when the mother is in the grips of illness, "trapped in bed" (52) as she is in the poem "Rehearsal," that her attitude rises to the ominous heights of Plath's *Ariel*. Now we are directly greeting Death as a familiar bedfellow. In "O, Death," de Meijer's speaker addresses the black spectre with a chiding and playful tone: "You make such awkward entrances sometimes. // Or you leave the party and don't even tell anyone. / I've done it before" (54). Death feels close in these pages, and the speaker goes so far as to imagine Death triumphant. In "Hereafter," the mother's attention—nourishment for the child—lives on even in the afterlife, like the insistence of the daughter in Moure's *The Elements* ("we are remember") and the everyday triumph in Murakami's *Render* ("*still here*"). The mother, imagining herself freed from the physical tethers of the corporeal body, reconfigures herself as a permanent fixture in the evolution of the child:

> Then these atoms, held in the aspic of me,
> that now like pakoras and Nina Simone,
> will loosen in the dark flux,
> relinquishing unhurriedly,
> and ascend again in rhizomes,
> blankly, good as new.
>
> But still will love
> this child, somehow
> the grasses would love this child. (72)

Here is the speaker in all her specificity ("pakoras and Nina Simone"), as well as her symbolic significance: scattered to the wind, yet loving the child "somehow."

"Love, the world / Suddenly turns, turns colour," declares the speaker in the opening lines of "Letter in November" (Plath 45). Many of the most famous poems in *Ariel* include the cutting self-jabs of which the depressive speaker is capable, and further attacks on the self by the patriarchal figures of father and husband, so this meditation on the approach of winter is, at first, disarmingly blithe and joyous. But it is not any child that warrants this joy; instead it is the "barbarous holly" and "the wall of old corpses" which the speaker celebrates, widening the circle of the mother's attention from "babies' hair" to forces natural, elemental, and ancestral (45). Murakami, Moure, and de Meijer look head-on at the unavoidable approach of winter—that symbol now rendered as the grip of addiction, illness, or death—only to find much to celebrate, to be joyous about, to remember into soft and curious attention. Their subjects (self, daughter, and mother) live on in the divinely productive strategies of the poetry.

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A Book Review, over Thirty Years Too Late

W. R. Martin

Alice Munro: Paradox and Parallel. U of Alberta P $16.95 (Out of Print)

Reviewed by Robert Thacker

Anyone who has spent time editing book reviews for a journal knows that it's easy to miss publications which, subsequently, prove to have been significant. In the same way, critics look back at the books they've reviewed over the years to see that there are those on their shelves that, for one reason or another, they should've done, but didn't. During the late 1980s, I started reviewing critical books on a well-established but then still emerging Alice Munro and, probably owing to the timing of its publication, missed taking up the first real critical monograph on her art, W. R. Martin's *Alice Munro: Paradox and Parallel* (1987) (see Thacker, *Reading*). For its part, *Canadian Literature* missed it too. While I have certainly drawn on it since in other contexts, I recently returned to the book and read it cover to cover; this was something, I admit, I'd not done before. I discovered in it a revelation: Martin seems to define just where Munro's art was then as it continued to gain complexity but, more significant, he foresaw just where she was heading. The whole book read,

and since I knew Martin a bit from the mid-1970s—when I did my first work on Munro as a graduate student and he was teaching in the English Department at the University of Waterloo—I thought I would write him an appreciatory note. I was aware that he had fled apartheid in his native South Africa during the early 1960s and joined the faculty of what was then a fledgling university. Before and after his book he published important essays on Munro as well, and he generously aided me when I was researching *Alice Munro: Writing Her Lives: A Biography* (2005, 2011). Sadly, I found that he had passed away in 2015, just one day shy of his ninety-fifth birthday. So I have decided to write this note instead: something of the book review I never managed, but more of a tribute, really.

Beyond any personal connection, the striking thing about *Alice Munro: Paradox and Parallel* is that Martin did his work and wrote at a key moment about halfway through Munro's career, just as she was really emerging as the significant writer she became. His treatment of her work is thorough and detailed up to *The Moons of Jupiter* (1982) but then, owing to timing, Martin could only consider five of the latest stories in their magazine versions (four in *The New Yorker* and another in *GQ—Gentlemen's Quarterly*) that he knew were to be collected in *The Progress of Love* (1986). He also discusses four then-fugitive stories, two of which have never been included in a collection ("Characters" [1978] and "The Ferguson Girls Must Never Marry" [1982]), and two which ultimately were ("Home" [1974, 2006] and "Wood" [1980, 2009]). Left as he was with Munro writing on, Martin did his best with what was in print then.

The published reviews of *Alice Munro: Paradox and Parallel* were very much of their time (see, for example, Stone, Warwick, York), and they presaged the outpouring of critical attention Munro's work was about to get—eleven monographs and a series biography by 1998, to say nothing of other, shorter pieces. They offer praise but are not very complimentary overall; the reviewers clearly saw Martin as a stodgy, evaluative, old-school critic, one skeptical of theory, especially the feminist variety. That's fair enough, of course. But at the same time, it's possible to argue Martin's prescience: that he saw, and detailed, just what Munro the artist was doing in the 1980s, and how her most recent stories suggested the myriad complexities to come. Thus Martin, whose own specialty was British modernism, writes this passage as he concludes his discussion of the story "The Progress of Love" (1985):

> Like D. H. Lawrence's *The Rainbow*, but in a much smaller scale, with remarkable artistic compression, the story is a history of society in the twentieth century. Without any feminist rancour, and with admirable detachment, Alice Munro depicts the social changes of our time, and the dynamics that bring them about. What we must admire is the cubic capacity and the architectural richness of her modest-seeming edifice. (179)

This is an indicative comment, for he writes very well. Martin's final assertion about this just-published but quite evidently singular story, one that seen now foretells what has been asserted as "late Munro," is, as I have said, prescient. The collection that the story titles and begins—one which ends with a similarly complex story,

"White Dump" (1986), itself thought by Munro for a time to be destined to title the book—abounds in a created world of intergenerational connection that captures being itself. Just what it feels like to be a human being. Each story creates and gets to the very heart of existence itself. Munro's themes are, Martin later asserts in a precise and compelling concluding chapter, "in Aristotle's sense of the word, philosophical and universal" (205). So writing, Martin foresees the historical depth that came to characterize late Munro (in stories like "Meneseteung" [1988], "The Love of a Good Woman" [1996], "Hateship, Friendship, Courtship, Loveship, Marriage" [2001], "Chance" [2004], "Wenlock Edge" [2005], and "Too Much Happiness" [2009]).

A critic of his time, Martin is keen to connect Munro's art to the acknowledged greats—Blake, James, Yeats, Joyce, and others are mentioned, and James gets considerable comparative discussion. But Martin follows Munro's acknowledgements to see her most influenced by Eudora Welty's vision and techniques, asserting that both writers "are historians of the working of the human imagination, and both are celebrants of strangeness and mystery, and 'all the opposites on earth'" (204). Along with Welty—to whom Munro would publish a tribute essay in 1999—Martin is among the first to also point to the influence of William Maxwell, citing a November 1985 interview on CBC Radio in which she mentioned his work. Munro published a tribute to Maxwell, too, in 1988. She allowed it to be republished in 2000 when he died, and then published an expanded revision in 2004. Maxwell's family history, *Ancestors* (1971), was a model for Munro's own family history collection, *The View from Castle Rock* (2006) (see Thacker, "Stabbed" and Thacker, "'As Truthful'").

Two more passages from Martin's excellent book bear quoting here. Citing an 1895 entry from Henry James' *Notebooks* where he wrote of "'the sacred mystery of structure,'" Martin connects this to Munro's key early story "Material" (1973), quoting from it, and writing that "By all the 'lovely tricks, honest tricks' that can be played with words, images and dramatic patterns, Alice Munro shocks, horrifies, and finally delights us with the truth that is the product of 'special, unsparing, unsentimental love'" (205). Continuing, Martin also writes that "It is ironical, but significant, that this very Canadian writer has achieved what she has without striving self-consciously to be 'Canadian.' . . . She is more than a Canadian writer, or a writer for Canadians. By seizing on the significant touches of nature in our small world she makes the whole world kin" (205-06). With this last allusion to Shakespeare's *Troilus and Cressida*, he asserts the heady heights at which he sees Munro's art.

As Del Jordan had it in the final sentence of Munro's crucial *Lives of Girls and Women* (1971), and as Martin well knew, "'Yes,' I said, instead of thank you" (254): "[S]he makes the whole world kin." While it is exaggeration to claim that in *Alice Munro: Paradox and Parallel* Martin foresaw, in the mid-1980s, that Munro was a writer headed for the great international acclaim she reached with the Nobel and other prizes, it is clear in his book that he found in her work a most singular greatness that could only be compared with the very greatest authors who have lived. That he did so in the middle of her publishing career, just as considerable critical attention was beginning to burgeon, and when the sustained complexity of late

Munro was emerging, shows a singular critical acuity. As Martin wrote, Munro *is* "more than a Canadian writer, or a writer for Canadians." She is that certainly, but as Martin was among the very first to detail, Munro's vision of Huron County, Ontario, and of the world has made her work among the very greatest ever written.

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Epic Perceptions

Shaun Robinson
If You Discover a Fire. Brick $20.00

Marc di Saverio
Crito Di Volta: An Epic. Guernica $25.00

Reviewed by Carl Watts

New books by Shaun Robinson and Marc di Saverio engage with the perceptions and experiences that comprise our lives. Robinson focuses on the minutiae of a gently adrift adulthood, while di Saverio tackles sweeping societal and institutional oppressions. One yields to the current of stimulus; the other musters a defiant, unwavering assertion of self. The biggest divergence is in the poetics that emerge from and articulate their encounters with the world.

Robinson's opening poem, "Greyhound Depot, Cache Creek," plays with measures of time, shifting from "decades ago, // in the incomprehensible era of Kenny Rogers" to the gift of a watch "when you turned sixteen that's never kept // the right time—3:02 could be 3:05, or midnight, / or 1978." "Trivia Night" adds scales of exploration, invention, and history, recalling that Vasco da Gama "discovered whatever it was— / Florida, maybe, or fire, or the fountain / of youth" before considering that the helicopter has existed only "since 1936. The zipper was invented / in 1891, and before that we lived / without it." The poem's ending combines these modes of apprehension into an image of memory, forgetting, and habit:

> You know you'll wake on your bathroom
> floor, the toilet glowing above you
> like a ceramic moon, like a match
> struck on your zipper in the dark room
> of everything you've forgotten.

Many poems employ alcohol to evoke a barely detectable circularity. "Sunomono" moves from skyscrapers that look like "a shelf of high-end / vodkas" to a "tiny city" in "the cracked-open television / in the alley where I leave / my empties"; in "New Year's Day," the nervous brio of a hangover is an only somewhat ironized microcosm of the decision to move to a new city: "I have no choice—I obey. Why not? / It was impulse that brought me here, farther / from home than I've ever been." But the mundane alienations of the book exist independent of intoxication. "Shared Accommodation" highlights one's realization of being interchangeable and smooths out the accompanying unpleasantness with the repetitions of inane chatter:

> Ignore the photos on the fridge—
> that's who you'll be replacing.
> Temporary is okay, in the sense
> that everything is temporary and okay.

Robinson's easy, conversational style belies a purposeful minimalism. (All the poems from his 2017 chapbook *Manmade Clouds* are here, many with shorter lines and more regular breaks.) There's just enough echo to bring out the ghostly patterns and paradoxes of personal growth. That "Annie, Annie, Are You Okay?" voices this dynamic with a CPR dummy ("Day after day, I die in the mailroom's / manila light") underscores the way life, death, and crisis remain comprehensible to us as still more ready-made, replicable scenes and remarks.

In *Crito di Volta*, di Saverio's eponymous character, emerging from a decade in an institution, breathlessly asserts his beliefs and persona. The self-described epic encompasses Crito's bond with Flavia Vamorri; their fight against abuses in mental health institutions; and Crito's Mortarism, a movement against the "*light-blocking ceilings of present Western 'Verse,' 'Art' and 'Democracy*.'" Reviews have praised di Saverio's passion and the complexity of his protagonist. The book is certainly ambitious, incorporating epistolary form, translation, visual poetry, and an electric mixture of classical and vernacular language that at its best recalls George Elliott Clarke.

Still, it's hard to discuss the book without mentioning the volume and relentlessness of Crito's monologues. Here's an example from a letter to Flavia, after Crito declares that "the amphetamine's working!":

> Rattle the world harder than the guerrilla machine-gunning
> at the start of her first battle.
> Be in me as the brusque verity of a cadaver, and not as

anything hazy: an Afghan field of poppies for the
unrequited lover.
Have me in the intensity of Christ on the cross, a second before
he gave, and not in the calm comfort of a lover in my arms.

It's epic on stimulants, alright, and the trip lasts for much of the book's 177 pages. The exhaustion will be compounded for many readers given the tirades against political correctness ("*with which I have divided and conquered your conversations, closing you into your small talk, alone!*"), sometimes flippant discussions of sexual assault, and ham-fisted set pieces (like when "a girl wearing a blue hijab" appears and asks, "What are your thoughts on 9/11, Crito?").

For this reviewer, what rankles isn't the violation of progressive tenets but the culmination of these attacks in prescriptions for poetic authenticity:

Drivers of their lines of "verse" are failing their beginners' tests,
but "poet"-editor-professors let them graduate with honours, yes!
The "poets" write prose and tailor their "poetics" to their own
inabilities—thereby re-defining poetry as prose—then accuse our
few true poets of not knowing how to write verses at all!

Some social justice discourse certainly reduces individuals to cardboard cutouts or repeats ungainly mantras. But, neither does di Saverio's larger-than-life thinking and feeling and shirt-ruffles-billowing-in-the-wind *Rückenfigur* express objective truth in a form we all ought to learn from. Whatever authenticity exists in poetic language lies in its artifice, constraint, or indirectness—going back to M. H. Abrams, it's pretty much anything that's stylized to such a degree as to differentiate it from strictly communicative prose. Declaring what real poetry is as part of a thirty-page harangue that obliterates irony or uncertainty (or negative capability!) misses this point, even if it convinces us of Crito's fervour.

There are also subtleties that emerge over the book's long haul. The landscape and landmarks of di Saverio's native Hamilton, Ontario, are rendered not heavy-handedly, or even deliberately, but as part of the comings and goings of Crito's small network of friends and acquaintances. As we grapple with the relentless unreality of Crito's journey, a city we don't often think about emerges into vivid detail, its invisible normies taking buses on named streets, looking out over the Escarpment, or going down the hill to Jackson Square or McMaster University. It brings to mind Robinson's subtly augmenting repetitions—the patterns through which our lives find shelter and shuffle oddly forward—even as Crito's hubristic pronouncements churn under the power of their own lake effect.

A Purpose for Every Time

Paul Huebener

Nature's Broken Clocks: Reimagining Time in the Face of the Environmental Crisis.
U of Regina P $24.95

Reviewed by Catherine Rainwater

Folk singer-songwriter Pete Seeger promised us a time for every purpose under heaven. This comforting eschatological notion underlies Western beliefs in nature as governed by a coherent divine plan unfolding in unitary time. In *Nature's Broken Clocks,* Paul Huebener calls for critical reflection on this foundational notion, inscribed in material culture as well as in our cultural and personal narratives. Nature, he argues, displays not one temporality but many temporalities that, especially in the era of modernity and climate change, are observably out of sync. The migratory patterns of some birds, for instance, are disturbed by human-sourced disruptions of seasonal temperatures; the bird's "clock" is "broken," no longer coordinated with the seasonal cycle that is itself also "broken." Leading readers through careful and entertaining analyses of various "broken clocks," as well as through literary critical analyses of novels, short stories, and poems bearing messages about time, Huebener sets out to create in us a keener "literacy of time." His instructive discussions of literary works include Margaret Atwood's "Bear Lament," Christian Bök's *The Xenotext: Book One*, Thomas King's *The Back of the Turtle,* Emily St. John Mandel's *Station Eleven*, Don McKay's "Quartz Crystal," Waubgeshig Rice's *Moon of the Crusted Snow*, Robert J. Sawyer's *Flashforward*, and Thomas Wharton's *Icefields*, among others. Huebener's imaginative and generally accessible literary analyses are informed by diverse works from a variety of fields including philosophy, environmental studies, and science.

According to Huebener, encoded in the stories we tell ourselves about nature are conceptions of time that serve diverse, often conflicting political and economic agendas. These ideas about time inform our visions of the future and shape our notions of progress; they emphasize elements of nature we arbitrarily prize, as well as those we wish to alter without sufficient attention to consequences. Our ideas about time determine our response to human suffering and our ability to imagine the future, including alternatives to industrial capitalism. Finally, some of these stories we tell ourselves may help us to "question all the other stories." The author hopes that "a thoughtful literacy of time" might result from our queries, since at stake "is our ability to negotiate the age of ecological collapse."

Huebener examines representative examples of "broken clocks"—material phenomena that reveal our misconceptions about time. First, however, he lays the groundwork of his "eco-critical time studies" by reminding us that not only mechanical time is constructed but also "natural time." We know that measuring time with clocks and calendars is a human invention. However, when we imagine that guidance by diurnal and seasonal cycles amounts to a pristine, "natural" alternative,

we blind ourselves to human interference that has permanently altered this imagined "nature." For example, artificial light affects biological processes such as the circadian rhythms of both human and non-human animals. What, then, is "natural" time if birds, for instance, begin to arrive "too late" for an unnaturally early spring? What is "natural" about a new type of hybrid bear, the "grolar," that appears because the grizzly bears' and polar bears' territories overlap, and their hibernation times change as the planet warms? Huebener would have us see that there is no fixed "natural" time unaffected by our conceptions and actions. However, our fixed notions of "natural time" persist and are preserved in the stories we tell ourselves about reality.

Such stories we tell ourselves occur even in advertisements for products that mythologize the natural world. Huebener points to an interesting and internally contradictory temporal narrative in advertisements for recreational vehicles that purportedly give buyers the chance to slow down, get "back to nature," and escape the humanly-constructed world. In ads nostalgically associated with an idealized past, nature is ironically constructed for consumer entertainment. Among the stories we tell ourselves about time are also our intellectual constructions of the prehistoric past. Huebener reminds us that today's frozen North was once hot and humid. The imagined past—the "Arctic Alligator Swamp"—is the projected future of the Arctic on a warming planet.

Understanding how we think about time, the author contends, makes us see that there is no simple "reset," no simple "return" to nature. Instead, we must move on with new awareness of how our conceptions of time, and the purposes we assign to imagined time, themselves determine our experiences in time and the effects of these experiences on the earth.

The Prairie Is Black

Karina Vernon, ed.
The Black Prairie Archives: An Anthology. Wilfrid Laurier UP $44.99

Reviewed by Alison Calder

In her introduction to this anthology, Karina Vernon asks, "[W]here are the black writers in all our critical assessments of prairie literature?" Checking in at 594 pages, *The Black Prairie Archives* should permanently shut down any nostalgic thoughts that settler culture on the Canadian Prairies was exclusively built by white folks. Vernon's thoughtfully curated selection of writing by Black people redefines Western literary history and is an important resource for anyone interested in regional studies.

Vernon writes that this anthology has four purposes:

> (1) to make the archive public; (2) to transform the dominant inherited imaginings of the prairies by reading the region through the aperture of the recovered black archive; (3) to establish a black prairie literary tradition; and (4) to assist readers' close engagements with the literature, thus opening up new scholarly and pedagogical possibilities (1).

Ranging from Daniel T. Williams' notebook entries from 1872 to Miranda Martini's gorgeous 2010 essay, with stops in fiction, poetry, memoir, drama, and rap, the anthology dazzles with the sheer diversity of entries. It would be impossible to find "the Black prairie voice," and happily Vernon doesn't try.

Vernon divides her literary history into four periods: fur trade and settlement (1790-1900); the migration of Black farmers from the US, primarily Oklahoma (1905-12); Canada's institution of the points system for immigration (1960s-present); and "the era of neoliberal immigration and asylum" (2012-present)(11). That two of these eras overlap stresses how history can happen differently to different people in the same place. It is instructive to compare Vernon's introduction, which stresses diasporic identity and multiple ways of belonging, with the introductions to studies of Prairie literature, particularly those from the 1980s and 1990s, which often seek to establish and defend ideas of authenticity and deliberately exclude immigrants or city dwellers.

Through excavating and legitimating often marginalized Black voices, *The Black Prairie Archives* reveals also "the process by which the region gained identity as a political, social, and above all, ideological formation by rejecting this presence and producing it as the outside boundary that defined the legitimate spaces of the region" (3). In this, Blackness, like Indigeneity, is revealed as that which white settler culture rejects, and also that upon which it depends. Black presence here didn't drop innocently out of sight: it was deliberately effaced as part of the strategy to cement white settler claims to the land. Vernon's question, "Where are the black farmers and store keepers in the pages of Frederick Philip Grove's *Settlers of the Marsh*?" hits the mark (2): I edited a critical edition of this text, and never thought to ask.

For Vernon, the construction of Black archives requires a rethinking of the conventional notion of an archive, popularly understood as an institutionally validated catalogue of historically important items. In contrast, Vernon stresses the importance of the archival process, which becomes a complex negotiation between the collector and the collected. "A black archive is a network of social relations forged slowly and carefully, on the basis of trust," she writes (4). Sometimes those negotiations don't bear fruit, and so the item cannot be included. The relationship, in this case between editor and writer, that this kind of curation requires is the difference between what Vernon, quoting Katrina Leial Sellinger, calls "an archive *of* blackness and an archive *as* blackness" (4). She emphasizes the incompleteness of this anthology, particularly around the loss of oral stories and oral histories. The first entry in the anthology is a page of solid black, reminding readers that Vernon's version of the Black Prairie archives is necessarily incomplete.

While these pieces vary widely in both form and content, a number of them address the complicated relationship between Black settlers and Indigenous people, sometimes depicting a shifting and arbitrary set of identities and the ways in which the writers worked within and against these systems. These complex situations are only touched on in Vernon's introduction, which promises that she will develop the discussion further in a forthcoming companion volume. One note: the youngest writer included in this anthology was born in 1990, suggesting that a sequel might be needed.

Desire, Violence, Nature, Truth

George Elliott Clarke
Canticles II (MMXX). Guernica $29.95

David Helwig
A House in Memory: Last Poems. McGill-Queen's UP $17.95

Reviewed by Joel Deshaye

During a pandemic, with democracies faltering and new media redefining truth and our perceptions of reality, recourse to poetry is not always a comfort. David Helwig's *A House in Memory* is possibly too rose-coloured in retreating to an unblemished nature; George Elliott Clarke's *Canticles II (MMXX)* is bloody with unconstrained sex and violence. In very different styles, both books speak to crises of truth today.

Truth is not the major concern of either text, but it is a preoccupation of both, especially *Canticles II (MMXX)*. In the introduction, Clarke describes the book as "a conjured, 'Africadian' Bible," but qualifies that "[o]ne will be careful not to read it as if it were *The* Bible" (xii). Clarke's reflections on his adaptation of sacred texts imply that his book seeks versions of "the" truth. Various characters make statements about truth: "*Truth* is the fulfillment of *Mortality*. / *Truth* is how *Time* ends" (197). Later: "To stand for *Truth* / is to be targeted by irrevocable spears" (201). Later still: "*Truth* is a veil torn open" (265). Finally, Jesus (known as "X") declares in "The Odyssey of X" that "*Truth* carries no accent" (411). But then truth becomes a lot more relative. In "The Gospel of X," Pontius Pilate responds to Jesus and sounds like the infamously untrustworthy Donald Trump: "The facts: / No fake news" (425). Pilate gets his own narrative in "Appendix: Chronicle of X's Last Days," where he concludes by stating that "[t]here is no other proof, but *Rumour*" (440).

Rumour is often sexual, so I wondered if Clarke's Pilate's view of truth-as-rumour is one reason for the oversexed diction and style of his *Canticles*. (Another reason is simply that his energy for creative writing is so audaciously vital.) Like the previous volume of *Canticles* (2019), this instalment is a veritable dictionary of sexual dysphemisms and wordplay, the latter evident in "Ezekiel XXIII," in which the character "Ahola doted upon Assyrians / (abutting em cos how their name starts)" (16). In the Bible, Ezekiel 23 has similar sexual content, only sanitized; Clarke adds gratuitous, graphic details. Clarke's Mary di Magdala eventually asks herself whether "*Scripture* should be as undeviating as *Porn*, / if it is to work any good" (489). He is profaning the sacred; he footnotes Leonard Cohen twice.

Clarke's allusion to Pilate-as-Trump is not isolated. He allegorizes Tony Blair and George W. Bush as *Conquest* and *Massacre*. As he did in *Trudeau: Long March, Shining Path* (2007), he gives characters names that belong to real people from other times and places: e.g., the nineteenth-century British historian John Acton, who said that absolute power corrupts absolutely. Indirectly, the allegorized characters suggest that truths about the corruption of power—and its abuse—cycle through history as embodiments in human figures, even if these figures cast doubt on truth.

Clarke's "X" alludes not only to Jesus but probably also to Malcolm X, and yet with one more implication: "He's too doubly, dingy a black! / X resembles . . . another dark, salty, / silk-pants Nova Scotian" (300), like Clarke himself, perhaps. Clarke finds Black, brown, beige, tan, copper, and other-coloured people throughout his adaptations of Judeo-Christian sacred texts, vividly countering the whitewashing of Western religion.

Meanwhile, I noticed a strange (but beautiful) greenwashing in *A House in Memory*, Helwig's posthumous book of late poems juxtaposed with selected early poems. Even though the poems are often set in nature—e.g. "at the shore of the sea where time is urgent" (41)—I found no explicit references to the urgency of today's climate crisis. There is a "doomed grey goose" (46), but even "Migration in Orange" makes no mention of the effects of climate crisis and pollution on butterflies. The "mass extinction of species" in "Untitled" happens not during the Anthropocene but "during thousands of millenia [*sic*]" (103) before human interference with the planet. One reason for this potential oversight seems to be that nature in *A House in Memory* is part of the "garden of memory, all shapeliness" (53); nature is a construct of the imagination.

Partly as a result, many of Helwig's poems—though never sounding old-fashioned—seem to be an escape from the modern world. There is a counterpoint when *A House in Memory* turns back to the early poem "Illuminations," where the title refers not mainly to medieval manuscripts but to the "luminous presence, / agitated electrons" (120) of a digital image. Soon thereafter, however, Helwig leaves town in "Kentville, October," and announces, "I am abroad in a forest of the first age, / a lucky survival . . . safe / somehow from harvest or from fire" (122). Whether as an indication of his thoughts and feelings, or those of his daughter and literary executor, Maggie Helwig (or both), *A House in Memory* prioritizes peace, the legitimate desire to feel "safe / somehow" at the end of life, even if that means ignoring (here, anyway) the truths of climate crisis and war.

Clarke's preoccupation with violence is scarcely evident in Helwig's poetry, unless it is in "marauding / criminal gangs of slugs" (35) that attempt to infest a garden, or when "busy hermit crabs / prepare for war" (69). On the rare occasions of "O Summerland" or "Alien Newcomers," "[h]istory calls out for battle," and we do get some Clarkean lines: "Blood / flows, wood burns as cannons blast, ships drift while thick / smoke chokes the seasick admiral" (51). Reflecting on Helwig's "Oedipus at the Crossroads," I could almost see Trump again: "A king stands above the law / in a mask of gold foil" (17)—if only Helwig could have predicted the COVID-19 pandemic. "Is the old pain serious?" asks the final couplet on the page: "All its truths are lies" (17). Ultimately, Helwig offers a suggestion about altering our reality that is similar to one from Clarke. Helwig: "The shaped desire's consequence: / spasm, cramp, literature" (29). Clarke: "Be convulsively alive, compulsively active, / so any dire prayer bursts spontaneously / into inspired verse" (541). Desire shapes truth; literature teaches how.

Contributors

Articles

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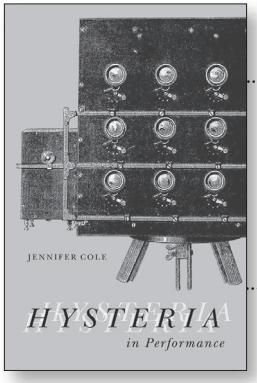

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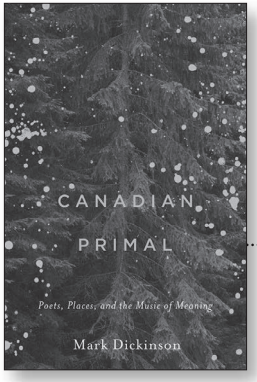

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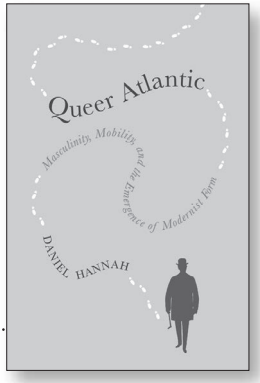

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