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Reconceptualizing Canadian Generalists

Christine Kim

The five articles in this issue pose intriguing questions about archives, storytelling, ways of knowing, language, and metaphor as they examine Tomson Highway's *Kiss of the Fur Queen,* David Chariandy's *Soucouyant*, Guy Delisle's *Pyongyang,* Jordan Scott's poetry, and Don McKay's *The Book of Moonlight.* As a general issue, there was no set of questions for these articles to respond to, and consequently no expectation that there would be a shared focus. The range of scholarship is demonstrated through the subjects, texts, critical approaches, genres, and themes with which the authors engage. And yet, there are still many rich overlaps and common lines of inquiry that run through these articles—mutual lines that are suggestive for reflecting on the field of Canadian literary studies and its connections to other scholarly fields. Reading these articles together reveals how scholars are thinking alongside each other (although not necessarily with each other) about mutual interests that span transnational sites, genres, and critical approaches. It also offers a way of conceptualizing the field of Canadian literary studies at this moment.

Focusing on moments of critical coherence is a very different method for approaching the field than most of us have been trained to perform. Such a method compels us to question how we are to define the field of Canadian literature and, moreover, what constitutes the position of the Canadianist. Such an endeavour returns us to questions about how we are to understand the relationship between what we teach in the classroom, the material we research and produce scholarly writing about, our critical approaches (which often extend beyond national borders), and how we define the field of Canadian literary studies itself. Other issues include how we perceive our scholarly and pedagogical interests as being in dialogue with or different from other scholars in the field.

The field of Canadian literature, like many others, has been under immense pressure to understand its relevance, value for students, relation

to the discipline of literary studies and other coterminous fields, and how it engages with the contemporary social context. That these are old rather than new questions is part of what makes them intriguing. Writing two decades ago, Barbara Godard asked us to interrogate Canadian literary studies by employing a Bourdieusian analytic: "the lived social relations of ruling, taken-for-granted understandings, and practices of the everyday—that interact dynamically to compose 'the field of cultural production'" (209). From this critical perspective, Godard argues against an objective knowing of the field that presumes to grasp it in its totality:

> There is no such thing as a "complete" diagram in the representation of a given field. Maps rarely halt and contain but gesture toward continuations and/or disjunctions. The visibility of relations, the inclusion or exclusion of positions and details, depends on the scale of the map in question. A different scale of analysis, from greater distance or proximity, leads to a shift in focus and a new map. As a surveyor, my perspective is not detached from the field under analysis but positioned within it and implicated in the shifts in critical stance I have outlined. (241)

In this essay, Godard remarks upon the changing geopolitical contexts for reading Canadian literature, noting that the field was institutionalized during the Cold War but that she writes in an era of global capitalism. Despite these changing circumstances, however, there still remains a persistent "'geografictional' (van Herk) imperative in Canadian literature discourses" (211).

Is a Canadianist defined by their comprehensive knowledge of canonical material designed to centre Euro-Canadian subjects through narratives of settler colonialism and nationalism? This presumed knowledge of dominant Canada and its literature has long shaped the field, even as there have been many debates over canon formation, the relations between the so-called centre and margins of Canadian literature, and strategies for decolonizing the field. For instance, this presumption operates as a guiding principle for doctoral field examinations and reading lists as we seek to assess the candidate's ability to teach in the field or demonstrate mastery of it. This continues to be true even when our own classrooms are often preoccupied with very different concerns or even make use of different reading practices. Laura Moss poses this problem in a 2006 editorial for *Canadian Literature* when she asks, "Am I being

responsible to the rich history of Canadian literature if a student I work with hasn't read Susanna Moodie, A. J. M. Smith, Don McKay, or Joy Kogawa when he graduates? How much does literary history play a part in the literary future?" (7-8). The same year, M. G. Vassanji raises similar questions about an author's place within the field as he notes that writers are often preoccupied by the question of for whom they write and what the category *Canadian* means to readers. Questioning the work this critical category performs, Vassanji observes that the general sentiment regarding migrant writers is to "[g]ive them the space, this is a tolerant country: but are they truly, completely Canadian?" (12). The exclusionary dimensions of such understandings of Canada and Canadian literature are obvious, and Vassanji argues instead for a more dynamic conception. Such a conception accounts for changes to the Canadian literary landscape by including the histories and stories that migrants carry with them: "Canadians have fought not only in the World Wars, but also in the wars of liberation of Africa, Asia, and South America . . . The stories of the Jewish Holocaust, the holocausts in Rwanda, the Partition of India, and the massacres of Cambodia are also Canadian stories" (Vassanji 12).

Moss and Vassanji identify ways in which the desire to reproduce the status quo tends to be articulated, as well as the structures that enable this tendency. In light of these issues, we might ask, What space exists for scholarship that pushes us in different directions, such as that of Indigenous literary scholars whose focus moves throughout Turtle Island instead of remaining only Canada? Or Black studies scholars who engage with literary production that circulates throughout multiple diasporas including Canada? What about critical debates about gender, sexuality, disability, or refugeeism, to name just a few, that exceed national parameters but are of crucial importance to Canada and Canadian literature? What do these different ways of moving through and working with Canadian literature suggest about the ever-widening gap between the dominant fiction that this field, or perhaps any field, is a thing to be reproduced and our experiences as teachers and researchers that show us otherwise?

Following Stuart Hall's insight that the archives of diaspora are living archives, we can theorize Canadian literary archives in terms that emphasize their unfinished and open-ended nature (89). For Hall, archives "always stand in an active, dialogic, relation to the questions which the present puts to the past; and the present always puts its

questions differently from one generation to another" (92). Thus to centre questions of Indigeneity, migration, gender, and sexuality, for instance, is to legitimate perennial questions about power, privilege, and nation in relation to how we engage with the archives of Canadian literature. Given the dearth of new faculty positions in the humanities, these kinds of questions about the shape of the field are being asked with increasing urgency in conference panels as well as workshops on professionalization held by departments and professional organizations. It is becoming increasingly clear that hiring committees cannot simply hire to reproduce the field as it once was or was imagined to be. Instead, Canadian literary studies must seriously consider where emerging scholarship in the field is directing us and reframe existing critical conversations and reading lists. The dynamism of the field, as it negotiates forces that both demand and resist change, also compels us to reflect upon the terms of knowledge production for Canadian literary studies.

In the space that remains, I want to draw attention to some of the overlapping directions taken by the articles in this issue. In so doing, I ask us to consider what might come out of reframing these overlaps as what I want to call an intimate dialogue, in the sense of being both personal and proximate. Here I extend Lisa Lowe's methodology of reading the "processes of settler colonialism, slavery, and imported colonial labor" as "coeval" (20) in order to hold the different lines of critical inquiry represented by these articles within the framework of Canadian literary studies. Bringing together historical phenomena and creative texts that are more often read discretely, such a method offers an opportunity to recognize intimacies between conversations that are not always immediately apparent. This method does not assume that work within this field is determined by national paradigms or literary traditions that connect generations of writers and thinkers. Instead it asks what critical energy drives engagements with Canadian writing. In other words, what kinds of questions is Canadian literature helping us think through and with?

The essays by Walter Villanueva on *Soucouyant* and Melanie Braith on *Kiss of the Fur Queen* share an interest in examining the institutional structures of healthcare and residential school. The archives Villanueva and Braith investigate compel us to note the labour of carework undertaken by individuals, often to compensate for the cracks in institutional infrastructures. The lack of support for children with disabled parents is a topic that Villanueva addresses while he "approach[es] Adele's disorder

as a literal medical condition . . . to explore how her caregiving needs affect not only her but also those around her." But as Allan Isaac argues in *Filipino Time*, his book on the contracted labour performed by Filipino migrants, we must recognize the psychic and material demands particular to care labour. Unlike other forms of contracted labour, "[c]are work is not repetitive, mechanical, skilled labor housed in the factory. Other and more human capacities, especially the capacity to dream and improvise, are called upon to be used and developed to do care work effectively" (Isaac 10). Similarly, through a reading of archival materials related to *Kiss of the Fur Queen*, Braith helps us understand the kind of work Jeremiah performs as he cares for his brother when Gabriel is on his deathbed. Isaac's point that carework constitutes a form of "creative labour" as it forms relationships (16) resonates with the arguments made by Braith and Villanueva as they explore the everyday lives and labours of caring sketched out in *Kiss of the Fur Queen* and *Soucouyant*.

If we read the contributions by Braith, Joon Ho Hwang, and Eric Schmaltz together, questions about secrets begin to emerge. Braith's essay on *Kiss of the Fur Queen* addresses how the abuse Jeremiah and Gabriel experience in residential school and the secrecy surrounding it harm their kinship relations. It is only through *aniskwâcimopicikêwin*, which "literally means 'the process of connecting stories together,'"[1] that Jeremiah is able to "make meaning of his own experience while reclaiming a story from a tradition that the residential school tried to suppress." In his reading of Jordan Scott's *Lanterns at Guantánamo*, Schmaltz outlines the many restrictions to which Scott is subjected before and during his visit to the notorious US offshore detention camp, as well as the limits that these restrictions place on the poet's ability to represent his experiences of the prison. The mode of secrecy shapes *Lanterns at Guantánamo*. "Without actual images of torture and violence," Schmaltz observes, "Scott's photographs point to these elements of Guantánamo, leaving us to imagine the various forms of violence that the state uses to coerce speech from prisoners who are unwilling to speak." Secrecy also determines ways of seeing and knowing in Guy Delisle's *Pyongyang*, and Joon Ho Hwang's essay focuses on the structures of power that determine how outsiders see North Korea. Hwang argues that while Delisle has the uncommon opportunity to challenge our perceptions of North Korea as an outsider who was permitted to visit the country, Delisle's work unfortunately often tends to reinforce stereotypes of North Korea. These three essays enable us

to interrogate the tension between what Ma Vang describes in her work on Hmong histories and refugee epistemologies as the tension between what is secret and "what has been silenced" (24).

Kevin Tunnicliffe's essay on Don McKay reads *The Book of Moonlight* as "a two-way dialogue" between McKay and Wallace Stevens. He focuses in particular on their use of metaphors such as the moon and moonlight, arguing that "metaphor poses a question as to the limits and uses of language." Metaphor is also an object of Braith's attention as she considers the interpretive problems it poses for the audiences of Jeremiah's play. In this instance, "[t]he audience is not able to reconcile testimony and the Cree custom of metaphor and does not understand that the metaphor is part of the active engagement that Indigenous storytelling asks of the audience" (Braith). For both Tunnicliffe and Braith, metaphor directs our attention to the limits of communication and asks us to imagine how we might move beyond these limits. Metaphor is also a point of discussion for Villanueva who pushes against what he sees as a trend in scholarship of "metaphorizing Adele's mental condition."

Notes

1. Here Braith cites McLeod, *Indigenous Poetics* (8).

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Melanie Braith

Braiding Stories, Braiding Kinship: How Cree Storytelling Restores Relationships in Tomson Highway's *Kiss of the Fur Queen*

This article argues that Cree author Tomson Highway's *Kiss of the Fur Queen* celebrates Cree storytelling as a way to restore kinship relations that have been impacted by residential schools. In doing so, Highway's 1998 novel rethinks what it means for residential school survivors to tell their life story. Scholars have published substantial criticism on Highway's novel by analyzing it through an Indigenous Queer/Two-Spirit lens or by focusing on how it involves the land and urban Indigeneity.[1] Several scholars point out the connection between Highway's novel and Cree storytelling via its use of figures such as the Weetigo and Weesageechak.[2] I argue that the extent to which the novel incorporates the power of Cree storytelling goes further than acknowledged by critics to date: *Kiss of the Fur Queen* shows how storytelling as an inherently relational practice can be central to the restoration of *wâhkôtowin*, Cree kinship relations.[3] In this article, I employ Cree storytelling principles in order to analyze a part of the novel that has received surprisingly scant attention from scholars: the plays that protagonist Jeremiah creates toward the end of the novel. I furthermore shed new light on the significance of these plays and the novel's ending by discussing an unpublished play written by Highway, which I came across in the Highway fonds at Library and Archives Canada. My discussion of this unpublished manuscript will demonstrate how the novel's characters create plays to reconnect with kin and culture by weaving testimony and Cree storytelling. As a settler scholar, I aspire to respectfully engage with Indigenous intellectual traditions. I consider Indigenous knowledges like the Cree story cycles that underpin Highway's novel, as well as analyses of other versions of Highway's story that are preserved in the archive. Nevertheless, I need to acknowledge that my perspective is that of an outsider and that there are therefore limits to my understanding. I

have been engaging with Highway's novel for almost a decade, and my interpretation of it has changed as I have been learning about Indigenous storytelling and unlearning approaches that emerge from the context of Western courtroom testimony. The present article is the culmination of all these years of listening to the story that *Kiss of the Fur Queen* has to tell.

Kiss of the Fur Queen tells the life stories of two Cree brothers from northern Manitoba, Champion and Ooneemeetoo Okimasis. It follows the brothers from their childhood on the reserve Eemanapiteepitat to their experience at residential school, where they are forced to take on their Catholic names Jeremiah and Gabriel. The action then turns to urban Canadian centres such as Winnipeg and Toronto, where Jeremiah becomes a classical pianist and Gabriel a ballet dancer. The novel is loosely based on Tomson Highway's and his brother René Highway's own life stories.[4] Throughout the novel, Highway emphasizes the connections between Cree storytelling and kinship relations. In Cree, kinship relations are expressed by the idea of *wâhkôtowin*. Métis writer Maria Campbell's description of *wâhkôtowin* extends this state of kinship beyond the human and includes kinship relations with the land and the other-than-human: "Today it is translated to mean kinship, relationship, and family as in human family. But at one time, from our place it meant the whole of creation. And our teachings taught us that all of creation is related and inter-connected to all things within it" (5).[5] From the beginning, *Kiss of the Fur Queen* emphasizes a connection between storytelling and *wâhkôtowin* in what might be referred to as the brothers' "pre-birth stories." These stories emphasize the relations between humans, the land, and the other-than-human, as well as the principle of reciprocity on which these relations are built. The two stories are inserted right before Champion and Ooneemeetoo are born, and they demonstrate how Cree storytelling encapsulates teachings of relationships. Champion's pre-birth story evokes a storytelling performance, because it opens with an onomatopoetic "*Poof!*" as the child lands "on his bum, smack into the most exquisite mound of snow in the entire forest" (19). By describing how "a small spruce tree that happened to be sleeping there . . . opened one drowsy eye" (20), the story attributes human features to parts of the land. The story teaches about the land as a relative—a notion that is addressed in Maria Campbell's statement on *wâhkôtowin*. Reciprocal relationships to the other-than-human are encapsulated in the story of the baby's encounter with a rabbit which, upon seeing the freezing child, "slipped off his coat

and wrapped it around the child's shivering, plump midsection" (20). The baby reciprocates, as he "made his gratitude clear to the rabbit" (20-21). Later in the novel, Abraham Okimasis tells stories to his two youngest sons about his interactions with the land. His stories also emphasize that human relationships to the land are not dissimilar from those to other humans, when he speaks "of arguments he had had with the fierce north wind, of how a young pine tree had corrected his direction on his homeward journey and thus saved all their lives" (104). His story depicts the land and its elements as animate beings with whom humans interact constantly. It teaches the brothers how they are embedded in a network of relationships—even when they think they are alone.

The novel also shows how stories themselves reinforce relationships. The beginning of the novel (Abraham Okimasis' victory at the 1951 World Championship Dog Derby) is characterized by sentences that turn the story's present into a future act of storytelling: "The next thing Abraham knew, *or so he would relate to his two youngest sons years later*, the goddess floated up to a sky fast fading from pink-and-purple dusk to the great blackness of night" (12; emphasis mine). What is unfolding in the reader's mind is not what happened at the derby in 1951 but what Abraham Okimasis later tells his sons. Noteworthy is Highway's word choice for this act of storytelling as a process of "relating," which suggests that the father is not only telling a story to his sons but is simultaneously connecting with them in an empathic process that strengthens kinship bonds. Highway puts an emphasis on this process by including a second instance in which Abraham Okimasis "relates" a story to his sons (13).

When Champion turns seven, he is forced to go to residential school. Gabriel is forced to go a few years later. The school not only physically separates the brothers from their relations, but also attempts to separate them from all of the cultural practices that uphold these relationships. Speaking Cree and telling Cree stories is forbidden by the school, as it forces a Euro-Christian worldview on the children. The school deeply harms the Okimasis brothers' kinship relations, as they are separated from their family and the land. The novel also describes how Jeremiah witnesses Father Lafleur abusing Gabriel (79). Jeremiah blames himself for the rest of his life for not protecting Gabriel, crying out his sense of guilt at Gabriel's deathbed: "I promised Mom and Dad I'd take care of you. And I fucked it up" (301). The reader does not learn about the sexual abuse that Jeremiah himself suffers until the end of the novel, when Jeremiah, as an adult, is

overwhelmed by the memory that he suppressed all of his life. The abuse not only impacts the relationship between Jeremiah and Gabriel. It also impacts the brothers' relationship to their Catholic parents, whom they cannot tell about the abuse because, as Jeremiah says, "Even if we told them, they would side with Father Lafleur" (92). The silence around the abuse is indicative of the brothers' loss of trust in their parents and thereby addresses the intergenerational effects that decades of residential schooling have had on the ties between parents and children.

Because of the ways in which residential school harms their kinship relations, Jeremiah and Gabriel struggle with isolation later in life and at times behave in ways that are detrimental to the meaningful relations of *wâhkôtowin* in which they were embedded in their early childhood.[6] When Jeremiah moves to Winnipeg after residential school, he feels completely alone and thinks back to his father's stories of being alone with the land—stories that do not offer him any solace now because they "never told us how to spend time alone in the midst of half a million people. Here, stars don't shine at night, trees don't speak" (104). Jeremiah's isolation in the city does not stem from any incompatibility between Cree *wâhkôtowin* and the city but rather shows that the residential school's assimilatory practices, while harming Jeremiah's relationships, did nothing to teach him how to forge connections in this new environment. Still living on the reserve, Gabriel comes to realize that "there was no place for him in Eemanipiteepitat or the north" after his father insists, "The Catholic church saved our people. Without it, we wouldn't be here today" (109). Colonialism and the worldview that comes with it make it exceedingly difficult for both brothers to uphold their kinship relations or to forge new ones. This does not mean that the brothers do not resist. Jeremiah and Gabriel try to find ways to uphold kinship relations throughout the novel. Jeremiah at times imaginatively connects to the land when he plays the piano (213), and Gabriel expresses his father's dog sled stories in his dance (237). However, the novel suggests that the temporary relationships that are created by these actions are not sustainable.

Highway utilizes the Weetigo as a metaphor to express how residential school imposes behavioural norms on Jeremiah and Gabriel that are further detrimental to kinship ties. The Weetigo is a figure from Cree (and other Algonquian) storytelling traditions and can be seen as the opposite of all of the principles that are expressed through *wâhkôtowin* as outlined by Campbell.[7] As Métis scholar Jo-Ann Episkenew points out,

"[t]he *Wihtikow*, in Cree tradition, like the *Windigo* of the Anishinaubae, is a giant insatiable cannibal spirit who eats everything and everyone in its path; it is the personification of greed" (176). This cannibal spirit stands in stark contrast to the principles of balance and reciprocity. Omushkego Elder and storyteller Louis Bird says that the "wihtigo . . . was created by starvation—humans starved, went crazy, and ate human flesh when it was decayed . . . And you become a wihtigo" (112).

In *Kiss of the Fur Queen*, there are instances in which both Jeremiah and Gabriel are associated with the Weetigo. In one scene, the narrative represents the little girls in Gabriel's ballet class as making "him look, and feel, like a Weetigo" (152). Jeremiah is told by a little boy that he was eaten by a Weetigo (271) and according to settler scholar Sam McKegney's analysis, Jeremiah is in this moment confronted with "his latent capacity to become an abuser" (170), to turn into a Weetigo himself. Building on McKegney's interpretation of the cannibal spirit as a metaphor for cycles of sexual abuse, my own reading, based on Bird and Episkenew, adds the dimension that the Weetigo figure in *Kiss of the Fur Queen* can also be understood as a metaphor for behaviour that is detrimental to the reciprocal and respectful relationships that characterize *wâhkôtowin*. The central question is whether storytelling, specifically Jeremiah's act of telling his life story, can be a way to restore relationships and to metaphorically battle the Weetigo. The last part of *Kiss of the Fur Queen* offers a powerful demonstration of how this is indeed possible.

Towards the end of the novel, Jeremiah tells his life story in a couple of plays entitled "Ulysses Thunderchild" and "Chachagathoo, the Shaman." *Âtayohkewina* include sacred stories such as creation stories and stories "emphasizing that animals and other non-human agencies spoke and behaved like humans." *Âcimowina* describes a category of stories where "[t]he narrator knows the characters or has direct or indirect knowledge of them through human intermediaries" (7). *Âcimowina* is the category that life stories (*âcimisowina*) or testimonies would fall under.[8] Another subcategory of *âcimowina* is *kayâs-âcimowina*, *kayâs* being the Cree term for "a long time ago." As Brightman describes, *kayas-âcimowina* are oral histories of events (7).

In his first play, "Ulysses Thunderchild," Jeremiah adapts "The Son of Ayash"—a traditional Cree *âtayohkewin*—to his own life story or *âcimisowin*. There are many different tellings of "The Son of Ayash," but the essence of the narrative is the story of a child who is separated from his

parents and must find his way back home (Brightman 94). From a non-Indigenous perspective, Jeremiah's creative process could be described as fictionalization, "the action of writing about a real event or character but adding imaginary details and changing some facts" ("Fictionalization"). However, the problem with the idea of fictionalization is that it connotes "fiction," which is generally defined as an "invention or fabrication as opposed to fact" ("Fiction"). Looking at a residential school survivor's life story through the lens of "fiction" is potentially problematic, especially in the context of Canadians who refuse to acknowledge the atrocities of the residential school system. I propose that Cree storytelling principles can help us understand Jeremiah's play differently. As pointed out above, *âtayohkewina* are understood as true accounts, and Jeremiah's blending of stories is therefore not a process of fictionalization in a Western sense. Jeremiah's combination of *âcimisowin* and *âtayohkewin* is a process in which he blends two stories (both of which are true accounts) in a creative manner in order to enhance the meaning of each and to carve out aspects that are important to him.

One possible way of understanding how Jeremiah braids *âcimisowin* and *âtayohkewin* is articulated by Cree scholar Neal McLeod as *aniskwâcimopicikêwin*, which "literally means 'the process of connecting stories together'" (8).[9] According to McLeod, "the dissonance between" the stories, the space in-between, allows the reader or listener to understand each of the stories "in new ways." Meaning not only emerges from each of the stories but also lies within the relationship that is established during the process of *aniskwâcimopicikêwin*. Jeremiah creates new meanings when he braids his own life story with the traditional Son of Ayash story. Jeremiah can thereby make meaning of his own experience while reclaiming a story from a tradition that the residential school tried to suppress.

As suggested in the first part of *Kiss of the Fur Queen*, Indigenous storytelling creates relationships. The fact that Jeremiah decides to testify in the form of a play can be read as his attempt to recreate a storytelling situation in the city far from the storytelling contexts he grew up in. As Highway himself points out, theatre can be seen as "a natural extension of the oral storytelling tradition" (Interview 95). Jeremiah's choice of genre suggests his realization that he is in need of relationships. By asking Gabriel "to direct it" (*Kiss* 278), Jeremiah hopes to work with Gabriel on the play, but he also implicitly hopes to work with Gabriel on restoring their kinship relationship. While I agree with McKegney's argument that writing

the play allows Jeremiah to claim agency, I disagree with his idea that Jeremiah controls the story as a writer (171). Jeremiah certainly *attempts* to control the story of his play as a writer, which becomes visible when he uses James Joyce's *Ulysses* as a second frame of reference and refers to "Ulysses Thunderchild" as depicting "one day in the life of a Cree man in Toronto, 1984" (277). Joyce's novel is usually taught as a prime example of a Western notion of literature that celebrates the author as a solitary genius whose work is directed at a small audience of similarly intellectual readers. Theatrical plays, however, "are not the creation of solitary individuals working in isolation. They are communal both in production and in performance" (Episkenew 147). Jeremiah's attempt to have sole control over the story as a writer goes against the idea of co-creation that is central to both theatre and Indigenous storytelling. And indeed, while rehearsing Jeremiah's play, the actors complain that it is "unplayable" (279) and that it's "all head and no gut" (280). After the accusations, Jeremiah angrily starts playing the piano, singing and shouting the words "the son of Ayash" in Cree. The group of actors joins in, making it "a dance, a Cree rite of sacrifice" (280). It is only when they all work together that they turn Jeremiah's play into something that can be understood and felt. Gabriel teaches Jeremiah that storytelling is an act of embodiment that needs to be felt "with the tips of your fingers, your forehead, the soles of your feet, your toes, your groin." *Kiss of the Fur Queen* therefore conceptualizes testimony as a holistic process of collective and creative storytelling. Working with Gabriel and the actors on co-creating his testimony, Jeremiah experiences the relational power of story as he connects with a new, self-chosen community of artists and starts to restore his kinship ties with Gabriel. The rehearsal scene in *Kiss of the Fur Queen* suggests a process of creative co-creation of story that happens among Jeremiah, Gabriel, and the actors who grow together to build a community. This act of co-creation is reminiscent of oral storytelling when story emerges from the interaction between teller and listener. For Jeremiah, his community of actors is more important than his relationships with the audience.

The audience, however, still plays a crucial role in this particular process of testimony because, as Jeremiah points out to Gabriel, "I want my *Muskoosiuk* to understand it" (278). *Muskoosiuk* refers to the children whom Jeremiah teaches and who embody the next generation in the novel. Jeremiah here explicitly states his intention to create a situation of intergenerational witnessing and education. The fact that Jeremiah shapes

his testimony into the form of a play also gestures toward his desire to confront the public with the atrocities that were committed in residential schools. In his play, Jeremiah discloses an act of abuse by showing the figure of a Weetigo "shedding his costume at death, revealing a priest's cassock" (285). The element of disclosure, however, is not acknowledged as such by all audience members. As Jeremiah reads later in a review of his play, the image of the Weetigo-priest "comes from nowhere. And goes nowhere" (285). The review demonstrates that not all of those witnessing his play are aware of its testimonial nature. The audience is not able to reconcile testimony and the Cree custom of metaphor and does not understand that the metaphor is part of the active engagement that Indigenous storytelling asks of the audience. Or as Gabriel puts it, "You didn't say it loud enough, Jeremiah" (285). By including the image of the priest as Weetigo in his play, Jeremiah enacts what Neal McLeod refers to as the Cree way of *kiskino*, when things are "pointed to, but never completely articulated" (5). According to McLeod, "this space allows the listener or reader to arrive at his or her own understanding." Jeremiah's reimagining of testimony challenges Western understandings of testimony just as his play challenges Western theatre, as is pointed out when his script keeps getting rejection comments such as, "No conflict. It's not a play" (278). This comment indicates that readers of the script do not recognize the conflicts in Jeremiah's play and therefore do not understand its implications. Therefore, in Jeremiah's case, the (presumably non-Indigenous) reviewer and, by extension, the broader public do not know how to understand his testimony. Despite some audience members' lack of understanding, seeing his play performed still has an impact on Jeremiah, since it is only after the performance that the suppressed memory of Jeremiah's own abuse is revealed. Here, the novel itself mirrors the disclosure in "Ulysses Thunderchild" by disclosing to the reader that it was not only Gabriel who was abused in residential school.

Even though the performance of "Ulysses Thunderchild" as a collective and creative testimony helps Jeremiah to restore kinship ties, it is not a magic remedy. In fact, it is only the starting point of this process, which he continues with his second play, "Chachagathoo, the Shaman." The story of Chachagathoo is alluded to throughout the novel. Jeremiah and Gabriel grow up hearing it from their parents, who tell them that "Chachagathoo was an evil woman. Because she had *machipoowamoowin*" (90), which the narrative reveals elsewhere means "bad dream power." The novel later

shows how this image of "the wicked Chachagathoo" (196) comes from a sermon in which the reserve's priest Father Bouchard tells the community, "There was a woman here who flouted the church, who did not worship the one true God, who practiced witchcraft" (197). The two brothers later learn that their "parents' generation" was "[l]ied to and lied to and lied to" (247) about Chachagathoo, when an Anishinaabe Elder Ann-Adele Ghostrider tells them the actual story:

> [O]ne day, a man became possessed by Weetigo, the spirit who feasts on human flesh. At this time, the first priest arrived on Mistik Lake . . . The crazed man was brought to the priest, who proclaimed his soul to be possessed by Satan. But the shaman said no. When she started curing the man, when she started exorcising the Weetigo, the priest stopped her. The man died. And the priest accused the shaman of witchcraft. He had her sent to jail in Winnipeg. There, in despair, she hung herself. (245-46)[10]

Jeremiah utilizes his knowledge of this story for his second play, "Chachagathoo, the Shaman," in which he blends *âcimisowin* and *kayâs-âcimowin*.

Jeremiah's creation of "Ulysses Thunderchild" and "Chachagathoo, the Shaman" is described in a thirty-page section towards the end of the novel. It is, however, important to keep in mind that the original manuscript of the novel was about eight hundred pages long before it was edited down to the three hundred pages that were published (McKegney 153). Drafts and fragments of Highway's longer versions of the novel are available at Library and Archives Canada, and an early draft of the novel from 1995 describes Jeremiah and Gabriel's work on staging the two plays over the course of more than ninety pages. I looked at even earlier manuscripts from 1994, when Highway had not yet started working on the novel but was still hoping to have his story told in a two-part TV movie. Highway's screenplay for "Kiss of the Fur Queen" puts even more emphasis on Jeremiah and Gabriel's use of testimonial theatre as a means to renew kinship relations in the aftermath of residential school. The screenplay particularly focuses on Jeremiah's play about Chachagathoo, which in this early version is simply entitled "The Last Shaman." The screenplay suggests that "Kiss of the Fur Queen" opens and ends with the staging of this play, and it includes several rehearsal scenes that give far more insight into the play than the published novel does. Among Highway's many other drafts, I found a complete

manuscript entitled "The Last Shaman" in which Highway imagines how Jeremiah would have written and designed this play. Presumably, Highway wrote this complete version of "The Last Shaman" to make it easier for filmmakers to stage the rehearsal scenes that are included in the screenplay. As I argue in what follows, "The Last Shaman" is a crucial document for understanding the importance of Cree storytelling traditions to Jeremiah and Gabriel's conception of theatre as a site of kinship renewal.

"The Last Shaman" is set in 1860 at Brochet (which the novel reimagines as Eemanapiteepitat on Mistik Lake). It tells the story of Kichimakskwew the shaman (who takes the name Chachagathoo in the novel). In a note, Highway points out that "[a]ll dialogue is in Cree, unless otherwise indicated" (1). In 1860, the Cree community of Brochet is struggling with famine after a harsh winter during which "[t]he caribou have not come" (2). The play opens with the description of a family's fruitless attempts to hunt caribou north of the community's village. As the hunter Migisoo, his wife Cheechagee, and their three children face starvation, a Weetigo takes possession of Cheechagee. The play then focuses on the community, which welcomes Father Egenolf, a Catholic priest or "holy boss" as he likes to be called (11). Some in the community have high hopes for the priest to end the famine, having heard that one of these holy bosses "changed two trout into five hundred pickerel" (11). Kichimakskwew, the community's shaman, remains skeptical, extolling the community to "doubt. Question. Fight back. Don't give in so easily" (11). Soon after his arrival in the community, Father Egenolf starts to build a church and to teach the community's children about Catholic beliefs and practices. The play's climax unfolds as Migisoo the hunter brings his Weetigo-possessed wife back to the community, asking Kichimakskwew to perform a ritual to help her. The ritual performance requires Kichimakskwew to hold Cheechagee "firmly around the throat," which Father Egenolf views with horror, running toward the shaman yelling, "No! Get away from her!" (43). Despite Kichimakskwew's warning not to interfere with something he knows nothing about, "[t]he priest continues pulling at the Shaman, trying to break her hold on Cheechagee. In the ensuing confusion, Cheechagee turns on the priest, murderously, with her teeth at his throat." Protecting the priest, Kichimakskwew "intercepts and strikes Cheechagee across the throat," causing her death. The play then depicts the ensuing trial in a courtroom in Winnipeg, Kichimakskwew's sentencing, and her suicide in prison. The play's last scene depicts Father

Egenolf's mass in Brochet, which is drowned out by Kichimakskwew, whose spirit returns to the community to offer a warning to the priest to "[t]ake care of our young men . . . For before you know it, the seventh lifetime will be upon us all . . . And the souls of men will not die. And the caribou will be plentiful once again" (50).

When looking at Highway's unpublished playscript, it is important to keep in mind that within the world of *Kiss of the Fur Queen*, "The Last Shaman" is written by Jeremiah and staged by Jeremiah and Gabriel. Even though its narrative is set in the historical past, "The Last Shaman" interweaves the *kayâs-âcimowina* of Kichimakskwew with the life experiences of Jeremiah and Gabriel. In a note that precedes the unpublished playscript, Highway points out that

> bits and pieces of this show will resemble, visually, aurally and otherwise, elements from all other shows the Okimasis brothers have done before, as well as scenes from their "real" lives. For instance, the first set piece we see here will be a facsimile of the meadow in the northern Manitoba tundra, with its large rock in the middle, where the herd of caribou almost stampeded over Leo [Gabriel's name in the unpublished screenplay] and Jeremiah as children.

Highway's note on what the performance of "The Last Shaman" should look like in the film version of "Kiss of the Fur Queen" suggests that Jeremiah creates yet another act of testimony because he lets the play be influenced by his personal experiences. The way in which the play connects the story of the shaman to stories from Jeremiah and Gabriel's lives—e.g., the time when Jeremiah saved Gabriel from a caribou herd—is yet another instance of *aniskwâcimopicikêwin*. In *Kiss of the Fur Queen*, this aspect of Jeremiah's second play is lost because the novel was edited and shortened for publication. *Kiss of the Fur Queen* only retains fragmented references to Jeremiah's second play, and therefore readers of the novel cannot get the full experience of how this second play works towards the restoration of *wâhkôhtowin*. I argue that even though the playscript for "The Last Shaman" is not part of the published novel, it is still part of the story that Highway originally conceived. I also argue that an analysis of how Jeremiah's "The Last Shaman" works towards the restoration of *wâhkôhtowin* explains Jeremiah's turn against Catholicism and towards Cree culture at the very end of *Kiss of the Fur Queen*.

Looking at the playscript "The Last Shaman" and the note from

Highway that precedes it, I argue that the fact that Jeremiah stages the *kayâs-âcimôwin* of the shaman using imagery from his own life demonstrates how he once again uses this form of storytelling to restore relationships to his brother, the land on which he grew up, and the Cree language. As Highway's note suggests, Jeremiah's writing of the play creates an opportunity for the brothers to keep working together. In the screenplay as well as in the novel, the caribou stampede that almost tramples Gabriel to death is, tellingly, an incident in which Jeremiah is able to protect Gabriel by pulling him up onto a rock—and thereby fulfilling what he perceives as his kinship responsibilities. The image of the rock from this incident features prominently in "The Last Shaman" and can be read as Jeremiah creating a reminder for himself and Gabriel of a time in which their relationship was still characterized by *wâhkôhtowin*.

The landscape of northern Manitoba features prominently in "The Last Shaman" and the playscript suggests that Jeremiah uses the play to reconnect with his home territory. For example, the audience is taken to "the bush a distance from the village of Brochet" (22), and snowstorms and starlight are visible on stage (20). In this production, Jeremiah and Gabriel revisit memories of their home territory and thereby potentially create a feeling of connectedness. They attempt to bring their home territory to the city—even if this has to happen through the use of unnatural props such as "125 green garbage bags sewn together" to indicate a lake (13). As Highway describes it, the play makes extensive use of the Cree language, which also helps to restore the brothers' connection to place. As Cree playwright Floyd Favel explains in "Theatre of Orphans," "Language is related to place; it is our umbilical cord to our place of origin, literally and symbolically . . . It is a doorway and a window . . . Present in the immediate words are the ancestors" (9).

Through "The Last Shaman," Jeremiah testifies to the atrocities of residential schools and his and Gabriel's suffering of sexual abuse in a number of ways. Even though the play is set in a time before the community was affected by residential schools, it foreshadows residential schools in a scene in which Father Egenolf, "[l]ike the Pied Piper . . . leads the children . . . as he teaches them snippets of Gregorian chant from the mass, so that, as they progress, the children's chant changes imperceptibly from Cree to Latin" (33). The play also evokes Jeremiah's experiences in residential school in a scene in which the priest teaches the community's children with a "chart which depicts a map of heaven and hell" (34). In

Kiss of the Fur Queen, young Jeremiah learns about heaven and hell with exactly such a map (59-61). "The Last Shaman" implicitly addresses the issue of sexual abuse in a scene in which, according to the stage directions, "three children . . . finger Father Egenolf's crucifix with intense curiosity. The crucifix rests just above the priest's crotch" (27). To direct the audience's attention, a "pinspot focuses on this visual." Jeremiah also connects Father Egenolf directly to his and Gabriel's experiences of sexual abuse by adding a scene in which Father Egenolf "transmutes" into the community priest that Jeremiah and Gabriel grew up with and then into the priest from residential school who abused them (49). Thereby, Jeremiah illustrates a long line of abuse and connects his and Gabriel's experiences to this lineage. Jeremiah also addresses the transgressions of the Catholic Church through the figure of the Weetigo. Jeremiah's play depicts the community members' encounters with the Weetigo as originating from starvation. The play uses a different strategy, however, to connect the priest to the Weetigo. In several instances, the play describes the Weetigo as lurking in the background when the priest performs mass (39, 45). More explicitly, the play notes in a stage direction that when Father Egenolf performs this rite, "subliminally, it is like the Weetigo eating human flesh" (40). In short, the play explicitly represents how the Catholic Church brings practices into the community that threaten the community's health and *wâhkôhtowin*.

The reader of *Kiss of the Fur Queen* has no access to all the statements that "The Last Shaman" makes about Jeremiah's life and his attempts to reconnect while disclosing the Church's assaults. These statements are, however, crucial for understanding what happens at the end of the novel. The novel represents Jeremiah and Gabriel working together on a second play, "Chachagathoo, the Shaman." But it does not include the extensive rehearsal scenes that feature prominently in the "Kiss of the Fur Queen" screenplay. The novel mentions that the audience deems the play "so controversial that the cardinal of Toronto had snuck into the show dressed as a Rosedale matron" (295-96)—and the "The Last Shaman" playscript certainly sheds light on why Jeremiah's version is considered controversial by the church. At the end of *Kiss of the Fur Queen*, Gabriel, who suffers from AIDS, is on his deathbed in the hospital. The novel hints at the fact that Gabriel was supposed to play the community member who is possessed by a Weetigo in the production of "Chachagathoo, the Shaman." In the novel, Gabriel dreams about this role, reciting lines such as, "Haven't

you feasted on enough human flesh while we sit here with nothing but our tongues to chew on?" (299). He also conflates the Weetigo with Father Lafleur, who abused him in residential school (300). On its very last pages, the novel establishes parallels between Gabriel's death and the failed Weetigo ritual in "The Last Shaman." These parallels speak to the ways in which the Catholic Church and its practices assaulted Cree practices and beliefs—but also to how a resurgence of Cree practices can counter the harm that was done.

As in "The Last Shaman," Indigenous and Catholic worldviews clash in the hospital scene that concludes *Kiss of the Fur Queen*. Ann-Adele Ghostrider performs a sweetgrass ceremony for Gabriel. Like the shaman in the play, she performs a traditional ceremony that the situation calls for. Jeremiah and Gabriel's mother, however, brings a priest to the hospital, who is supposed to give Gabriel his last rites according to the Catholic faith. The mother and the priest's intrusion on Ann-Adele Ghostrider's ceremony parallels the intrusion of the priest on the shaman's ceremony in the play. In the playscript, one of the characters tries to pull the priest back in order to prevent him from interrupting the ritual, yet fails (42). In the hospital, Jeremiah stands up against his mother and the priest by literally blocking the door. Ann-Adele Ghostrider is able to finish her ceremony and Gabriel dies peacefully, surrounded by his family. In the playscript, the community member who is possessed by the Weetigo dies as a victim of the Weetigo after the ritual is interrupted. I argue that Jeremiah prevented Gabriel from such a destiny by ensuring that Ann-Adele Ghostrider's ceremony can be performed as yet another act of reconnection that battles the relationship-harming Weetigo. The Catholic priest's disruption of the ritual in the play can be read as a metaphor for the Church's disruption of Indigenous cultural practices through Catholicism and residential schools. However, as the ending of Highway's novel shows, it is possible to reconnect with Indigenous cultural practices. Gabriel's death therefore comes to be a statement of resurgence, demonstrating that the prophecy spoken by Kichimakskwew at the end of "The Last Shaman" will become true. Jeremiah's act of keeping the priest out of Gabriel's room is not only a rejection of Catholic beliefs. It also honours Gabriel's last wish not to have "priests anywhere near my bed" (299). In honouring Gabriel's wish, Jeremiah fulfills his kinship obligations. In conclusion, the novel once more gestures towards a restoration of relationships.

As I hope to have shown, Highway's novel addresses the role of Cree

storytelling in restoring kinship relationships in the aftermath of residential schools. From the beginning, the novel showcases the importance of storytelling for *wâhkôtowin*. It demonstrates how residential schools were designed to disrupt these relationships, and it imagines how storytelling can support the restoration of these relationships. The novel emphasizes the importance of residential school survivors telling their life stories and imagines a Cree form of testimony, grounded in Indigenous storytelling principles. Jeremiah's creative and collective testimonies braid together personal story, history, and Cree storytelling, enabling the brothers to restore their kinship ties and to vanquish the metaphorical Weetigo. By choosing the medium of the play to tell his life story, Jeremiah chooses a collective process of storytelling. Director and actors work together to bring a story to life through an interpersonal process that is similar to the collaboration between storyteller and listener in Indigenous storytelling.[11] Highway's novel demonstrates that art can be a form of testimony that is creative and truthful at the same time. At first glance, Highway's reimagining of testimony seems very different from the kind of testimonial process that occurred as part of Canada's Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), which gathered about seven thousand life stories of residential school survivors. Highway's focus on testimony as a process that is embedded in Indigenous storytelling principles and that helps to restore relationships can teach us alternative ways of listening to TRC testimonies.[12] For example, it can help us see how survivors involved their listeners and created communities while giving testimony. Jeremiah's desire to educate the audience with his testimony—to have them acknowledge its truth—evokes the TRC's emphasis on witnessing. The TRC asked everyone who was present during a testimony "to store and care for the history they witness and to share it with their own people when they return home" (24n32). Many survivors who spoke out at TRC events emphasized (like Jeremiah does in Highway's novel) that they spoke out so that their children and grandchildren could understand what they went through.

Kiss of the Fur Queen suggests that by braiding his testimony with other stories, Jeremiah enhances the meaning of his life story as this act of braiding helps him to add more depth to experiences he wants to emphasize—if the audience knows how to listen. Braiding one's own life story with other stories, the novel suggests, also enhances the relationship-establishing potential of testimony as it connects speaker and listener to additional places, additional voices. Highway (like Jeremiah), however,

braids life stories with traditional Cree oral stories and historical accounts in order to make them more specific and more grounded in place and culture. Telling one's story through other stories does not take away from the truth of testimony. Highway blends his own life story with traditional Cree oral stories and historical accounts in order to tell the truth about his experiences. Like Jeremiah, Highway creates a carefully braided novel that also functions as testimony that includes references to different Cree oral stories and that uses different genres of storytelling, such as theatre. The essence of *Kiss of the Fur Queen* has undergone many transformations and it exists in relation to other stories and texts such as "The Last Shaman" and also traditional Cree oral stories. Here, *Kiss of the Fur Queen* mirrors life itself just as all of our own life stories and identities grow in relation to those of others. Jeremiah's plays come to life through the collaboration of actors. Similarly, *Kiss of the Fur Queen* as testimony comes to life through the collaboration of the reader, who is asked both to witness and to participate through interpretation. Both Indigenous and non-Indigenous readers are invited to enter a network of story relationships. For Indigenous readers, this might spark processes of reconnection. For non-Indigenous readers, this kind of testimony is a gift that comes with the responsibility of finding a way to honour these stories.

Notes

1. For discussions of sexuality in the novel, see Belghiti, Buzny, and Scudeler. Discussions of land and urban spaces in the novel appear in Van Essen and Smith.
2. Settler scholar Sam McKegney discusses the novel's political effects through what he terms "trickster poetics." (137). He also discusses how the novel draws on a Cree mythological context (152). Settler scholar Sophie McCall discusses Highway's use of the Weetigo in relation to the politics of reconciliation.
3. My reading resonates with Métis scholar June Scudeler's thought-provoking article on the importance of *wâhkôtowin* for decolonization in the 1992 movie treatment of *Kiss of the Fur Queen*. While Scudeler focuses on how honouring *wâhkôhtowin* may foster a community's inclusion of 2LGBTQ+ people, I look at *wâhkôtowin* in the broader sense defined by Métis writer Maria Campbell as kinship relations to all of creation.
4. In 2015, the *Huffington Post* quoted Highway on the Truth and Reconciliation Commission with the following words: "You may have heard 7,000 witnesses in the process that were negative . . . But what you haven't heard are the 7,000 reports that were positive stories . . . Nine of the happiest years of my life I spent it at that school" (Ostroff). Highway's comments were picked up by those who deny the traumatic effects of residential schools. In an address to the Senate on March 7, 2017, Lynn Beyak laments that Canada ignores "the abundance of good" that came out of residential schools (2514). In her appalling speech, Beyak refers to Highway, saying, "Tomson Highway is an accomplished playwright, novelist and classical pianist. Of residential schools, Highway says this" (2514). Beyak then quotes Highway's

statement without contextualization or offering any of the numerous quotes in which Highway speaks about the negative impacts of residential schools. Tomson Highway never commented on his more than problematic statement from 2015. His brother Daniel Highway told *CBC News* in 2018, "People kind of cherry-pick what [Tomson] says . . . If Tomson were ever to tell the whole story, things would change pretty quick" (Meloney; square brackets original). In my opinion, Tomson Highway did tell "the whole story" in *Kiss of the Fur Queen*, which makes the insidiousness of the residential school system and its harmful effects abundantly clear. Those who cherry-picked Highway's comments for the purpose of denying the atrocious nature of the residential school system were quick to turn Highway's brief comments into an encompassing experience and a single man into a spokesperson for 150,000 survivors. For me, this is an important reminder for my work as a witness and literary scholar: the stories that we hear are personal perspectives that arise from specific times and contexts, and one testimony never speaks for everyone in a community—whether this community is one of residential school survivors or a specific Indigenous nation.

5. In my work with *asiniskaw ithiniwak* (Rocky Cree) communities, I learned that there can be community-specific protocols around *wâhkôtowin*. For the Rocky Cree, for example, *wâhkôtowin* entails extended kinship and adoption practices (Dumas 37). For this article, I choose to focus on Maria Campbell's description of *wâhkôtowin* because over the years, I have found it most helpful for understanding how storytelling works in Highway's novel.
6. After years of listening to Indigenous stories and engaging with Indigenous literatures, I have learned that meaningful relationships are relationships that sustain one's well-being in a holistic sense and that are ongoing lived experiences emerging from and sustained by reciprocity, accountability, kindness, and the commitment of those involved.
7. I adopt Highway's spelling of "Weetigo."
8. A thorough theorization of *âcimisowina* can be found in Cree-Métis scholar Deanna Reder's *Âcimisowin as Theoretical Practice*, which demonstrates that autobiographical stories are part of Indigenous intellectual traditions.
9. In 2014, Neal McLeod was charged with domestic violence, behaviour that is clearly contrary to the respectful relationships he often writes about. McLeod took responsibility for his actions, and I choose to include his work because of the important contribution that it makes to the study of Cree literature.
10. Highway's story of Chachagathoo draws on a historical event that occurred in Norway House in the fall of 1907. "Jack Fiddler, a shaman and leader of the Sucker clan from the upper Severn River in what is now northwestern Ontario," and his younger brother Joseph Fiddler were charged with killing "a possessed woman who had turned into the dreaded windigo" (Fiddler and Stevens vii). For *Kiss of the Fur Queen*, Highway turned the shaman into a woman.
11. The way in which Highway's novel imagines testimony as a collective and interpersonal process resonates with other creative Cree testimonies, including David Robertson's graphic novel *Sugar Falls*. The graphic novel is based on the experiences of Betty Ross, an Elder and residential school survivor from Cross Lake First Nation. Ross shared her life story with Robertson, who expresses it creatively together with Scott B. Henderson, who draws the images. *Sugar Falls* as a creative testimony that is told collectively displays certain parallels to Jeremiah's process of creating a testimonial play that is enacted collectively by actors on a stage. Cree poet and residential school survivor Louise Bernice Halfe's collection of autobiographical poems, *Burning in This Midnight Dream*, also creates a creative form of Cree

residential school testimony. Like Highway, she focuses on relationships—especially through her use of family portraits.

12. I write about Highway's novel and how it can change our perspective on TRC testimonies in detail in my dissertation, *Restorying Relationships and Performing Resurgence*.

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Dr. Melanie Braith is the Project Manager of the Six Seasons of the Asiniskaw Īthiniwak Partnership Project, and the Research Coordinator for the Centre for Research in Young People's Texts and Cultures at the University of Winnipeg. She holds a PhD in Indigenous literatures from the University of Manitoba, and her current research focuses on Indigenous oral storytelling and its contemporary manifestations and reinventions. Melanie has published work on residential school literature and her dissertation examined the ways in which an understanding of oral storytelling can change how we engage with residential school testimony as it was shared with the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. Melanie is from Germany and worked as a journalist for print, online, and TV before she came to Winnipeg for her PhD.

Walter Rafael Villanueva

The Invisible Labour of Informal Care: Parentified, Gendered, and Racialized Caregiving in David Chariandy's *Soucouyant*

Introduction: Moving Beyond the Metaphorical Valences of Dementia

I first discovered David Chariandy's *Soucouyant* at a book sale at the University of Toronto's Robarts Library many years ago. When I read the novel, I was struck by the parallels its narrative had (and continues to have) with my own experiences. Much like the nameless narrator, I too am the primary caregiver for my mother, who underwent brain surgery when I was in my late teens. Both the surgery and the social infrastructure around my mother left her disabled and unable to work. My brother, much like the narrator's, soon left my mother and me with no warning. I was provided with little guidance by doctors and found it difficult to navigate the bureaucracy of the public healthcare system and insurance companies. This story of mine and my mother's is not unique. Direct funding provided to families who need assistance with caregiving for disabled loved ones is difficult to access. "[O]f the approximately 6,000 people . . . using attendant services in Ontario," only 676 are documented as receiving support from the Direct Funding Program (Kelly 8).[1] Moreover, these figures do not account for those whose primary source of care is informal or who need help with disabilities that are not physical—because people with intellectual disabilities or mental health issues, such as my mother, are ineligible for the program. Eventually, the brain trauma my mother endured because of her surgery led to her developing vascular dementia. As with the narrator of *Soucouyant*, I found it difficult to care for my mother on my own and made provisions for her to be cared for by others when I moved away from our home in Scarborough (where the novel is coincidentally also set) to pursue a master's degree in a different city. Although I did not abandon my mother to the extent the narrator does and remained involved in her

life and visited frequently, I still felt guilty for much of the time I was away. Once I returned, however, my mother welcomed me home, and like Adele (the narrator's mother), she did not blame me for needing to leave for my own mental health. What is often left out of informal caregiving narratives is how caring for another is only possible if you can care for yourself first. In his own account of caring for his mother with Alzheimer's disease, Canadian writer Mike Barnes shares the most illuminating advice he ever received: "You won't be of much help to her if you're dead" (14). The labour of informal caregiving is typically invisible, but it should not be. Novels like *Soucouyant* reveal the suffering endured by both caregivers and those they care for in a public healthcare system that makes it too easy for young carers and their family members to slip through the cracks. Chariandy himself states in an interview with *Canadian Living* that he would like discussions of his novel to include "the psychological toll of dementia on families and caregivers."[2] This essay's goal is to take part in that conversation.

Most scholarship on David Chariandy's novel *Soucouyant* focuses on how the dementia experienced by Adele, the protagonist's mother, represents the preservation of "cultural memory" and the perniciousness of "historical trauma" (Coleman 55; DeFalco 139; Delisle 1; Hellegers and Narayanan 82; Josephs 151). However, by metaphorizing Adele's mental condition, these critics risk treating her dementia as mostly figurative, and they thus elide a more detailed discussion of the literal ramifications of her dementia diagnosis. The work of these scholars is valuable, and they have already done a wonderful and thorough job of exploring the symbolic dimensions of Adele's dementia. My paper's main intervention, then, is to approach Adele's disorder as a literal medical condition and to explore how her caregiving needs affect not only her but also those around her. As Amelia DeFalco notes, the Canadian "national healthcare system remains invisible, unhelpful, unavailable" in the novel (144), and Adele's family and friends must therefore (to varying degrees) provide her with private, informal caregiving.

Scholars including DeFalco remark that informal caregiving is framed through a limited and unrealistic lens within the public imagination; self-help guides for caregivers often sublimate "the more unsettling aspects of care relations" (DeFalco 24). The image of the "saintly caregiver, who goes beyond any expected reaction to illness and becomes a superhuman advocate and nurse," is also pervasive in mainstream media (Levine

and Kuerbis 118). *Soucouyant*, however, subverts traditional caregiving narratives by depicting the difficult and typically invisible labour of informal caregiving undertaken by the families and friends of those who are ill or otherwise disabled. The novel provides a depiction of informal caregiving that is multi-faceted and asks us to question why it is exactly that we place the burden of care on those who are not equipped to handle such pressures instead of putting the onus on the government and the public healthcare system to take care of its most vulnerable members. I will analyze how caregiving in the novel is inflected by age, gender, race, and mental disability. Although the characters are ultimately unable to provide suitable "proper" caregiving, the novel reveals how their limitations are symptomatic of a wider systemic issue within the Canadian healthcare system. Because these characters are unable to access proper public healthcare resources within the community, the burden of care falls upon these characters: the protagonist and his brother, who become *parentified* children (as in they essentially act as parents for their mother); Meera and Mrs. Christopher, who assume but also destabilize the archetypal role of the Black female caregiver (or "mammy") who goes underacknowledged and unpaid; and the disabled Adele herself. My goal is not to demonize or blame Adele or catastrophize her dementia diagnosis but rather to elucidate the ways in which the novel nuances how we think of informal caregiving. Aging studies scholar Larry Polivka notes that although policymakers often offer "pious expressions of appreciation . . . for the sacrifices caregivers make to keep the system afloat," governmental support for these caregivers remains inadequate (557). By showcasing the struggles of informal caregivers, Chariandy's text combats this dangerous and empty political rhetoric.

My analysis of care relations in *Soucouyant* is a reading that can only be accomplished by traversing the metaphorical and symbolic dimension scholars have thus far ascribed to Adele's mental disability.[3] Care relations motivate much of the plot, yet analyses about caregiving in the novel are rare, with Amelia DeFalco (2016) and Sally Chivers (2019) producing what are perhaps the only two works broaching this topic. Metaphorical understandings of dementia in *Soucouyant* remain nonetheless useful and do not need to be entirely discarded. I propose the opposite: we must push these readings even further by returning to and putting them in conversation with the literal.[4] Throughout my essay, I argue that the bruises that appear on various characters in the novel can be figuratively attributed

to the vampiric-like figure from Caribbean folklore to which the book owes its name. Marlene Goldman writes that the narrator is "haunted not by his mother's illness" but is instead stalked by the soucouyant, which assumes the "dreadful otherness" usually reserved for the disease in Canadian dementia narratives (324). My analysis of the novel elaborates upon Goldman's assertion by arguing that the "true" soucouyant is in actuality the draining process of informal caregiving that is instigated by a lack of access to proper public healthcare resources. By using relevant research from the disciplines of disability studies and the health humanities and acknowledging the literal ramifications of having a mental disability, we can foster a deeper understanding of how these disabilities operate within literary texts. Although this paper focuses specifically on dementia and informal caregiving in *Soucouyant*, my intention is to create and model a basic methodology that can (with text-specific modifications) be applied to other works in which mental disability features prominently.

All Work and No Play: Parentified Caregiving in Soucouyant

For the purposes of this paper, I am primarily interested in what DeFalco terms "para-ordinary" care, which she defines as "experiences of care that often catch participants off guard," such as "the demands made by a loved one's sudden illness or impairment" (7), which we see in *Soucouyant* with the rapid and early onset of Adele's presenile dementia. DeFalco explains that "[s]uch situations are by no means extraordinary—they are common, even ordinary—yet the demands are high and often unpredictable, drawing attention to the ethical difficulty of responding to another's needs." This sort of para-ordinary care, DeFalco stresses, occurs largely "outside the healthcare system." Although informal caregivers (the focus of this paper) are usually family members, the National Family Caregivers Association "advocates for the term *family caregiver* to be defined broadly to include friends and neighbors who assist with care by providing respite, running errands, or a whole host of other tasks that support the caregiver and care recipient" (Crews and Talley 3). Seeing as it is not just Adele's son who occupies the role of caregiver but also Meera and Mrs. Christopher (who are not technically family members), this definition is the one I use when speaking of informal caregiving in the novel. As Diemut Elisabet Bubeck notes, "'[c]aring' can refer to an emotional state or to an activity or to a combination of the two" (127). In her theory of care, however, she posits a definition of care as an activity:

"Caring for is the meeting of the needs of one person by another person where face-to-face interaction between carer and cared for is a crucial element of the overall activity and where the need is of such a nature that it cannot possibly be met by the person in need herself" (129).[5] Both DeFalco and Bubeck argue that the labour of care and caregiving have been historically gendered female,[6] a fact that I address in my discussion of the caregiving provided by Meera and Mrs. Christopher.

Caregiving, particularly when it is undertaken by children of ill or disabled parents, can be further divided into two categories: instrumental and emotional caregiving (Chase, "Parentification" 5). Gregory J. Jurkovic explains that "[i]nstrumental role assignments require children to assume responsibility for concrete functional tasks that are necessary for the physical maintenance and support of the family, such as child care, grocery shopping, cooking, nursing an ill or disabled parent, and earning income" (8). In emotional or "expressive" caregiving, "youngsters" must "minister to the family's socioemotional needs through such activities as protecting family members, serving as a confidant, companion, or matelike figure, mediating family conflicts, and providing support, nurturance, and comfort" (8-9). Jurkovic is quick to acknowledge, however, that there is considerable overlap between the two roles: "Instrumental behaviors are not without a psychological-expressive component, just as expressive caretaking activities may have instrumental properties" (9). Accordingly, children often assume both instrumental and emotional roles in caregiving. These young people may become "parentified children" in the sense that they are "parents to their parents, and fulfill this role at the expense of their own developmentally appropriate needs and pursuits" (Chase, Preface x-xi).

The role of young carers in Canada is one that has recently received some attention in scholarship produced by sociologists and social workers. In a 2012 document published by the Vanier Institute of the Family, professors at the School of Social Work at the University of British Columbia explain that in "cases where adults are unable to assume their caregiving role, young family members may be required to take on a range and depth of care-related responsibilities well before they might be otherwise expected or prepared to on a regular basis. These young people are *young carers*" (Charles, Stainton, and Marshall 5). What "differentiates young carers from other young people who contribute to the well-being of their families is that they take on a *primary* caregiving role" (6). Until recently, young carers "have been largely absent from the discussion of

family caregiving in Canada" (5). Although the term "young carer" tends to apply to youth eighteen years old or younger (5n1), the "contributions that young carers make to their families typically don't stop once they reach the age of majority. Rather, most go from being a young carer to being a young adult carer overnight, without any change to their roles or responsibilities" (8). In countries such as Australia, a young carer is thus defined "as anyone in a family caregiving role up to the age of 25 years." I agree with this assessment and suggest we can use this research on parentified children and young carers to better understand the caregiving role undertaken by the protagonist and his brother in *Soucouyant* and the circumstances that lead to these characters assuming this role.

In *Soucouyant*, the unnamed protagonist and his brother become parentified caregivers because their mother is unable to offer them reciprocal support as her condition starts to worsen. "Long ago, she began to forget," the protagonist says, explaining how he and his brother "were the first to notice" (Chariandy 12). This realization comes as little surprise because, as with other parentified children, they possess "uncanny sensibilities" and "are attuned to their parents' moods, wishes, vulnerabilities, and nuances" (Chase, "Preface x). The narrator confirms this parentification when he reveals that he and his brother "were young children" when Adele first began to exhibit symptoms of dementia, and that they were thus "naturally alert for the smallest signs of adult weakness" (12). Although they initially take advantage of their mother's receding memory by eating food when they are not allowed, the protagonist and his brother begin to assume an emotional caregiving role. When his mother accidentally prepares his father's coffee with salt instead of sugar, the narrator's brother mediates a potential family conflict by falsely asserting that it is April Fool's Day, which Adele confirms as her justification, and her husband accepts this reasoning (14-15). Instead of Adele providing her child with comfort and reassurance as a parent should, it is the narrator and his brother who must reassure her by justifying her actions. Accordingly, they are providing her with emotional support. Although this act is not in itself unhealthy, it becomes so because Adele cannot reciprocate by abating their fears. When she questions the narrator about his age and name, he tells her, "Mother . . . I wish . . . I mean, I'm scared sometimes, Mother" (19). His palpable fear affirms that there is an imbalance in their relationship. Nancy D. Chase explains that "[r]esponsiveness to parental need is not inherently problematic" ("Parentification" 4), but it becomes

an issue "when there is a lack of acknowledgement and reciprocity between adults and children in terms of the nurturance exchanged" (5). Adele, who (unconvincingly) excuses her own baffling questions to the narrator by claiming she wants to hear her son "say [his name] *properly*" (19), cannot return the comfort he provides her. The emotional caregiving undertaken by the narrator is perhaps best exemplified in the scene at the buffet. During the week of his fourteenth birthday, the narrator's family visits a restaurant, but Adele disappears when the others are collecting their food at the buffet. When they eventually find her, she is sitting in a corner with "streaked" makeup and her hands "clasped around her knees" (20). The narrator waits for his now sixteen-year-old brother "to say something reassuring, something appropriate, but he was quiet," and so the narrator looks to his father to act but he, too, remains "quiet and still." The responsibility thus falls on the protagonist, barely a teenager, to reach out to his mother, taking her hand. This tactile stimulation reassures her and, although it takes a while, "she smiled" and later tells the protagonist, "I knew you would never leave me." It is at this point that the fourteen-year-old narrator assumes the role of his mother's primary caregiver, even lobbying his father to allow his mother to see more doctors, a request the patriarch denies, claiming, "She gone far beyond the help of men, boy" (22).

Of course, we must consider the institutional factors that lead to a fourteen-year-old child and later young adult assuming the primary emotional caregiving role for his mother. While it would perhaps be easy to blame Adele's husband or even Adele herself for ignoring the protagonist's plea to seek medical help, the "interpersonal dynamics that arise among individuals with disability and their caregivers are sometimes more accurately attributed to failings in larger system supports rather than to the disability, per se" (McDaniel and Pisani 12). The unnamed protagonist and his brother become caregivers largely out of necessity because the public healthcare system does not provide them with adequate support. The narrator explains that they visited "a downtown medical specialist" who diagnosed Adele with dementia but "was puzzled by the many unusual features of Mother's case" (37). The doctor is struck by how "early the symptoms had appeared, and how slowly and unevenly they had developed." However, because Adele and Roger (her husband) are reluctant to "agree to any more tests," the doctor ends "the session by politely stating that . . . there was very little that he could do," before "handing us some pamphlets." The Canadian public healthcare system fails Adele and her

family. While it is true there is no cure for dementia or Alzheimer's (and indeed the condition was less understood in the 1980s, when the novel is set, than it is even now), the doctor does not suggest any possible treatment or medication, offer a prognosis, or even refer Adele and her family to the Alzheimer's Society of Canada or the Alzheimer's Association of Canada, which had both been established by 1980. Adele is well within her rights to refuse to submit to further tests, but surely the doctor could do more than offer pamphlets (that Roger promptly throws away). Moreover, the rationale behind Adele and Roger's declining of further testing is that they "were suspicious about the diagnostic tests which always seemed to presume meanings and circumstances which were never wholly familiar to them in the first place" (39). Adele and Roger are Caribbean-born immigrants, and their reservations towards state-supported healthcare systems are understandable. Sami Schalk contends that "people of color and the poor are more likely to have experiences on the borders or outside of able-bodiedness and able-mindedness due to violence and failures of society to provide access to affordable, quality insurance, housing, and medical care" (10). This point is further echoed by Therí Alyce Pickens, who writes that there is a "historical distrust between medical personnel and Black communities" (51), and by Christina Sharpe, who explains that "medical and other professionals treat Black patients differently: often they don't listen to the concerns of patients and their families; they ration palliative medicine, or deny them access to it altogether" (10).[7] The field of psychiatry has a history of oppressing Black people. Psychiatrists invented diagnoses such as *drapetomania*—"a mental illness causing Black slaves to run away" (Pickens 8). "In the 1960s and 1970s," they invented "protest psychosis" to justify the subjugation, incarceration, and institutionalization of Black people (Clare 114). The reverberation of these racist and dehumanizing medical practices continues to be felt today and provides a contextual backdrop that explains why Adele is hesitant to accept help from state-supported systems of care. The brief interaction with the doctor reveals little was done to lessen the cultural gulf between the doctor and Adele and Roger, and the healthcare system is never mentioned again in the novel. Adele is essentially abandoned by public healthcare institutions, which happens too often with marginalized populations and people in Black communities especially.

Moreover, Adele's understanding of her own condition is influenced by the mythology of the soucouyant in Caribbean culture.[8] The story

Adele tells her son about the traumatic experience of seeing such a creature appears in fragments throughout the novel. In an interview with Kat Tancock, Chariandy says "the meaning of this event or story is only revealed gradually and perhaps never with absolute clarity." Picking up on this point, Kit Dobson suggests in another interview with Chariandy that "near the end of the book, you shift towards what we might call a more official tone or discourse of history, although perhaps with anxiety and a sense of irony" (812). We learn the soucouyant Adele saw when she was a child was in fact her mother, whom Adele accidentally set on fire after a soldier emptied a wash bucket on them "filled with oil and tar and solvents" (192). Goldman argues that "the trauma associated with this event contributes to Adele's dementing illness" (326). From a socio-historical perspective, Goldman also observes how Adele's "illness was partly instigated and certainly exacerbated by the traumatic dispersal of native Trinidadians during the Second World War and the subsequent scattering of these peoples across North America" (324). Indeed, Adele uses this encounter with the supposed soucouyant as a way to comprehend her condition through a culturally specific lens (in this case, one steeped in Caribbean folklore). This folkloric explanation, however, is no less accurate than "official" historical or medical framing because even these two lenses rely on narrative construction. Diagnosis is, according to critical diagnosis scholar Annemarie Goldstein Jutel, "a narrative in and of itself . . . a story that links in a series of facts or phenomena, and explains their relationship" (163). While often couched in the language of "truth," diagnosis rests as much on interpretation as fiction. I am *not* suggesting that medical diagnoses are not "real" but instead that they are useful precisely because of the "sense-making" (to use Jutel's term) they provide both doctors and patients. In the same vein, Adele's encounter with the alleged soucouyant allows her to grapple with her experience with dementia.

The healthcare system's fleeting appearance in *Soucouyant* does not mean the failings of Canada's existing healthcare infrastructure are not among the novel's primary concerns because the virtual absence of proper governmental support serves as the catalyst for the entire narrative. Adele is even further neglected by other institutional organizations ostensibly designed to protect her. Several years later, when Adele wanders off and her disappearance is brought to the attention of the police, the narrator explains to the officer that Adele "has presenile or early-onset dementia" (65). The officer who arrives writes this information in his notepad, but

nothing comes of it. The officer states that he must keep records "[s]o we can know. So we can help." But help whom exactly? Certainly not Adele, the one with the medical condition, but rather those in the predominantly white neighbourhood, who the policeman says have been making "complaints" (65). In effect, Adele is failed by the institutions around her that are meant to ensure her health and safety. As a result, the responsibility falls onto her family to provide her with informal care.

The situation only becomes worse for the protagonist and his brother when their father dies in a workplace accident, and the familial caregiving relationship accordingly becomes more complex. His brother takes on "a new role as the working man of the family" (27). Although he is now eighteen, he is still a young carer under the definition I previously provided because he is under the age of twenty-five. Unlike the protagonist, who provides emotional caregiving, his brother assumes an instrumental (as opposed to emotional) caregiving role by providing the household income (since by this point Adele is incapable of working herself). After Adele fails to recognize her older son one evening, he abandons both her and his brother (28). However, Meera, who cares for Adele once the narrator leaves too, later reveals to the protagonist that his brother returned several times during the narrator's two-year absence. She describes how he would visit and "bring crumpled bills of money" (168) even though his "jeans and sweater had holes, and he smelled" (169). The three of them "ate dinner together," and Meera noticed "[h]e was famished." Nonetheless, Adele "acted as if this happened every evening. As if he was still living at home"; she would tell him "to sit up, and he immediately did." For a time, he would continue to bring "the same crumpled bills of money." Meera tells the narrator that his brother "was trying his best in circumstances neither of us had chosen" and that she "needed to believe that a belated gesture could matter, if only a little" (169). The brother, having abandoned Adele years before, returns intermittently and continues to fulfill (to a much lesser degree) his instrumental caregiving role by offering Adele money even though it appears that he is now homeless. But the dynamic between him and his mother has changed. By not acknowledging that their having a meal together is no longer a regular occurrence, she is reciprocating his (however minute) instrumental care by providing him with emotional care. She is offering him a sense of normalcy now lacking in his life. The relationship between Adele and her sons reflects the real-life struggles young carers often experience and reveals how the pressures that come

with informal caregiving can become too demanding. However, by depicting how Adele herself is sometimes still capable of offering her own form of care, the novel showcases how caregiving relationships can at times be rewarding despite being complicated and onerous. I want to emphasize the importance of this last point because it is crucial to understand that although informal caregiving can be difficult work, it can nonetheless lead to moments of joy and connection, as we see here in this scene between Adele and her older son.[9]

These moments of reprieve are brief, however, as the caregiving role taken on by Adele's family becomes overwhelmingly burdensome, especially for the protagonist. Echoing other critics, Jennifer Bowering Delisle argues that "Adele herself is at times a kind of soucouyant, a strange and terrifying creature . . . a kind of monster, a distortion of the woman she once was" (6). Giselle Liza Anatol similarly infers that Adele comes to embody the traits that define the soucouyant (197). Although these readings are compelling, I am hesitant to indulge them because they engage in a literal (although unintentional) demonization of Adele by ascribing to her a set of vampiric traits that implicitly parallel the symptoms of her diagnosis. In her analysis of Chariandy's novel, Sally Chivers discusses how popular media abounds in characterizations of aging and dementia as a "monster under the bed" (108). The mythological figure of the soucouyant has a penchant for leaving bruises upon her victims (Alonso 16). It is thus tempting to read the bruises that "mark the characters Adele cares for" (Chivers 116)—and also, I would add, those who care for her—as being directly caused by Adele, who is figuratively acting as a soucouyant. I am more swayed, however, by the argument Chivers offers in response to these readings. Alongside other possible interpretations, Chivers observes how the bruises also "signal an encounter with the soucouyant who haunts Scarborough" and imply the "fashioning of care relationships" (116). Building off Chivers' argument, I would like to assert that the soucouyant that haunts Scarborough is the process of informal caregiving, which leaves its bruises on those embroiled in precarious care relationships.

Chivers notes that the protagonist and his brother have mysterious bruises that connect them to their mother (116). However, these bruises do not simply fade once the brothers have been "freed" of Adele; the day of Adele's funeral, the protagonist awakes with a "mysterious bruise on my forehead" (Chariandy 141), which suggests his exhaustion from caring for Adele continues to affect him even after her passing. In many ways, it

is the protagonist himself and *not* Adele who is transformed into a kind of soucouyant. In a heated discussion with the narrator, Meera remarks, "Do you realize that you're eternally sad? . . . Do you know what it's like to be around someone who's eternally sad? It drains you. It sucks your life" (119). Meera reveals here that it is the narrator, and not his mother, who exhibits the vampiric traits of the soucouyant. His self-described "melancholy" (194) drains those in the household, including Meera and his mother. This encounter shows that the protagonist, much like his brother, is not equipped to adequately care for Adele and that his relationship with both his mother and Meera becomes strained as a result. But it is important to acknowledge that Meera's mediation is what occasionally restores a semblance of balance to the household, as we see when she has dinner with Adele and her eldest son. Meera, who assumes the role of Adele's primary caregiver for a time, is thus the focus of the next section of my paper.

Women's Work: Caregiving as "Feminine"

Care and, by extension, caregiving have been historically gendered female. DeFalco explains that although "ethics of care philosophers as far back as Nel Noddings and Carol Gilligan have taken pains to stress care as a model for ethical relations that can, and should be adopted by men and women alike, actual care is performed primarily women" (15). Thus, no study of caregiving (including my own) can ignore "the political dimension" of how caregiving largely remains seen as "women's work" (DeFalco 17). Bubeck observes that "[c]aring as an activity, disposition, and attitude forms a central part of probably all cultural conceptions of femininity and is virtually absent from, or even incompatible with, conceptions of masculinity" (160). John E. Crews and Ronda C. Talley claim that "women—mothers, wives, and daughters—provide the bulk of care" in informal caregiving relationships, although Crews and Talley also admit that the gendered division depends largely on specific family dynamics and cannot be overly generalized (4). Yet, as Bubeck asserts, there is indeed a difference in what we perceive to be care relegated to women and care relegated to men:

> Now there is a sense of caring that applies specifically to men, namely that of "providing for." Traditionally, men are caring husbands and fathers if they are reliable breadwinners . . . Correspondingly, a caring son would not be expected to care for his frail parent himself, but rather to provide the material

> resources to pay for care if needed, i.e. if his sister or wife did not agree to, or could not do, the actual caring herself. (162)

Based on Bubeck's formulation, certain forms of instrumental caregiving are coded as "masculine," such as the narrator's brother in *Soucouyant* finding employment and contributing the bulk of the family's household income (at least initially). Other forms of caregiving, then, such as the emotional caregiving provided by the protagonist, are gendered "feminine." However, even the narrator himself absconds these "feminine" duties when he leaves his mother and makes financial provisions on her behalf:

> Then my own leaving. I wouldn't just leave her, of course, I'd first alert all of the crucial "people at the bank and the phone and cable companies. I'd arrange for monthly withdrawals from Father's insurance for necessities. I'd contact social services as well as Mother's friend, Mrs. Christopher. I'd make all sorts of provisions for my departure" (Chariandy 28-29).

Overwhelmed by having to provide physical and emotional care for his mother on his own, he shirks this responsibility and leaves her after he contacts "crucial people" and makes "financial provisions," therefore at least ensuring his "masculine" caregiving continues remotely. Yet, once the narrator returns, he makes the effort to engage in more "feminine" aspects of caregiving, such as bathing his mother (83), cooking (11), and completing other housework Meera delegates to him (53). By depicting the narrator taking on these caregiving tasks, the text signals his newfound commitment to his mother.

Meera's intervention affords the protagonist and his brother the luxury of choosing when to return home and begin caring for their mother again. The narrator (and, by extension, likely the reader) assumes Meera is Adele's nurse (10). We cannot exactly fault him for believing this stranger is a nurse specializing in "palliative care" (55) because, by his own admission, he *did* notify social services he was leaving. Strikingly, however, there is no mention of social services elsewhere in the novel; instead, the reader can only assume Adele has somehow (but not surprisingly) fallen through the cracks of the system, which has made it possible for a complete stranger to move in with her under the guise of being her nurse. Nonetheless, Meera is the one who has been caring for Adele in the protagonist's absence, and when he discovers she is "not a qualified nurse at all" (124), she angrily retorts, "I never once said I was a nurse. That was you. Your own convenient belief. Your own guilty story" (125). Meera is correct, but she

is also using Adele to assuage her guilt. When the narrator abdicated his "feminine" role as caregiver for his mother, he assumed she would be cared for by the public healthcare system. But this presumption was obviously incorrect; the responsibility has instead fallen once more to an informal caregiver, Meera, whom we discover is a former neighbour who once cruelly prank-called Adele and lied about how Adele's entire family were victims of a horrific accident.

But why is it Meera—and not any of her schoolmates who also bullied Adele—who must assume the role of de facto caregiver for her? In her important chapter on caregiving in Chariandy's novel, DeFalco offers the following as a potential answer to this question:

> Meera's care suggests an awakening to responsibility, to the relational identity she strove to disavow with prank phone calls and cruel jokes. Despite having a mother with the same ethnic background as Adele, or rather because of this similarity, Meera studiously avoided contact with the narrator and his brother in an attempt to avoid the same ostracism they suffered from their classmates. Indeed, to avoid victimization Meera became the victimizer, mocking the narrator and his family. (144)

Consequently, in a scene that parallels her prank call, Meera phones Adele again. After Adele reveals on the phone that she is "feeling a little bit lonely," Meera suggests a visit, even though Adele does not recognize to whom she is speaking (Chariandy 168). Examining this scene in more detail, it is possible to push further DeFalco's claim that Meera's decision to care for Adele serves as some sort of "awakening to responsibility." Meera primarily decides to care for Adele *out of guilt*—although Meera's sense of responsibility also plays an important role. The morning after she prank-calls Adele, Meera sees "the bruises that were caused when she had pressed the receiver of that phone so unforgivingly against herself," and she begins to weep "for what seemed to be the first time in her life" (166). The bruises symbolize how the pain she causes Adele also causes *her* pain, leaving an indelible impression on her, both physically and emotionally. Like the protagonist and his brother, Meera is literally "marked" by her relationship with Adele.

Notably, Meera also possesses a birthmark that becomes more prominent when she becomes Adele's caregiver. This birthmark, which "looks a bit like one of those symbols on a weather map" (34), implies that Meera has an inherent affinity for Adele. In fact, this "mark on her

neck" (10) is one of the first physical attributes the narrator notices when he returns home and discovers Meera has been caring for his mother. Initially, Meera attempts to cover her birthmark with her hand, suggesting she longs to hide her connection to Adele. This attempt to conceal her physical link to Adele is similar to how, years before, she attempted to reject all association with Adele's family. Moreover, the fact that she has a birthmark and not a temporary bruise reveals that her connection to Adele is innate. Rather than bind the protagonist and Meera together, however, their shared experience of caring for Adele initially serves to drive them apart. I have already explored how informal care is like a soucouyant in that it drains those enmeshed in such relationships. During a moment of tension, the narrator describes Meera to himself as an "inscrutable bitch with a stupid smear of a birthmark" before asserting, "I know these sorts of things [about Adele] . . . because I've lived with her for a lifetime . . . she's not just some goddamned patient of yours, she's my *mother*!" (82). The narrator's need to attest to his understanding of Adele betrays his own insecurity over having abandoned her, suggesting he longs to bury the fact that he is and has been an imperfect caregiver. But as I explained, Meera is similarly flawed. In part, she decides to become Adele's caregiver to atone for her past behaviour and to ease her conscience, which are the same reasons why the narrator returns after abandoning his mother for years. I am not making a value judgment here. This novel appropriately depicts how caregivers are not always "saintly" (Levine and Kuerbis 118) and altruistic in their motivations, which is merely a fact of life. Adele is *not* "officially" Meera's responsibility, although it is laudable she cares for her at all. The text's intimation that Meera has any sort of responsibility to Adele is due in part to an apparent solidarity spurred by their shared gender and race, a connection displayed both figuratively and literally on Meera's skin. Although I have suggested that Meera and the narrator are motivated partly by guilt, I want to clearly state that DeFalco's argument about an "awakening to responsibility" still stands. It is not altogether uncommon, as Pickens emphasizes, for disability to "be taken care of within [Black] families or local enclaves" because of the discrimination Black people have faced from the medical-industrial complex (51). Building on Pickens' point, then, we must remain critical of the systems in place that result in informal caregiving being the "norm" in Black communities while at the same time acknowledging that racialized forms of care are no less legitimate than "formal" alternatives, especially when these latter include "state-imposed

regimes of surveillance" (Sharpe 20) and violence towards Black people that are "carried out under the rubric of care" (139n28).

Race, Mental Disability, and the Politics of Care: The "Mammy" Figure and Disabled Caregiving

The "mammy" archetype is pernicious and pervasive. She is an enslaved Black woman who is the "maid of all work, caring for the children, washing, ironing, cooking, cleaning" (Parkhurst 351). Although the "mammy" is typically associated with the southern United States, this figure was also dominant in Canadian advertising during the early twentieth century (Kinahan 188) and still exists in contemporary Canadian popular culture and media (Nelson 66). Interpretations of the "mammy" by Black Canadian writers (including Chariandy) are also informed by the experiences of Black women from the British Caribbean who immigrated to Canada in the 1950s and 1960s through the Domestic Worker Scheme (Beckford 122-23).[10] Chariandy's novel rebukes this stereotype in its depiction of Meera and Mrs. Christopher, both of whom are Black caregivers. The former, as I have discussed, has decidedly complex motivations and remains an active agent in her desire to care for Adele (rather than having this responsibility forced upon her).
Mrs. Christopher, moreover, becomes an informal caregiver for Adele once the narrator notifies Mrs. Christopher of his decision to leave Adele, but Mrs. Christopher ultimately demands recognition in the form of payment once Adele dies. When Mrs. Christopher visits Adele for the first time since the narrator's return, she enters with her own key, has a sustained conversation with Adele, and is clearly familiar with Meera (Chariandy 86-87), all of which suggests she has been a frequent presence in Adele's life while the narrator has been gone. After Adele's death, the narrator quickly sells the house for $50,000 and offers $10,000 to Mrs. Christopher because she has spent two years caring for Adele (147). He is stunned, however, when she tells him, "It not enough . . . For *me*, I talking. It not enough for *me*." She has been keeping meticulous track of the wages she should have earned as a domestic worker, ultimately totalling somewhere between $100,344.10 and $345,033.48 (148). The narrator is infuriated by her reaction and angrily says, "For god's sake, she was your *friend*!" She responds, "That not at all the point. You check the math yourself. Is all right and proper." The narrator thinks to himself, "I don't know what angers me the most, the demand itself or the fact that I expected gratitude, just

simple gratitude, from this woman" (148), but he furiously and reluctantly writes her a cheque for the entire proceeds of the house (150). The novel rejects the "mammy" archetype by having Mrs. Christopher (rightfully) request remuneration for the informal caregiving she has been providing Adele (caregiving, I might add, he specifically asked of her when he left). Regardless of whether she was Adele's friend or not, a mere "thanks" (which the narrator later sarcastically offers once he has paid her) is not enough. This scene functions as a moment of empowerment for Mrs. Christopher, who advocates for the value of her labour. Invisible caregiving is arduous work, and the math Mrs. Christopher shows the narrator reveals it has a monetary value that is almost never reimbursed by the government.

The "mammy" archetype is also further nuanced by Adele herself taking on an informal caregiving role for Bohdan, an autistic child of Eastern European descent. At Adele's funeral, Bohdan's mother tells the narrator that Adele often cared for him because "I was working all the time" and that Adele "never take any money for this" (140). After stating that Adele "was a lesson to us all," Bohdan's mother ponders, "Imagine everyone house, everyone community and nation so open." However, the idea that Adele is capable of caring for anyone else, much less a child, runs counter to the narrator's earlier revelation that she "steadily lost jobs" because her dementia gradually impeded her from properly caring for children (13). We have already learned Adele cannot be a responsible enough caregiver even though she appears to have assumed this role for Bohdan. Although Adele embodies the characteristics of the "mammy" figure in the sense that she is a Black woman who cares for a white child out of the apparent goodness of her heart, the novel invites us to question her suitability for this role because Adele is an imperfect caregiver. How is it, then, that the responsibility of caring for any child at all is thrust upon her? [11]

Whereas the novel depicts Adele and Meera sharing a connection based on their gender and race, it implies Bohdan and Adele share a connection based on the exclusion they face as a result of their struggles with mental disability. Bohdan's mother reveals that although "some children are so cruel" to Bohdan and tease him because he is autistic, Adele never passed any judgment (139). Their bond is apparent in their idiosyncratic use of the word "eyestache." The protagonist details how Bohdan traces "my eyebrows . . . with his thumb" and how he describes

them as an "eyestache" (143-144). This moment mirrors an earlier scene in the novel in which Adele performs a similar action and also describes the protagonist's eyebrows with the word "eyestache" (92). We know this word is a construction of Adele's because Meera (who never speaks with Bohdan directly) also uses it at the end of the novel (196). This word signals the connection Adele has with Meera but also the special bond—as Bohdan's mother attests—Adele had with Bohdan. In her conversation with the protagonist, Bohdan's mother posits a utopian vision in which all those with mental disabilities are able to care for each other. However, it is the government and the healthcare system that should help provide adequate patient-centred care for those who are disabled and lack the financial means to pay for private care if needed.

Regardless, it is not surprising for racialized people living with disabilities (such as Adele) to eschew state-supported care because, as disability justice advocate Leah Lakshmi Piepzna-Samarasinha passionately attests, "the state was built on racist, colonialist ableism and will not save us, because it was created to kill us" (15). Care collectives comprised of disabled people and their loved ones are able to thrive. As Piepzna-Samarasinha acknowledges, however, "'community' is not a magic unicorn, a one-stop shop that always helps us" (23). Moreover, "there aren't a million collectives for low-income Black and brown autistic, physically disabled, or chronically ill people in Toronto" (46).[12] This last point is particularly relevant to Adele, who lacks access to this kind of community because the area in which she lives is largely white and non-disabled. Thus, her relationship with Bohdan gestures towards what could be accomplished if Adele were able to access these community-based supports, although she is ultimately unable to make use of this form of interdependent care.[13]

Conclusion: Towards a Better Understanding of Informal Caregiving

I would like to conclude this essay by returning to the story I shared in my introduction. As a non-Black racialized person who both cares for a mother with a disability and has a disability of my own, I found David Chariandy's novel to be a gift that has helped me grapple with my own experiences with informal caregiving. *Soucouyant* reveals the gaps in public policy and law by showcasing how marginalized communities must rely on each other just to *survive*. The government and the public healthcare system have shirked their responsibility of ensuring and tending to the well-being of the population; pressure should be placed on those in powerful positions

in the government to create changes in policy and law that would lead to better supports for minoritized communities, including people of colour and people with disabilities. Moreover, the forms of informal care that arise among these groups must be acknowledged and legitimized as appropriate alternatives but should not be seen as the only solution. *Soucouyant* offers us a glimpse into the process of informal caregiving that is messy and authentic and, perhaps most importantly, challenges us to rethink how we conceptualize care.

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Notes

1. The full name of this program is the Self-Managed Attendant Services in Ontario Direct Funding Program. My sincerest thanks to Professor Anne McGuire for suggesting I read Christine Kelly's *Disability Politics and Care*.
2. Many thanks to peer-review reader A for drawing my attention to this interview.
3. In this paper, I consider Adele's dementia a mental disability. Within disability studies, there has been a wide-ranging debate about how to label and categorize impairments and disabilities that are mental rather than physical and how to better incorporate these conditions into the disability rights movement. I agree with Margaret Price, who suggests that the label "mental disability" is productive and inclusive because "this term can include not only madness, but also cognitive and intellectual dis/abilities of various kinds," as well as "'physical' illnesses accompanied by mental effects" (19). Price acknowledges Cynthia Lewiecki-Wilson's essay "Rethinking Rhetoric through Mental Disabilities" as important to her formulation of these claims. My deepest thanks to Professor Katherine Schaap Williams for introducing me to Price's work.
4. It goes without saying that much of my thinking in this essay is indebted both to Susan Sontag's landmark essay "Illness as Metaphor," which addresses the figurative language used to discuss illness, and to David T. Mitchell and Sharon L. Snyder's *Narrative Prothesis*, which explores how physical disability is often used as a narrative and discursive device in literature. For those interested in learning more about methods of non-figurative reading, see Schmitt, "Tidal Conrad (Literally)," and Freedgood and Schmitt, "Denotatively, Technically, Literally."
5. For further elucidation of Bubeck's concept of care, which both extends and tends to the limitations of this definition, see pp. 129-37 of *Care, Gender, and Justice*.
6. See especially Bubeck's section on "The Gendered Nature of Care" (159-70) and DeFalco's section on "Moral Dilemmas and the Gender of Ethics" (9-17).

7. Many thanks to peer-review reader B for suggesting Christina Sharpe's illuminating monograph *In the Wake*.
8. María Alonso Alonso explains that "a *soucouyant* is a Caribbean folkloric figure":
   > It usually represents marginal women as it is commonly considered to be a female who looks like an old person and lives an apparently ordinary life in the outskirts of a city or a village. But at night, this woman turns into a ball of fire and travels across the sky to suck the blood of her victims while they sleep. It is supposed that the best way to identify a soucouyant is to look for an old neighbor that appears the next morning with bruises all over her body as if she had been beaten up the night before. (16)

   The soucouyant figure thus at once creates bruises on her victims and endures bruises of her own from the fire that engulfs her.
9. I cannot recommend enough Leah Lakshmi Piepzna-Samarasinha's groundbreaking book *Care Work*, which provides more insight into the nuances of informal disabled caregiving, including both its rewards and shortcomings.
10. Again, many thanks to reader A for suggesting this article. I encourage readers to consult Beckford's paper for a more thorough exploration of how the "mammy" and "domestic" figures have evolved over time in Canadian society and literature.
11. The capability of people with disabilities as caregivers has received significant attention in disability studies. For a detailed discussion of this debate, see Deborah Marks' *Disability* (95-113), as well as Piepzna-Samarasinha's *Care Work*. Although I certainly agree that those with disabilities can be responsible caregivers, I am suggesting that the novel itself depicts Adele as not being among this group because she cannot by this point care for her own children and the children of others.
12. It is also important to note that disability studies and disability justice movements are typically youth-oriented (Goldman 344n10), which further explains why Adele, who is older, may not have access to these communities.
13. By contrast, Chariandy's equally brilliant second novel *Brother* offers a depiction of community care that is successful.

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Walter Rafael Villanueva is a Ph.D. Candidate in the Department of English and a Research Assistant with the Centre for Global Disability Studies at the University of Toronto. His work explores the metaphorization of mental illness in contemporary Canadian memoirs and novels. More specifically, his current project seeks to bridge the divide between psychiatric discourse (which approaches mental illness clinically and coldly) and literary works (which emphasize the deeper lived experience of madness).

Eric Schmaltz

Stutter, Chew, Stop: Three Mandible Modes in the Poetry of Jordan Scott

As a site for the expression of audible linguistic and extralinguistic sounds, the mouth is undeniably a powerful apparatus for meaning making. The mouth can articulate the environment and world; it can also fragment them. The mouth can break down and ingest materials; it can also expel them. The mouth can divulge information; it can also conceal it. In *Lexicon of the Mouth: Poetics and Politics of Voice and the Oral Imaginary* (2014), scholar and artist Brandon LaBelle positions the mouth as an integral "contact zone where language performs as a powerful agent" (2) for mobilizing the forces of subjectivity and agency in personal, social, and political spheres. In conjunction with what anthropologist Edward Sapir calls the "organs of speech"—"[t]he lungs, the larynx, the palate, the nose, the tongue, the teeth, and the lips" (7)—the mouth gives shape to outpourings of sonic expression that bring forth the voice and figure the vocalizing subject as an autonomous being within a network of human, posthuman, and non-human assemblages. Remarking on the mouth's complex functions across these assemblages, LaBelle identifies what he calls "'modalities of mouthing,' or methodologies of bodily figuring, each of which contours, interrupts, conspires with, or elaborates subjectivity" (11). These modalities include speaking and stuttering, biting and chewing, reciting and stopping, and so on. LaBelle's account of these modalities leads him to position the mouth as a site of "extremely vital productions by which the spoken is deeply extended, as well as brought into question." For LaBelle, the mouth "reveals the borders of the linguistic while enlivening understandings of what counts as language" (11). These "borders of the linguistic," as they are revealed and obscured, are central to the inquiry of this article.

LaBelle describes his lexicon of the mouth's movements as a

delineation of an encompassing and expansive poetics. He suggests that a poetics of the mouth invokes "beyond the strictly linguistic to that of worldly experience" and "enrich[es] our understanding of all the signifying modalities by which the body comes to perform" (12). The mouth is prominently featured in the oeuvre of Canadian poet Jordan Scott, whose works present formidable case studies for investigating the significance of the mouth in poetry and poetics. Scott's work engages the possibilities of mouth-based meaning making across a heterogeneity of registers—personal, social, material, and political. It also presents readers with a compelling continguity between mouth and ecology, which forms a through line across a number of his books. To advance this study, I focus on three of Scott's texts that each demonstrate a distinct and dynamic performance of mouthing with particular emphases on human and non-human registers. These texts are *Blert* (2008), Scott's personal exploration of stuttering and "nature poetry"; *Decomp* (2013), a collaborative text (with Canadian poet Stephen Collis) that rethinks the ontological vibrance of British Columbia's biogeoclimatic zones; and *Lanterns at Guantánamo* (2019), his poetry-adjacent online multimedia assemblage that explores disfluency and "speechscapes" at the Guantánamo Bay Detention Center. Reading across these texts, this article examines the mouth as it manifests and is mobilized within Scott's poetry, with a particular interest in how he places language under the pressure of external grammars to challenge the power dynamics of linguistic communication, and in the ways that environmental considerations and verbal expressivity shape one another.

Stuttering Sublime: *Blert*

Scott's exploration of mouthing modalities is most strongly evident in his book *Blert*, which he describes "as a spelunk into the mouth of a stutterer . . . a trek across labial regions, a navigation of tracheal rills, and a full bore squirm inside the mouth's wear and tear" (64). The poems are comprised of words and sequences that Scott finds challenging to read aloud as a stutterer: "Tonsils click hummocky, sound of hummingbirds drenched in glacial milk" (25), for example. The poems also contain playfully repetitive structures:

> Of my mouth and me. Of other people's fluent mouths and me. Of fluency and me. Of me and my mouth. Of me and other people's fluent mouths. Of me and fluency. My mouth and me. Fluent words and me. Other people's fluent mouths and me.

> Me and my mouth. Me and fluent. Me and other people's fluent mouths. (48)

Citing the personal dimension of Scott's compositional approach, poet and critic Craig Dworkin explains that Scott's "stutter seems to be tripped by initial stressed syllables beginning with nasal stops or plosive occlusives (whether aspirated, partially voiced, or voiced nasals) and exacerbated by terminal fricatives and the repetition of internal vowels across words" (179). By composing poetry guided by the complexity of his stutter, Scott transfers "the etiology of his stammer onto the structure of poetic language" (Dworkin 179). *Blert*'s poems foreground Scott's mouth and its inimitable interactions of tissue, bone, saliva, and muscle, while drawing attention to the mediation of stuttering on processes of vocal emittance. This map of his stutter's logic is downloaded to the reader who, even if they usually speak and read with fluency, necessarily stutter when reading *Blert*. Open the book to any page to find an example of *Blert*'s difficulty:

> You lambada glyph: cockatiel into calligraphy like your mouthwash swills hurricane. Puke gauze sphagnum and purr: *outbreaks will diminish* against the chincherinchee festooned on bronchial, you go on go on, urge backwash cha-cha-cha, homily into boomshackalacka like fungi canoodle sequoia: *say nosh cricket merengue, your turn, say gnash locust meringue.* (61)

The diction of *Blert* is rife with unfamiliar and invented words. Scott punctuates this language with commas, periods, and colons in a way that resembles common usage; however, the words together are indeed often a "swills hurricane" of nonsense. As Dworkin points out in his discussion of *Blert*, phrases such as "cha-cha-cha" replicate the stutter's force of involuntary repetition and delay. "[T]he difficulty of reading Scott's text," writes poet and critic Tyrone Williams, "is not due to his rather common use of parataxis but rather its scientific-cum-phonetic lexicon (anatomical, botanical, geographical, etc.), its Joycean neologisms, and its emphasis on the mechanics of pronunciation." One of the book's main thrusts, then, as Williams and Dworkin agree, is an enactment of the stuttering mouth.

Williams expresses some reservations about *Blert* as an aesthetic representation of disability. He wonders,

> [D]oes Scott risk self-exoticism to the extent *Blert* might suggest to non-stutterers that all stuttering sounds the same from the inside, even though Scott has been clear that the idiolect on view in his book cannot be abstracted as a general score from which

others might perform?

Williams hopes that readers do not conflate all acts of stuttering by assuming that *Blert* represents what stuttering looks and sounds like. Indeed, I caution readers and listeners to approach *Blert* critically, knowing that the actions and sounds of one's mouth are deeply connected to one's individual subjectivity. Careful readers know that Scott's text enacts and represents stuttering as a part of his identity. Dworkin gestures to this point when he identifies what "trips" Scott's stutter. Likewise, Scott alludes to the subjective position he occupies within the text when he writes "word order = world ardour" (13) and "word languor = world rancour" (46)—phrases that gesture toward the dictum frequently associated with the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis: word order = world order. The language that we know and language as we know it construct our worldview.[1] Scott's playful reconfiguration of the dictum suggests a less than straightforward relation to it, suggesting that the connection between word and world is also highly individualistic.[2]

Dworkin's and Williams' analyses of *Blert* raise fundamental questions about the relationship between identity, disfluency, and disability. Scholar Joshua St. Pierre unpacks this relationship, urging for a reconsideration of assumptions regarding speech, communication, disability, and their socio-political importance and, thereby, of stuttering as part of a diversity of communicative modes.[3] He points out that stuttering is frequently theorized within a medical model that represents it as "unwanted" and "invasive," which in turn objectifies the stutterer by reinforcing oppressive "abled/disabled binaries" (6). For St. Pierre, stuttering draws attention to what he refers to as the "liminal nature of the stutterer, who is neither clearly abled nor disabled" (3). This liminality highlights "the oppressive forces placed on stutterers, who, unlike many other disabled people, are often expected to perform on the same terms as the able-bodied." This problem is especially pervasive within the "domain of liberal individualism and American capitalism" (12), wherein disabled bodies are "not capable of meeting expectations of pace and productivity" and "are therefore disqualified from full participation not only in the economic sector but also in social situations" (13). This theorization foregrounds the political and social significance of the mouth and helps us see the radical potential of stuttering for the way it "interferes with established and codified rhythms of communication" within contemporary capitalist machinations. St.

Pierre's conceptualization of stuttering within an expanded context of disability studies works in consonance with literary critic Tobin Siebers' critical concept of disability aesthetics. As a concept, "[d]isability aesthetics seeks to emphasize the presence of different bodies and minds in the tradition of aesthetic representation" and to refuse "harmony, integrity, and beauty as the sole determination of the aesthetic" (542-43). Based on Scott's experience as a stutterer, *Blert*'s aesthetic is characterized by a plethora of interruptions; its language is disjunctive and fragmented, grounded in resistant parataxis, neologisms, and onomatopoeia. It denies readers the possibility of closure through critical interpretation—typically an indication of "efficient" linguistic communication—while positioning the stuttering mouth at the centre of the text.

The poet Derek Beaulieu highlights the radical potential of *Blert* and, in particular, the way stuttering gestures toward the disruption of capitalism's emphasis on linguistic efficiency. He remarks upon *Blert*'s disruptive syntax and diction and reflects upon the opacity of the book's parataxis and phonemic play. Beaulieu describes *Blert's* diction and syntax as "unhinged from a narrative construction" (72), a comment that partially explains some of the thematic content of the text. Beaulieu positions the book in the context of theorist Sianne Ngai's "poetics of disgust," which declares a resistance to "the bourgeois morality endemic to capitalism" (Ngai 98). Beaulieu posits that the book's parataxis informs its worldview and he understands Scott's worldview, to be resistant to capitalist machinations. *Blert* enacts a mode of disrupted articulation that exceeds the linguistic conventions of the capitalist marketplace and its frequent demand for the uninterrupted flow of consumable information. Beaulieu's argument is compelling, but I want to add nuance to his claim that *Blert* is "unhinged" (72), a claim that Beaulieu makes to underscore the disruptive features of the book. It is important also to emphasize that the vocabulary of *Blert* is carefully culled by Scott and representative of his identity. Scott draws from his interests in anatomy, geology, botany, marine biology, toxicology, consumerism, and linguistics, all of which he places alongside onomatopoeic words and neologisms. *Blert*'s interference in codified rhythms and vocabulary is more than a disruptive feature of the work; it is part of Scott's identity that informs his poetics. This personal connection is highlighted by the Author's Note, wherein Scott writes,

> When I was a boy my father would let me play hooky on 'bad speech days' and take me fishing. On one particular day, while

> watching the tide undulate against the shore, my father offered a precise ecological equivalent to what had been going on in my mouth: 'You see how that water moves, son? That's how you speak.' (64)

In this anecdote, Scott's father inadvertently recognizes that the equation "word order = world order" can also be understood in reverse—that "world order" can also equal "word order." So, while the paratactic arrangement of vocabulary in *Blert* may be unhinged from capitalist ordering, it is also connected to Scott's identity and his personal story as a stutterer, both in terms of his inimitable modes of articulation and his diverse discursive interests.

The comments from Scott's father mentioned above highlight another dimension of *Blert* that requires a pivot from discussions of the disruption of capitalist machinations to its disruption of normative representations of nature. By drawing a connection between the river and his son's speech mode, Scott's father recognizes an innate connection between nature and his son's stutter, emphasizing that Scott's stutter is *natural*. Following a similar line of logic, LaBelle reminds readers that "[m]oments of fluid speech are actually quite rare" and that speakers commonly punctuate their speech with small interruptions, pauses, and stops (132). Small interruptions in speech and chronic stuttering are not the same embodied experiences; however, LaBelle's point, like Scott's father's, asks readers to reconsider fluency as the dominant speech mode and gestures toward a more inclusive and varied understanding of speech. Both LaBelle and Scott's father encourage readers to reconsider what constitutes the natural flow of speech, and in doing so they undermine binary structures such as *natural/unnatural* but also, by extension, *natural/cultural*. *Blert* takes up this issue by problematizing the way the natural environment is rendered in language, which often relies on normative descriptions of phenomena that exceed language. In other words, Scott uses the structure of his speech to present an alternate understanding of the relationship between nature as an external object and language as an anthropocentric mode of organizing and understanding the external world. He aesthetically employs his stutter in *Blert* to rethink the prevailing conceptual organization of nature as a part of distinctive binaries in a way that is identical to *Blert*'s explicit reorientation of the categories "natural" and "unnatural" in speech.[4] This is not to assume that stuttering affects a stutterer's innate understanding of the language of nature. Rather, it is to say that *Blert*'s representation of nature, via a stutter-

based disability aesthetic, undermines the dualistic understanding of nature and culture.

Blert, then, is also a text that poetically engages complex representations of nature and ecology. In her essay "Outsides: Disability Culture Nature Poetry," critic and disability theorist Petra Kuppers contends that in writing from the perspective of disability, "traditional nature poetry imagery becomes transfigured" (22). Kuppers identifies nature poetry within the Romantic tradition, typified by images of poet William Wordsworth wandering through nature, inspired by the sublimity of the landscape, and seeking the ecstatic dissolve of the self. Kuppers claims that disabled persons experience nature and the sublime by their own inimitable means; she writes, "we create our own rhythms, and rock ourselves into the world of nature, lose ourselves in a moment of sharing" (23). Poetry by the disabled writers that Kuppers analyzes emerges from their distinctive experiences, revising and expanding the conventions of what she calls nature poetry. *Blert*'s aesthetic representation of stuttering and engagement with nature supplements Kuppers' view: Scott employs his stutter to transfigure the conventions of nature poetry even further.

Blert is resistant to the easily consumable linguistic flows and expressions of the egoistic sublime typically associated with the Romanticist tradition of nature poetry, at least as Kuppers characterizes it. In Kuppers' analysis, the binary of nature and culture is upheld—nature is a thing experienced by poets and artists, who then render their experience in aesthetic forms. A subtext of Kuppers' argument suggests how disability alters experiences of nature, thus altering access to traditional notions of the sublime: "[N]ot everyone can see that blueness of romantic worldview, that delimitation, the sublime color to lose a self in" (23). By means of the interruptive force of his stutter, Scott also revises dominant poetic representations of nature. For example, Wordsworth's conception of the horizon in "It Is a Beauteous Evening, Calm and Free" demonstrates a hard clarity of image and seeks to capture the sublime spirit entangled with his vision:

> [T]he broad sun
> Is sinking down in its tranquility;
> The gentleness of heaven broods o'er the Sea;
> Listen! the mighty Being is awake,
> And doth with his eternal motion make
> A sound like thunder—everlastingly.

In comparison, Scott resists appealing to such direct and concrete descriptions when portraying the sunset in *Blert*, while also deferring an invocation of the sublime ("the mighty Being") as poets and critics might traditionally know it. Scott contemplates the horizon and writes, "At dusk the sun ughed against horizon and the finches bruised the sky purple. I put the spoon in my mouth. Ziplocked lip to tin. I put the spoon in my mouth, incisor chunks bunt, bunt, bunt to Pango Pango sky" (31-32). Wordsworth's speaker opens his mouth, exclaiming "Listen!" while dramatizing the sunset and picturesque beauty of the scene. In *Blert*, however, the speaker's mouth closes, blending site and subject, to instead initiate an inward turn. The speaker's "Ziplocked lip" tightens against the sky and becomes part of the scene; it is not a force that mediates it but is part of it. For Scott, the poet's self does not get lost in nature to return and render that experience in flowing poetic form. Instead, the landscape and self are entangled; there is no separation.

Blert's representation of natural phenomena is more appropriately aligned with "ecology," as theorist Timothy Morton defines it. Morton advances a theory of *ecology without nature* to dissolve the commonly held divide between what is perceived as nature and culture. He wants his readers to see ecology as a concept that encompasses both of these terms: "Human beings need each other as much as they need an environment. Human beings *are* each others' environment. Thinking ecologically isn't simply about nonhuman things. Ecology has to do with you and me" (4). Morton's position designates a more collaborative and interconnected mode for humans to think about and experience the world in a way that combines natural and cultural spheres, which are too often seen as separate in the Western episteme. *Blert* highlights this connectedness by drawing from the language of the natural sciences and blending it with consumer language: "We rappel, frantic drips to harzburgites, spelunk carpal a soda straw to outwash, we—excess, wine must have gestured influx, bent knee, hamates wicket belay, Roosa light plunder esophagus. We blitz horizon, the Petzl Ecrin sheds its carbon" (14). This excerpt demonstrates how *Blert*'s phonemic play and syntax resist critical closure, which analogously deny imposing the structural logic of language onto the external world. Scott's representations of nature are tangles of objects, textures, perspectives, and sensations. Words like "rappel," "harzburgites," "spelunk," "horizon," and "Petzl Ecrin" are indicative of climbing and cave exploration, locating readers on a cliff or rock side. "Soda straw" and

"wine," though seemingly random, further announce a human presence within this scene. Most notable, Petzl is a manufacturer of climbing and caving gear. The Petzl Ecrin Roc is a rock climbing helmet. Further down the page, Scott mentions "Edelrid," an adventuring manufacturer known for their ropes and cords. By invoking consumerist language, Scott presents an expansive means of recognizing human presence in the landscape, as a first-person plural voice here represents it. The subject is in the landscape, but the presence of this "we" is enabled by a product made by a consumer commodity manufacturer. In this gesture, *Blert* recognizes that subjectivity in nature poetry is a much more complex assemblage of human and non-human entities akin to Morton's conception of ecology. The subject is entangled with nature and the internal and external grammars of a subject's body and consumer culture.

With its emphasis on human-nature connectedness, Scott's conception of ecology is further pronounced elsewhere in *Blert*. In a section entitled "Valsalvas" (a reference to a modified breathing method, the "Valsalva manoeuvre"), Scott writes, "Tethered to seven *molluscs*, an osteoblast chomps into the burger of *kelp*'s *wreck*; an osteoclast nibbles a *puffin*'s scapula in mid-afternoon weight" (11; emphases mine). Words such as "mollusc," "kelp," "puffin," and even "wreck" conjure a coastal locale. Similarly, Scott takes readers to another distinctive scene in a section entitled "Jökulhlaup," the Icelandic term for "a type of glacial outburst flood" ("Jökulhlaup"):

> Plankton trek trachea, an ice-packed high-top waltz. Walrus flop tongue, chomp tusk onto ice sizzle. Air sac ebb: eco racket dome slow ice furrow, dorsal rip katabatic overflow, tectonic chattermarks rip-rap frazil ice. Mucus globs gumbotill until syrup sweet lymph between words. (29)

Here, the language conjures icy ecological zones, like the Arctic Ocean, where walruses are typically found. In these disjunctive lines, Scott is using the affiliated discourses of nature to enact his stutter, but he is also using the interruptive forces of his stutter to aesthetically represent an expansive definition of ecology. These lines gesture toward particular nature images, but the presentation of these scenes is interrupted by the language of other discourses—words like "katabatic" and "tectonic" gesture toward broader meteorological and geological processes while words like "tongue," "trachea," and "mucus" imply human presence and reiterate *Blert's* preoccupation with the mouth. This paratactic assemblage—this language

without coordinating or subordinating clauses—places these words in an equal relation that flattens discursive and hierarchical structures. Analogously, this equal relation inventively disrupts the separation of nature and culture. In doing so, *Blert* engages the tradition of "nature poetry" to reconsider humans, language, and the world as a profoundly intersubjective relationship.

Blert illuminates the ecological complexity of being an *I* in the world, admitting that there are many forces that interrupt and comprise an individual's experience of nature, and destabilizing the conceptual barriers between inside and outside, human and non-human, nature and culture, and the like. In other words, Scott challenges the aesthetic traditions of nature poetry via his "disability aesthetic" to consequently undermine assumptions about what comprises categories of the "natural," thus generating a more compelling aesthetic representation of ecology in poetry. *Blert* disrupts normative assumptions about aesthetic traditions of poetry and fluency while demonstrating that "nature" is resistant to standardized linguistic quantification. In Scott's writing, nature is instead a complex entity that cannot be understood by discursive divides; it is a "Bramble" as it "harmonizes with glottal percussion" (30). *Blert* suggests that the linguistic expression of nature is better aligned with new materialist philosophies that recognize the inherent intermixing of *things*, a line of thinking that Scott pursues further in his collaborative book *Decomp*.

The Mouthing of Worms: *Decomp*

In collaboration with poet Stephen Collis, Scott intensifies the convergence of the mouth, language, and ecology in their co-authored book *Decomp* (2013) which draws attention to a different set of mouthing modalities—biting and chewing. The book was created by means of an experiment in which Scott and Collis took copies of *On the Origin of Species* (1859) by Charles Darwin and placed them within five different biogeoclimatic zones in British Columbia: Nicola Lake, Prince George, Kootenay Lake, Gabriola Island, and Tofino. Scott and Collis left the books within these zones to endure the weather, flora, and fauna, which subsequently acted upon Darwin's influential text, altering, decomposing, overwriting, and revising it. One calendar year later, Scott and Collis returned to their deposited texts. They photo-documented each zone's act of creative destruction, finding the texts, in ecocritic Sarah Bezan's words, "worm-eaten," "waterlogged," "buried beneath fermenting layers

of vegetation" (241). They had become sites of "a vital partnership between living and dead organisms" (241). Each copy of *On the Origin of Species* was transformed into heterogeneous ontological matter: from evolutionary study and canonical text to food, habitat, and art object. Scott and Collis' findings provide the basis of *Decomp*, which comprises the photographs taken in each zone as well as printed responses to each book-object. Theses responses include meditative poems, reflections, dialogues, quotations, journal entries, and found poems made from the legible portions of the decomposing text. The project, according to Collis and Scott, resists the nature-culture binary that traditionally upholds ecological discussions, reversing "the normal flow of bringing nature into the poem" by "bringing the text into nature" (qtd. in Moss 140). In nature, the text wrote back to the authors but it spoke back too.

Decomp's prominently featured full-colour photographs document the year-long decomposition process in each of the biogeoclimatic zones. Aside from the unavoidable interventions that photographers make when capturing their subject, these photographs present *On the Origin of Species* before the authors' poetic interventions. The photographs capture palimpsests created by layers of soil, dust, leaves, needles, and branches, as well as the erasures and omissions made by rain, sap, and, most notably, the chewing and biting of insects, worms, and birds. The photographs do not let readers forget that humans are involved in the process of creating this text; Collis and Scott consistently announce their presence by including photographs of people—likely the authors themselves—as they move through each zone. These photos are often candid and frequently capture these persons in motion to remind readers that—like the creation of *Decomp*—subjectivity and identity are processual.

The photographs in *Decomp* highlight the many processes and co-authors that contributed to its creation. In one particularly dramatic photograph from the Prince George section, for example, a thin shaft of light illuminates the words *the* and *idea*, making them more visible than other bits of text in the photograph. In this instance, the photograph asks viewers to consider the concept of "the idea" as an anthropocentric invention. Humans historically distinguish themselves from other living beings for their capabilities of critical thinking, ideation, and creativity. This photograph in *Decomp* captures a non-human entity, a beam of light, as it seizes upon "the idea." The photograph is the result of non-human and human interaction: the decomposition of *On the Origin of Species* in the

biogeoclimatic zone of Prince George, the plants and undergrowth whose positions in physical space made room for this particular beam of light, and the cosmic alliance of these circumstances with the forces of the solar system, all of which allowed light to shine down on the book at the time that the photographer approached it.

Despite the emphatic ocularcentricity of *Decomp*, spectres of sound and speech are also present in the text. The authors hint at the sonic dimension of the book, referring to the final section as a *coda* (rather than an *afterword*). In so doing, they gesturally figure the book as literary, performative, and musical since *coda* is meaningful to each of these artforms. I am compelled to read the photographs as documents of sound—specifically, as evidence of sonic events that can be heard in the aural imagination. In *Hungry Listening*, xwélmexw (Stó:lō) artist and writer Dylan Robinson refers to this form of imagination as *audiation* (1), a term for the sounds that are heard in one's mind when reading descriptions of sound. Recall here, too, sound theorist Jonathan Sterne's reminder that "the tree makes a noise whether or not anyone is there to hear it" (12). Thus, readers of *Decomp* may not literally hear the sounds of worms and insects chewing Darwin's text, of birds tearing a verso for nesting, or of pine needles falling into its margins. However, the photographs trigger the reader's audiation so that each zone can be heard as it slowly engages the source text over the course of the year. These photographs capture these sonorous sites, charged by the chewing and biting of nature that is forever delayed from our ears but, through the power of audiation, immanently within our consciousness.

The photographs powerfully facilitate further inquiry into sounds and mouthing, prompting questions such as, What do the voices of these ecological zones sound like? Who or what speaks from within them? How do humans meaningfully engage and understand these sounds? Every bite mark, gnaw, and tear is also a para-speech action. Some critics may not consider ecological degradation to correlate to a form of vocal emittance as it is conventionally understood; however, given the active involvement of biting and chewing as a contributing force to the creation of *Decomp*, it is a text that, in part, captures processes of *mouthing*. "[T]he mouth," as LaBelle writes, "wraps the voice, and all such wording, in its wet and impressionable envelope, its paralanguages" (7). Further, he suggests that "what surrounds the voice proper—the paralinguistic, the sociolinguistic, the glossolalic, etc.—contributes a vitalizing base to the spoken by

extending, problematizing, and saturating its communicative aim" (9). The mouthing of worms and insects provided the altered source texts that form the basis of *Decomp*, which, in turn, shaped the authors' voices as they composed the corresponding text.

Given the agency that Scott and Collis give to the conditions and organisms of each biogeoclimatic zone as collaborators in *Decomp*, philosopher Jane Bennett's theory of *vital materialism* is resonant within this context, particularly for how it extends the possibilities of speaking and communication by striving to "give voice to a vitality intrinsic to materiality" (3). Bennett undermines the subject-object binary "to conceive of [non-human] materials as lively and self-organizing, rather than as passive or mechanical" (10). She prefers to refer to all things not as subjects or objects, but as *interveners*. Such a decision decentres anthropocentric thinking and deconstructs hierarchies of materiality to destabilize the divide between humans and non-humans. In Bennett's words, vital materialism generates "newfound attentiveness to matter and its powers" (13). It inspires "a greater sense of the extent to which all bodies are kin in the sense of inextricably enmeshed in a dense network of relations." Bennett's reconsideration of materiality does not retract agency from human beings; rather, it encourages more generous ways of thinking and interacting with non-human materials, recognizing them as collaborators in structuring and engaging the self and world.

In her chapter "Political Ecologies," which focuses on the political dimensions of a vital materialist philosophy, Bennett—like Scott and Collis—addresses Darwin and his particular fascination with worms. In this chapter, Bennett's vital materialist perspective significantly resonates with *Decomp*, especially in its attention to the mouth and voice. Making a case for the political participation of non-human interveners—like worms—Bennett suggests that her vital materialist perspective "can uncover a whole world of resonances and semblances—sounds and sights that echo and bounce far more than would be possible were the universe to have a hierarchical structure" (99). Vital materialism advocates for developing a polity with non-human matter (living and inert) and "with more channels of communication between members" (104). Building from Jacques Ranciére's theory of democracy and the political act as a disruption, Bennett asks, "Is the power to disrupt really limited to human speakers?" (106). Thus, Bennett extends speech and democratic political participation to non-human matter. By giving this kind of agency to non-human matter,

Bennett suggests that matter *speaks* through and with its interventions to "transform the divide between speaking subjects and mute objects" (108). If the mouth is the site from which speech is, in its most basic terms, expressed, and acts of nature are how non-humans speak, then Bennett's theory challenges the limits and boundaries of the mouth and what it means to have a voice.

Worms, for instance, have their own mode of communication that relies on chemical signals to exchange information. With Bennett's theory of voice and speaking, the vital materialist may recognize *Decomp* as a text that carefully documents the para-language of non-humans such as worms. For *Decomp,* Scott and Collis recognize that the bodies and biomes of each biogeoclimatic zone are always already speaking. These mouthing interveners, speaking in their way, disrupted and recreated the source text. When reading the text, and specifically when reading the photographs, readers are encouraged to engage their aural imaginations, discerning the sounds made as each zone intervened into Darwin's text. As human interpreters, we may not yet fully understand the para-speech mode of non-human interveners. For now, we can recognize that each biogeoclimatic zone engages Darwin's text, and that those engagements are meaningful. Perhaps these zones have minutely and performatively enacted Darwin's evolutionary claims as they transform the source text into complex ontological forms that diversely express their non-human subjectivities.

Carceral Speechscapes: *Lanterns at Guantánamo*

Like *Blert* and *Decomp*, Scott's poetry-adjacent multimedia project website *Lanterns at Guantánamo* further extends his visceral engagements with disruption, ecology, and the mouth. The materials housed on this site document Scott's research into stuttering and disfluency as a poet visiting the Guantánamo Bay Detention Center. The website is comprised of an assemblage of materials, including sound compositions (made by collaborator Jason Starnes) of Scott's field recordings, audio interviews, photographs of the prison (taken by Scott), photographs and scans of the art made by detainees in 2009, a multimedia chapbook entitled "Clearance Process," and numerous administrative documents (including scans of Freedom of Information Act requests, media visit information, operating procedures, policies, rules, vitals forms, and a press kit). As a poet cognizant of the power of aesthetic frameworks, Scott's choice of

an assemblage structure for *Lanterns at Guantánamo* may be partially informed by the ethical quandaries posed by the project. Rather than poeticize his experiences, Scott creates a collage that readers engage by their own inimitable means. In a text adapted from a 2016 lecture, Scott reflects on what he sees as the ethical responsibilities of his research into disfluency at the Guantánamo Bay Detention Center. He writes,

> When I watched those men pray and eat behind two thick panes of reflective glass in Camp IV, was my position ethical? What would be an ethical response or reaction to that experience? To this lecture? Can poems possibly emerge out of such an encounter? *Should* they? ("Lanterns" 11)

Similarly, should literary criticism be written about Scott's encounter? There are no easy answers to these questions. However, as a seeing and hearing witness to the conditions of the prison, Scott serves his readership by sonically and visually illuminating the conditions of this prison. His work highlights, explicitly and implicitly, the iterations of power that are executed within this space, demonstrating how voice and mouth are bound within these dynamics.

After a year-long application process to secure his visit, Scott was granted five days of access to Guantánamo Bay as the only poet known to have visited the detention centre. Scott was subjected to numerous reference and background checks, and he completed and submitted a number of documents and forms that were a standard part of the application. As part of the process, Scott was informed of the allowances he could take while visiting the centre. For example, officials at the prison could dictate whom he was allowed to interview and the kinds of photographs that he was allowed to take. It was clear, then, that Scott was subjecting his creative process to the design of this infamous carceral facility and that its logic would likely pose significant limits and challenges to his ability to articulate—in speech, writing, and image—the experience of the prison. Scott admits that he sought access to Guantánamo Bay to bring himself "closer to the apparatus of state interrogation," knowing full well that it would also bring him "to a place of uncompromising hostility toward dysfluency" ("Lanterns" 3). According to FBI interrogators, disfluency is a bodily signal of lying (3). Thus, a space like Guantánamo Bay pursues the "desire for speech to greet the ear smoothly and clearly, and for subjects or suspects to make themselves both understandable and believable" (3). As a lifelong stutterer, Scott clearly objects to this fiction

that posits a linkage between stuttering and lying since the fallacious extension of this logic is that persons who stutter are liars. Scott refers to this logic—which informs interrogation processes in a space like the Guantánamo Bay Detention Center—as the "regime of fluency" (4).

Scott's interpretation of the power dynamics at the Guantánamo Bay Detention Center are prominently displayed on the *Lanterns at Guantánamo* website. When visitors reach the site's home page, they are presented with an image of a makeshift guard tower elevated above a chain-link fence and topped by coils of barbed wire. In the background beyond the fence, vegetation browns and steel structures rust. This image establishes the contours of the power structure and hierarchy inherent in the prison. The centred and elevated tower symbolizes the power and control of the prison guards. This is contrasted by the apparent decay of the buildings and vegetation and the absence of human subjects—a testament to the prison's particular form of corrosive power. These combined features attempt to recreate the ominous and spectral feel of the prison as an environment and its anti-human ideology.

Below this image of the prison, Scott places a compelling epigraph, a quotation from the late Canadian composer and sound theorist R. Murray Schafer: "Noises are the sounds we have learned to ignore" (Schafer 4). The quote gestures toward Schafer's theories of acoustic ecology, wherein he appeals for the need of noise abatement laws to reduce the prevalence of noise in everyday life. For Schafer, noise as sonic phenomena is broadly defined as both problematic noise pollution and unwanted sound: "When the rhythms of the soundscape become confused or erratic, society sinks to a slovenly and imperiled condition" (237). Finding a means of returning society to the premodern soundscape, wherein noise is significantly reduced, is one of Schafer's key aims.

Scott's field research at the Guantánamo Bay Detention Center draws Schafer's premise into question and draws attention to the unsettling implications of ambitions to dampen or reduce "unwanted sound." The carceral soundscape far exceeds Schafer's considerations of the soundscape of primarily urban and rural spaces. Scott, however, brings the implications of Schafer's quest to the fore in his documentation of the carceral soundscape, highlighting the unsettling effects of rules and conditions pertaining to sound, and poignantly outlining the way that sonic expression is permitted and denied. The carceral soundscape is a site of control over the human ability to sound. By acknowledging this fact, Scott's recordings

throw the audible sounds of the prison environment into stark relief. For example, in the prison, Scott "was not permitted to record what one Public Affairs (PA) representative referred to as 'non-permissible human voice'" ("Lanterns" 9). Scott offers another, slightly more oblique example when he recounts interviewing the warden at the prison:

> He replied that on a typical day, when he walks into the prison he hears nothing; it is mostly quiet and unremarkable. The warden made sure to tell me that if I were asking whether he hears screams, then the answer is no. He then paused and said that what he hears all the time is the sound of air conditioners. At Gitmo you hear the air conditioners before the cooling begins. The sound is all drone. (24)

Here, the warden provides a machinic characterization of the prison's soundscape, describing how the ambient sound of air conditioning dominates the environment. Scott points out in the transcript of his 2016 lecture that the air conditioners are used as torture devices at Guantánamo ("Lanterns" 25). He cites Mohamedou Ould Slahi, a Mauritania-born man who was detained without charge in Guantánamo from 2002 until his release on 17 October 2016; Slahi explains in *Guantánamo Diary* (2015) that

> [t]he interrogators turned the A/C all the way down trying to reach 0°F, but obviously air conditioners are not designed to kill, so in the well insulated room the A/C fought its way to 49°F, which, if you are interested in math like me, is 9.4°C—in other words, very, very cold, especially for somebody who had to stay in it for more than twelve hours, had no underwear and just a thin uniform, and who comes from a hot country. (242)

Thus, there is an especially sinister kind of malice underwriting the warden's seemingly innocuous description of the soundscape. Further, embedded in the warden's comment, there is the powerful implication of the prison's powers over the mouth—voices are forcibly concealed, and the prison is generally haunted by an absence of vocalization. These implicit and explicit controls over speech define Guantánamo's carceral soundscape.

Lanterns at Guantánamo also comprises the multimedia chapbook "Clearance Process" (2016). Visually, sonically, and linguistically, this chapbook furthers consideration of the prison's paradigm of control over the voice and mouth. If *Blert* is a book that, as Tyrone Williams suggests, captures the "momentary loss of control, of agency" in the moment of

the stutter, then "Clearance Process" engages different losses of agency. In "Clearance Process," these losses are voluntary and forced, though both are products of the systemic operations of a space like Guantánamo. "Clearance Process" comes with a soundtrack by Jason Starnes made from Scott's field recordings. Starnes' composition in the chapbook captures the prison's hauntingly sparse soundscape. The soundtrack is composed of textures and ambient sounds—crackles, echoes, chirps, and buzzes from the prison space. The few voices on the recording are distant and muffled, interrupted by hums and percussive clangs: "This goes through the nose and down into the stomach to provide the [inaudible]" (00:01:41 – 00:01:47). What few voices there are in these recordings drift in and out of audibility. They are vulnerable to interruption by other sounds in the space as well as to the restrictions imposed by the detention centre's policies.

"Clearance Process" positions the voice in a soundscape like Guantánamo as that which is both silenced and forced to emerge through the interrogation process, thus materializing the the space's anti-human ideology. Representations of human life in "Clearance Process" are spectral. Many of the photographs are void of human subjects: nearly empty skies, flat stretches of concrete horizons, empty facilities, and piles of coiled barbed wire. The few images of human subjects that are present in "Clearance Process" are partial and fragmentary: a silhouette of a body on concrete, a barely visible body blurred by an unsteady camera, a body obscured by thick sheets of glass. There are cropped bodies too: hands holding a camera, a hand holding a bottle of liquid meal replacement, the lower half of a Guantánamo guard in military attire. Bodies in "Clearance Process" are presented as faceless (obviously cropped in accordance with Operational Security [OPSEC] protocols).

While, like *Decomp*, the collection is emphatically ocularcentric, Scott's "Clearance Process" draws us toward two related configurations of mouthing and vocalization: the voice that is silenced and the voice that is forced from the body. We know from Scott's introduction and the few audio compositions made from his field recordings that OPSEC limits whose voices can be heard and who can hear them. "Clearance Process" opens with a heavily redacted excerpt from *Guantánamo Diary*. These elements of the text gesture toward the mouth that is stopped and not permitted to speak, that is erased from the record. "Clearance Process" also subtly gestures toward the other mouth modality, the mouth that is wrenched open and forced to vocalize. There is a quiet violence to Scott's

photographic assemblage that signals the physical violence and inhumane atmosphere of the prison: images of rusted barbed wire, specks of blood on rocks, a lurid red heart carved into a tree trunk, and lots of debris. These images indicate the greater violence that lurks inside the prison: the interrogation and torture of the detainees. Without actual images of torture and violence, Scott's photographs point to these elements of Guantánamo, leaving us to imagine the various forms of violence that the state uses to coerce speech from prisoners who are unwilling to speak. The "quietude" of Scott's audio and visual materials invite the violence, screams, and pain of this space into the viewer's audiation.

In his introduction to "Clearance Process," Scott notes that the "speechscape" of the detention centre "was one of feedback loops and evasion, repetition with variations on an echo-forming language strategy," a voluntary stoppage and circumvention of what otherwise could be said (10). The strategy here is to always deny and delay the arrival of the requested information. Scott compiles a series of quotations of overheard speech during his visit:

> That's not in my lane.
> I don't know what they've done or what they haven't done.
> I'm not privy to that information.
> I'm not authorized to tell you that, sir.
> I can't speak to that. But I'll see if I can find someone who can.
> Sir, you're not allowed to ask that. (10)

Each seemingly scripted line, presumably uttered by one of the staff of the detention complex, is not necessarily a stutter, but a stoppage, a distraction, a deviation from speech to purposefully limit or stop the flow of information.

Restrictions on speech are found elsewhere, particularly in the audio recording "The Camps Are Good" on the *Lanterns at Guantánamo* site page. This recording contains an interview with a prison guard by Joan Faus, a former Washington correspondent for the Spanish newspaper *El País*. There are three voices in the room: the guard, the interviewer (Faus), and a mysterious voice, presumably of a senior official, that occasionally interjects into the conversation. It is important to note here that this third mysterious person is not the subject of the interview, as indicated by the way Scott identifies this recording: "This interview with a guard was conducted by Joan Faus *EL PAÍS* U.S. Correspondent." He does

not mention that this is an interview with a guard *and* a senior official. The conversation between Faus and the guard mainly focuses on the day-to-day operations of the centre. Strikingly, however, the third voice intrudes at crucial moments, particularly when the conversation begins to veer toward information that is classified. For example, when the guard is about to reveal the time of day that the detainees receive their meals, the third voice interjects to stop the guard from revealing this information (00:02:25). Similarly, Faus responds to the third voice in the room, which has seemingly gestured that the interview will be wrapped up soon (00:06:34). This occurs at the 00:06:34 mark of the recording. The interviewer holds to the initial terms of the interview, reminding the third voice that they had agreed on ten minutes. The power and presence of this third voice are notable since the person to whom this voice belongs is not the subject here. Yet, this third voice's influence is central to understanding the powers of the mouth and voice in the prison. As a mouth and voice of absolute authority, the third speaker intervenes in the discussion to delay, stop, and pause the flow of vocalization at moments when the information carried by those voices threatens to become too revealing. It is this all-powerful, unidentified voice that is indicative of the veiled authority in carceral spaces that controls the flow of vocal emittance.

Shutting Up: Conclusion

To return to my proposed investigation of the "borders of the linguistic" as represented and traversed in Scott's poetry, I now draw attention to one of the core tenets of his work. The mouth is, as LaBelle reminds us, a passageway from inside to outside. Thus, if we pay careful attention to the mouth and its many modalities, we can learn a great deal about our relationships to the external world—how to express it, relate to it, navigate it, ingest it, and expel it. Each of Scott's poetry collections under discussion confirms LaBelle's claim that the mouth is a "contact zone where language performs as a powerful agent" (2). Across these texts, Scott examines the mouth as it stutters, bites, chews, speaks, and stops to articulate complex relationships between humans and non-humans in aesthetic and systemic configurations. Scott's varied investigations into mouthing modalities are linked by his thematic interest in diminishing the division between inside and outside, as demonstrated by a frequent invocation of ecological themes—natural landscapes and carceral soundscapes. As works of poetry, they specifically demonstrate

how language is shaped by the mouth, and subject to many forms of disruption, reconfiguration, and erasure. Most importantly, Scott's poetry demonstrates the necessity of expanding assumptions around the processes of poetic meaning making to accept that these processes often involve a range of bodily communicative acts, that the utterance is more than words written or heard, and that the communicative act exceeds the logic of language and normative assumptions about speech. Scott's poetry powerfully and persuasively testifies that not all that needs to be understood can be said.

Notes

1. Anthropologist Edward Sapir is notable for his relativist theory of language and perception, which claims that the structure of language that is known by a person shapes their understanding of the world. In turn, this suggests that a person's experience of the world is relative to the language they know. See Sapir, *Language*.
2. Derek Beaulieu also highlights Scott's *Blert* in relation to the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis as a way of exploring what he refers to as a Calgarian poetics.
3. This thinking also underlies the important work of projects such as the *Did I Stutter?* project, a community-focused group dedicated to hearing the "diversity of sounds present in the human voice" and whose mission is "to challenge assumptions about speech-disability and . . . to open a conversation about how much of the anxiety related to dysfluency is produced by oppressive social structures and values."
4. Scott continues to approximate a relationship between disfluency and nature, most recently in his bestselling children's book, *I Talk Like a River* (illustrated by Sydney Smith). The book has received much acclaim, and it was featured on the BBC's *CBeebies Bedtime Story* program, where it was read by popular singer-songwriter Ed Sheeran.

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Eric Schmaltz holds a Ph.D. in English from York University and, from 2018-2019, he was an SSHRC Postdoctoral Fellow in the Department of English at the University of Pennsylvania. He is co-editor of the critical edition I Want to Tell You Love *by bill bissett and Milton Acorn (University of Calgary Press) and author of* Surfaces *(Invisible Publishing). His academic writing has appeared in* Jacket2*,* English Studies in Canada*,* Canadian Poetry*,* Canadian Literature*,* Forum*, and the edited collection* All the Feels / Tous les sens*. He is Writer-on-the-Grounds and a Sessional Lecturer at York University (Glendon College).*

Joon Ho Hwang

An Ambivalent Gaze at North Koreans in Guy Delisle's *Pyongyang*

I. North Korea, Graphic Travelogue, Otherness

Guy Delisle's *Pyongyang: A Journey in North Korea* (2003) records his daily observations and experiences in the capital city of North Korea, where he stayed for two months in 2001 to supervise the production of an outsourced French animated film.[1] *Pyongyang* has been critically acclaimed, as is demonstrated by a list of forty-three international reviews inside the book, but its topic alone is compelling enough to deserve wider attention. The travelogue is about North Korea, a territory of "others" that has not opened its doors to the world like "normal" nations.[2] As David Shim notes, North Korea has been represented as "a timeless 'mystery,'" an "enigma," "terra incognita," and a kind of "blackhole" (1-3). Yet these representations do not mean that the outside world has no inkling of the nation at all. North Korea is known for its totalitarianism, centralized economy, human rights violations, and its development of nuclear programs. These characteristics are not particular to North Korea alone, but lack of access to the nation means that North Korean lives remain mysterious to the outside world. Since North Korea seems inaccessible and travel to the nation unusual, *Pyongyang* demands critical scrutiny. Delisle's text produces ambivalent effects, as colonial writings about non-Western regions have often historically demonstrated. Writing from a position of privilege, Delisle has the opportunity to extend knowledge of North Korea to Western readers. However, his text runs the risk of merely legitimizing Western presuppositions about North Koreans.

Pyongyang is not just a travelogue of a "strange" land. It is "the first graphic novel of North Korea in English (or in its original language, French)" (Armstrong 366).[3] To retell his past experience with dramatic effect, Delisle presents the protagonist in his own image, whom North

Koreans call "Mister Guy," and depicts him grappling with local people and their culture in the panels. *Pyongyang* allows Delisle to visually represent the interior spaces of a city that he was not allowed to photograph or film during his stay. *Pyongyang* features visual tropes that are predictable and familiar as they depict North Koreans as eccentric, impoverished, and indoctrinated, if not brainwashed. In "(Dis)Orienting North Korea," Suzy Kim writes that despite the wide influence of Edward Said and postcolonial critique, "places like North Korea continue to be refracted through the Orientalist lens in the West today" (481). Nevertheless, *Pyongyang* is not another text that simply reinforces stereotypes about North Korea. Although Deslisle's protagonist, Mister Guy, searches for and reaffirms the "otherness" of North Koreans, a close reading of *Pyongyang* calls into question the legitimacy of this affirmation.

The meaning of otherness and the way it highlights certain qualities of particular people cannot be discussed without considering power relations. In Jean-François Staszak's definition,

> [o]therness is the result of a discursive process by which a dominant in-group ("Us," the Self) constructs one or many dominated out-groups ("Them," the Other) by stigmatizing a difference—real or imagined—presented as a negation of identity and thus a motive for potential discrimination. (43)

Otherness has been recontextualized, redefined, and reconstructed to identify who "we" are. Let me give two examples. In his discussion about Europe as an idea, an identity, and a geopolitical reality, Gerard Delanty pays attention to the way that "[identities] are constructed against a category of otherness" (5). The "we" is identified not by what "we" share or experience in common but rather "through the imposition of otherness in the formation of a binary typology of 'Us' and 'Them.' The purity and stability of the 'We' is guaranteed first in the naming, then in the demonisation and finally in the cleansing of otherness" (5). In this process, otherness is categorized as either "recognition" or "negation" based on whether or not it works for "self-identity"; otherness can be accepted when others are not regarded as "threatening stranger[s]," but if they are, their otherness will be excluded (5). Delanty's analysis overlaps with Sara Ahmed's view of how difference is treated in the construction of national identity. Taking the United Kingdom as a case study, Ahmed argues that the multicultural nation uses two types of others to present its ideal image "as 'being' plural, open and diverse; as being loving and welcoming

to others" (133). On the one hand, some others "'give' their difference to the nation, by mixing with others" (139), thus assisting the nation to "[construct] itself as ideal in its capacity to assimilate others into itself" (137); on the other hand, other others who fail to do so "become the sign of disturbance" (139) that presents "this national ideal . . . as all the more ideal" (137). Under these circumstances, the status of incoming others is determined by whether they "meet 'our' conditions" to love the nation as "an ideal object" (135).

Although Delanty and Ahmed focus on different geopolitical contexts, they both recognize that othering particular people, especially those who are inferior in power, involves defining "us" as *un*-othered at the expense of the complexity of diverse social relations. The dualism founded on a simplified "us" and "them" is detected in the Cold War construction of "North Korea as a problem of security and a failed state" (Choi 2). As Shine Choi explains,

> North Korea is a product of encounters between various "us's" and various "North Koreas", but this various, diverse, fragmented, ambiguous "us" remains a particular "us" on one side of politics along the line reified by the Cold War binaries of (neo)liberal US–Western Europe versus the communist-socialist Soviet bloc. (2)

During the Cold War, the United States pursued a "policy of 'containing' the Soviet system" (*NSC*). Paraphrasing the Americanist Donald Pease, Alan Nadel notes how "American cold war foreign policy is marked by a complex narrative of Other and Same" (14). Consequently, North Korea, aligned with the Soviet Union, was predictably othered in the West during the Cold War. But the Western representation of North Korea as "them" persists even in the post-Cold War era geopolitically and culturally. The image of North Korea is thus not simply a Cold War legacy but an ongoing cultural issue that, as Choi argues, leads to the discussion of "how a particular position (e.g. the culture, subjectivity, perspective of the 'self') gets privileged and how the figure of the 'Other' operates in these cases" (3).

Given the above examples of how to treat otherness in different contexts and the historical status of North Korea, Mister Guy's view of the North Koreans expresses a desire to adhere to the historical division between "us" and "them" rather than an attempt to view the local people from a new perspective. As a result, *Pyongyang*, even if inadvertently, reveals the discrepancy between the North Korea that Mister Guy expects

to see and the actual situations that he observes but does not fully perceive. While Delisle's cultural identity as a Canadian living in France requires consideration, my examination of otherness in *Pyongyang* does not intend to rearticulate the reductive dualism of East and West. It is hard to overlook the negative perception of North Korea in South Korea despite their shared history, culture, and language. Han S. Park, for example, notes, "preconceptions and prejudices about North Korea are frequently used as common sense" (39), and Jin Woong Kang admits, "misconceptions and prejudices about North Korea show that the remnants of the Cold War are not entirely overcome" (14) in South Korean society.[4] With this in mind, a critical approach to Delisle's text provides an opportunity to discern not only the Western visitor's gaze but also various other gazes that want to see North Korea as "we" believe it to be. From such a perspective, *Pyongyang* allows readers to consider difference and sameness, rather than otherness, in the people whose nation was once labelled as part of "the axis of evil."

II. Inside the World of the Soldier and the Toy

Like Delisle's other travelogues, *Shenzhen* (2000) and *Burma Chronicles* (2007), *Pyongyang* is neither in colour nor exactly black-and-white but instead filled with greyness of different degrees. The colour grey works effectively in *Pyongyang* for visualizing the opacity, if not obscurity, of North Korea, which is not easy for an outsider to penetrate at first. The difficulty is adumbrated at the beginning of the book. When Mister Guy meets his guide Mr. Kyu at the airport, the panel represents Mr. Kyu as a thick grey silhouette. The interior of the airport is dark due to a power shortage, and Mr. Kyu is standing indoors with his back to the sunlight. Upon closer examination, however, Mr. Kyu's face and clothes are not completely obliterated; they are dimly outlined in dark grey. Mr. Kyu's blurred appearance underscores why readers should scrutinize *Pyongyang*; otherwise, they may only find the Western stereotype that sees North Koreans as unknowable.

The first few pages of *Pyongyang* appear to reinforce Western stereotypes about the absurdity and eccentricity of North Korea. The awkward formalities for entry, the mandatory company of attendants, and the foreign visitors' obligatory floral tribute to the gigantic statue of the nation's founder, Kim Il-sung, are all peculiarities of the North Korean nation. *Pyongyang* highlights two national features of North Korea: economic deprivation and dictatorship. The economic difficulties

are epitomized by low quality meals, non-functional elevators, buses manufactured in Hungary in the 1950s, an empty grand ballroom in a hotel, lack of goods at a department store, and so forth. The local conditions are dreadful, but Mister Guy's humorous, if not sarcastic, reactions serve to lighten the mood without minimizing the seriousness of the economic problems. While looking at an empty dish in his hotel, a metaphor for the food shortage in North Korea, for example, Mister Guy abruptly picks up a toothpick and says, "[T]he toothpicks must be handcarved" (43). Similarly, when his translator Mr. Sin keeps refusing to explain the reason for citizen labourers, referring to them instead as "volunteers," Mister Guy blithely responds, "Ah!" (57).

Likewise, Mister Guy makes jokes about even politically sensitive issues. In a passage that mocks North Korea's surveillance culture, for example, he expresses shock at discovering the face of Kim Il-sung's son, Kim Jong-il, in the mirror on his desk. After realizing that the mirror reflects Kim's photograph attached to the wall, Mister Guy remarks, "Ha ha . . . What a joke!" and adds, counting his days left in Pyongyang, "I've gotta get outta here" (132). Mister Guy does not hide his cynicism toward the North Koreans' worship of Kim Il-sung either. One day, he and a group of North Korean soldiers bow to Kim's statue together at the International Friendship Exhibition, a holy place for the dead leader. While the soldiers have "tears in their eyes," Mister Guy narrates, "[I was] biting my tongue to keep from laughing out loud," because the statue seems ridiculously alive due to certain special effects (105).

The inseparability of North Korea's economic backwardness and the idolization of its former leader is inferred in a splash page. It shows Kim Il-sung's gigantic portrait on the top of a building as the only lighted spot in the darkness of the city (49). In *Pyongyang*, visual imagery in splash pages serves to underscore the otherness of the nation. Delisle's illustrations of monolithic public structures like the Tower of the *Juche* Idea (65), the Monument to Party Founding (97), and the incomplete Ryugyong Hotel (113) embody lifelessness and stagnation. On other splash pages, a huge propaganda billboard (17), a young girls' accordion band (145), and mass games (161) illustrate nationhood and collectiveness as the top priority of North Korea. The splash pages sometimes include factual information about the nation, but this seeing is not simply objective; it also conveys information about the observer. As John Berger puts it, "[t]he way we see things is affected by what we know or what we believe . . . To look is an act

of choice" (8). The subtitle of David Shim's *Visual Politics and North Korea: Seeing Is Believing* indicates a similar perspective. Examining photographic representations of North Korea, Shim argues that

> the depiction of something like, for instance, "real" life in North Korea is not initially a copy of the real, as many observes would contend, but rather a reflection of the photographer's own interest and prejudices. In this vein, a photograph is an act of visual imagination. Hence, the taking of a picture is as revealing of the photographer as it is of the subject depicted. (28)

Choi discusses Delisle's *Pyongyang* via reference to what she describes as "a detective mode of seeing" (77). "This mode of seeing," Choi writes, "creates a distance between the self and the Other, where the Other is evaluated from a higher moral position." The problematic aspects of seeing are legible in Delisle's splash pages and in his representation of North Koreans. For readers who uncritically take Delisle's travelogue as a source of factual information, *Pyongyang* functions primarily to reinforce the otherness of North Korea and its citizens.

It is necessary to remember, however, that all societies contain complexities that are difficult to grasp. North Korea is no exception. In the introduction to *Ask a North Korean*, Daniel Tudor cautions his readers not to generalize information or knowledge about North Korea: "If you asked a wealthy Manhattanite and a rural Arkansan to describe life in the United States, you'd likely get divergent answers. The same is true of North Korea" (10). It is thus no accident that *Pyongyang* reveals the multifaceted or even self-conflicting aspects of North Korea. Take isolation, for example, which Westerners frequently regard as a definitive feature of the nation. Delisle emphasizes the isolation of North Korea not only by means of Mister Guy's comment ("North Korea is the world's most isolated country," 10) but also by depicting North Korea as a fort protruding on a map, with a caption telling the reader that the Communist Party "sealed off the country to all sides" after the Korean War (26). Nancy Pedri reads this image of North Korea as an example of how "Delisle's cartoon maps . . . adopt a number of discursive strategies—appraisive, evaluative, persuasive strategies—to present a very particular view of North Korea" (101). Using Mister Guy's comment and the cartoon map, Pedri argues that Delisle presents the two kinds of isolation in North Korea: that of the nation as well as the people (Pedri 104). The confinement of North Koreans is also represented by a reappearing image of a lonely tortoise in an aquarium (Delisle 35, 81, 174).

In an interview with Kenan Kocak, Delisle says that the tortoise symbolizes his "trapped" condition as well as that of the North Korean people (110-11).

North Korea is not portrayed as completely "sealed off" in *Pyongyang*, however.[5] The presence of Mister Guy in North Korea evinces the connection, though anemic, between the nation and global capitalism. He is not the only Western animator in town either. Over the course of two months, Mister Guy meets various French colleagues: Sandrine, his predecessor; Richard, who started working in Pyongyang one week earlier; David, an old acquaintance; Henri, who is a producer at a small French studio that Mister Guy once worked for; and Fabrice, who later replaces Richard. North Korea is the French version of "an animation Who's Who" (134), in Mister Guy's own words. On his flight to North Korea, Mister Guy also sees a "French Alcatel employee," a "German mineral water exporter," and a "young Italian foreign aid worker" (9). He later discovers other foreign visitors, including French telecom engineers, Chinese tourists, a Libyan long-term resident, a Turkish delegation, and even Americans who came to retrieve the remains of US soldiers. Moreover, the city has a small "expat microcosm" (116) that hosts parties at which Mister Guy sees foreigners who have come to Pyongyang from different nations for different purposes. As the caption says in the scene of the reunion between Mister Guy and his acquaintance David, *Pyongyang* ensures that "globalization is global" (82).

Mister Guy's claim that "meeting Koreans is next to impossible" (10) is an exaggeration. It is nevertheless true that he is not allowed to freely engage with North Koreans in North Korea. He only manages to encounter a small number of them, such as an animation technician, a chambermaid in his hotel, and local animators at the Scientific and Educational Film Studio of Korea (SEK), not to mention the attendants who always accompany him. The cultural and language barriers prevent both sides from communicating with each other. The technician, for example, keeps annoying Mister Guy by singing or playing propaganda songs (28, 131), and the chambermaid keeps interrupting his sleep early in the morning to switch water bottles in the refrigerator, even disregarding the "do-not-disturb" sign on the door (35, 44). Mister Guy also fails twice to help the North Korean animators to understand the meaning of a cartoon bear character's "typically French gesture" (128), which they need to draw. He explains that people make this gesture when experiencing an electric shock. He even strangely appears to rejoice in the hypothetical situation:

"Yes, ha ha ha ha! That's exactly it, an electric shock! Dzzt! Dzzt!" (77). In another instance, he vaguely responds that the gesture means "Ooh la la" while mimicking the cartoon bear's speech and hand movements (128). Differences of language and culture cannot be resolved in a short period of time. Yet these anecdotes suggest that the nation's isolation is a major cause of the North Koreans' ignorance of manners and cultures widely acknowledged in the outside world.

The North Koreans in *Pyongyang* remain anonymous except for Mr. Kyu and Mr. Sin. Mr. Sin is the North Korean with whom Mister Guy most often talks. The disagreements between them signify not only individual but also geopolitical division. When Mister Guy raises the issue of Korean reunification, for example, Mr. Sin points out the responsibility of the United States for the division against the aspirations of both North and South Koreans. Mister Guy responds, "Hmm . . . I see" (63), but in his mind, he says with a playful smile, "Dream on, pal!" and rebuts that after the German reunification and the Asian financial crisis, South Koreans are no longer enthusiastic about reunification with "a country 46 times poorer than their own" (62). South Korean positions on reunification are open to debate. *Pyongyang* does not intend to seek these out, but Mister Guy's comments in his mind have the effect of aligning South Korea with the rest of world and against the North Koreans.

Mr. Sin is presented not simply as an unknowledgeable civilian. When speaking of the military tension in the Korean peninsula, Mr. Sin is transformed into a military commander (63). The visual change suggestively identifies his voice with the military's, thereby blurring the line between North Korean civilian and soldier. This is not the first time Mr. Sin's civilian-military identity is illuminated. When he is first introduced, two panels show the same figure of Mr. Sin, but his attire switches from civilian clothing to military uniform, and each caption implies that it is not easy for him to free himself from the military way of life: "Mister Sin. Fresh out of eight years of military service" (34). Commander Sin reappears as the captain of "a battalion of animators" (159) in Mister Guy's imagination, following panels that illustrate North Korea's military forces and North Koreans' preparedness for military drills. Another image attached to Mr. Sin and the North Koreans is a smiling clockwork toy that has a Kim Il-sung badge on the left side of its chest. The toy first appears, alongside the caption "[b]ody and soul serve the regime" (59), when Mr. Sin explains the North Koreans' duties to prepare for

national events. The toy reappears later when Mister Guy visits the Tower of *Juche* with his attendants (75).

These images of North Koreans as both soldiers and clockwork toys are consistent with "the often-stereotypical ways in which North Korea is looked at, thus establishing boundaries and difference" (Shim and Nabers 295). In "Imagining North Korea," David Shim and Dirk Nabers discuss two kinds of photographs of North Koreans from the Western media and analyze their "political and ethical significance" (296). On the one hand, Western photographs of North Koreans in "distress, depression, and desperation" or in suffering from malnutrition stereotype the nation as a "wimp" (Shim and Nabers 297). On the other hands, official North Korean photographs of military parades, displaying North Koreans as a "homogeneous, brain-washed, and robot-like mass" (301), offer evidence that the nation is a "menace" (300-01). The representation of North Koreans in military parades also appears in Suki Kim's travelogue, *Without You, There Is No Us* (2015). Kim infiltrated North Korea in 2011 as an English teacher and documented her observations of students from the ruling class, whom she describes as follows: "My little soldiers were also little robots" (278-79).

While Mr. Sin represents a stereotypical North Korean, the way he reifies the otherness of his people is not inherently "North Korean." When Mr. Sin or any other attendant expresses admiration for the achievement of North Korea at local attractions, his performance is not different from that of non-Western local tour guides outside North Korea, who mythologize the distinctions of their inheritance for Western tourists. In "Imagineering Otherness," Noel B. Salazar notes how "global tourism is the quintessential business of difference projection and the interpretive vehicle of Othering par excellence (with many peoples now cleverly Othering themselves)" (690). The primary purpose of tour guides is not to provide factual information but rather, as Salazar argues, "to satisfy the tourist's wish to see and experience the Other (as imagined since colonial times)" (691). Mr. Sin does not commercialize his knowledge or language capacity, and Mister Guy is never impressed by Mr. Sin's presentation. Nevertheless, it is hard to miss that Mr. Sin willingly embellishes his nation by othering himself for the Western visitor. As a result, like the narratives of other non-Western tour guides, his narrative of national glory inevitably participates in "the constant (re)production of stereotypes and categories of ethnic and cultural difference across the globe" (Salazar 690).

The attendants' explanations, therefore, should not always be taken at face value. Yet Mister Guy assumes that the North Koreans believe in their words. When an attendant says that there are no disabled people in North Korea because "all North Koreans are born strong, intelligent and healthy," for example, Mister Guy thinks to himself, "And from the way he says it, I think he believes it" (136). Mister Guy questions the authenticity of what he hears, but he often does not discuss it with the North Koreans. Mister Guy is silent as often as he is talkative. By his silence, he shares his thoughts about North Korea with readers, but not with the local people, thereby further distancing himself from North Koreans, as well as "them" from "us."

The same attitude is witnessed when Mr. Sin and Mr. Kyu inform Mister Guy about the global spread of *Juche*, the official ideology of North Korea, which the attendants promote as "the source of life that invigorates the spirit of all people, transcending latitude and longitude" (73). Mister Guy expresses repulsion but again only to himself: "Do they really believe the bullshit that's being forced down their throats?" (74). He believes that his attendants should know the position of North Korea in the world "[b]ecause they are among the privileged few who are able to leave the country" (75). Their status raises questions about North Korea's isolation again; the borders are not completely closed for North Koreans either. Mister Guy is speechless, however, when Mr. Sin denies the attractions of Paris: "It's full of beggars and it isn't very clean" (75).

To illuminate the reason for Mr. Sin's pretense, Delisle deploys a comic technique called *closure*, which Scott McCloud defines as the "phenomenon of observing the parts but perceiving the whole" (63). The first panel, showing Mr. Sin silently looking out of the window with his arms folded, is juxtaposed with a panel in which the clockwork toy reappears. While the first toy has only one spring in its back, the second toy has an additional spring in its head, connoting North Koreans' lack of critical thinking towards the regime. The image of the toy is followed by another panel showing the location of North Korea's political prison camps. According to McCloud's notion of closure, Delisle's ordering of these panels compels readers to fill the gaps ("gutters") between them, thereby reaching the conclusion that Mr. Sin may end up facing "life imprisonment" if he happens to "let on" about his personal thoughts to Mister Guy (75).

The logic underlying the arrangement of these three panels accords with the dominant "cultural representations" of North Korea widely circulated in the West. As Christine Kim elaborates, "these cultural

representations function as a cultural fantasy of the inhuman for the rest of the world, one wherein the spectacular and macabre are pitched as the North Korean everyday" (223). In "Figuring North Korean Lives," Kim argues that the problem with post-World War II human rights discourses concerns how they "imagin[e] the subject of human rights in Western terms" (222). As a result, she argues that "North Korea functions alternately as a metaphor for the inhuman and as a metonym for Asian incivility" (221) and thereby its historical achievement has been disregarded (224). Bruce Cumings corroborates the latter part of Kim's argument:

> An internal CIA study almost grudgingly acknowledged various achievements of the regime: compassionate care for children in general and war orphans in particular; "radical change" in the position of women; genuinely free housing, free health care, and preventive medicine; and infant mortality and life expectancy rates comparable to the most advanced countries until the recent famine.
> (viii-ix)

Mister Guy's adherence to a traditionally Western view of North Korean society causes him to overlook the complex subjectivity of Mr. Sin and other people of the same class. They are not simply native informants; as Mister Guy admits (Delisle 75), they are also travelers like himself, who may have "hybrid, cosmopolitan experiences as much as . . . rooted, native ones" (Clifford, "Traveling" 101). As Ulrich Beck writes, "*Transnational* is not conceptually opposed to *indigenous*. Transnationals are local people" (445). Moreover, Mister Guy is not the only one who acts as an observer. To Mr. Sin and his colleagues, Mister Guy is only a short-term visitor whom they should take turns watching. While performing his duties, Mr. Sin thus does not need to tell a foreign stranger what is on his mind at the risk of undermining his position. Mutual distrust is then sensed by both sides. Mister Guy, however, can hardly understand the significance of the local people's unheard voices, which are acknowledged even in Suki Kim's travelogue, a text that rarely deviates from its general skepticism about North Korea: "In groups, [my students] inevitably mouthed the right answer, which would then be reviewed in weekly Daily Life Unity critiques, but in private, their voices resonated" (279).

Even North Koreans with no opportunity to travel abroad were not completely "sealed off" (26) at the time when Delisle visited Pyongyang. During his reign from 1994 to 2011, Kim Jong-il's leadership was tested

against "three crises": famine, the emergence of a market economy, and nuclear development (Buzo 247). The "Arduous March" (1994-1996), a catastrophic famine, is estimated to have "claimed the lives of between 200,000 and three million North Koreans" (Tudor and Pearson 18). The government's inability to supply food and protect their people precipitated a market economy (*jangmadang*) in which daily necessities and foreign products were traded, including smuggled South Korean goods (Tudor and Pearson 25-29, 34-39). The markets that burgeoned in the late 1990s have continued to grow; according to Travis Jeppesen, who has visited North Korea five times since 2012, "[f]ar from being cut off from the rest of the world, the markets have put North Koreans directly in the middle of it" (114). North Korean markets did not only circulate material necessities from the outside in the early 2000s. As North Korean refugee Ji-min Kang recalls, "At first, it was Western culture that initially swept across Pyongyang. After that, Chinese and Hong Kong culture was the next to reach the big cities. Then South Korean dramas and music started to arrive" (qtd. in Tudor 69). Another refugee, Jinyuok Park, shares Kang's observation and underscores the popularity of South Korean television programs: "When I was still in North Korea, I only watched South Korean TV occasionally, and out of sheer curiosity. But these days North Koreans watch it almost every day" (qtd. in Tudor 76). Despite the North Korean government's control, South Korean popular culture had spread even among the elite. Referring to the work of Hye-il Ho, a former North Korean security guard, Ka Young Chung states: "during inspections in 2002, 600kg of South Korean videos, compact discs, and other publications were collected from students at Kim Il Sung University" (141). North Koreans were already aware that South Korea was materially richer and politically freer. Restrictions on information and mobility limit normal cultural flows. But North Koreans are no exception in terms of their connectivity with the world, as an anonymous translator demonstrates in *Pyongyang* with questions about Microsoft Windows and HTML (144). Mister Guy is not impressed, however; he instead stresses the absence of the Internet in North Korea. Upon discovering Autodesk 3ds Max graphics programs installed on computers at a school for gifted children, Mister Guy focuses on something else again: "I bet they didn't buy the licenses" (156). Despite the legitimacy of his concern about license, Mister Guy's remarks ignoring the local economic situation can pose a potential problem, which Michael Faber points out in a review of *Pyongyang* and *Shenzhen*: "There's

always a risk that disdain for an oppressive regime can cross the line into disdain for people too poor to be cosmopolitans."

The recognition of the North Koreans in *Pyongyang* as social and cultural subjects interacting with their surroundings can change readers' reception of Mister Guy's perspective. In "Travelling Culture," James Clifford suggests that the reconsideration of "indigenous collaborators" as "writers/inscribers" can help "to loosen the monological control of the executive writer/anthropologist and to open for discussion ethnography's hierarchy and negotiation of discourses in power-changed, unequal situations" (100). Clifford's argument can caution readers of *Pyongyang* to not entirely rely on Mister Guy's view and to recognize him as the outsider who fails to converse with the local people. Mister Guy is similar to his attendants in that his opinion of North Korea never varies over the course of his visit, thereby continuing to affirm the distance between North Korea and the West. Later in his stay, when a translator brings up US opposition to Korean reunification, Mister Guy breaks his silence to disagree with him, insisting that "the real problem . . . is that you've got only one source of information: the regime" (154). To support his position, Mister Guy picks up a French newspaper cartoon that satirizes President Jacques René Chirac and Prime Minister Lionel Jospin, arguing that when "people are free to criticize . . . at least you can base your opinions on more than one point of view." Turning his back on the translator, Mister Guy then concludes his outburst by remarking, "[D]'you know what *we* say about democracy and dictatorship? Dictatorship means shut up, democracy means keep talking! Ha Ha Ha Ha Ha Ha!" (155; emphasis mine). Mister Guy's skepticism about the potential for change in North Korea is intimated at the end of the book. In an interview, Delisle chooses *Pyongyang* as his favourite work and says, "I really like the ending of the book," though without providing further explanation (112). In *Pyongyang*, there are two scenes in which Mister Guy makes paper planes from recycled storyboard sheets and flies them from his hotel room on the fifteenth floor (114, 176). Mister Guy says, "I don't know why, but it makes me feel satisfied. Especially when I make it [a paper plane] to the river" (114). Here the paper airplane can symbolize the freedom of mobility, which Mister Guy believes does not exist for North Koreans or, temporarily, for him either. Interestingly, the storyboard sheet used for the paper plane on the last page has an image of the bear character making the "typically French gesture" (128) that the animators at SEK did not understand. In this sense, the ending can be interpreted as

implying that establishing freedom in North Korea may be as hard, if not as impossible, as overcoming cultural barriers.

Despite essentializing North Korean "otherness," *Pyongyang*, like Delisle's other travelogues, is a complex text that includes representations of North Koreans as ordinary people, which do not corroborate with Mister Guy's perspective. Ironically, Mr. Sin serves as a good example of this. After visiting a tae kwondo demonstration, Mr. Sin and Mr. Kyu bring Mister Guy to a shooting facility. Lacking military experience, he wildly fires his gun, mimicking Corto Maltese, Hugo Pratt's comic character (142). Mister Guy believes that Mr. Sin and Mr. Kyu "have the advantage of a few years of military training," but he surprisingly obtains the highest score. The subsequent panel shows Mister Guy celebrating by putting his hands up and saying, "Yes!" while Mr. Sin's sullen face silently looks down at his score sheet (142). Mr. Sin's reaction may not seem special; it can be observed in any person whose self-esteem has been hurt. But considering the portrayal of his identity as a clockwork toy and a soldier, Mr. Sin's expression of emotion, not to mention the comical atmosphere of the situation, makes him appear more human, like people in "normal" nations. At another moment, Mister Guy asks Mr. Sin to identify a propaganda song in which "Kim Jong-il" is the only Korean word that Mister Guy recognizes. After Mister Guy imitates the song as "Pa-Pa-Pam / Pa-Pa-Pa-Pa / Kim Jong-Il! / Pa-Pa-Pa" (125), Mr. Sin sings a song that sounds like "Ani-Yooooo-Na / To Yo Suuuu-ki / / Sun-Yo Chouu," and smiles, believing that he has figured it out (126). Yet Mister Guy responds, "No, not that one. Mine was slower," and imitates the song again. Mr. Sin sings five different songs in a row, but Mister Guy keeps saying, "That's not it," "Nope," "Not at all," "Don't think so," and "Uh-uh." The last panel on the page shows Mr. Sin's singing face with the caption, "If we hadn't arrived at work, we could have spent the day going through the repertoire" (126). The propaganda songs undoubtedly praise the glory of Kim Jong-il and his regime. Nevertheless, Mr. Sin is not portrayed as an impenetrable other as in other anecdotes; the onomatopoeic representation of his singing and the sequence of his various faces create a comic effect. At this moment, Mr. Sin is seen as a local person willingly helping a foreign colleague, who cannot identify a local song due to the language barrier.

Furthermore, not all North Koreans in *Pyongyang* are portrayed as homogenous and collective. In the later part of the book, Mister Guy is happy to learn that the current animation director is being replaced by a

more skillful animator who "comes from a village near the Chinese border" (151). Considering the new director's success, Mister Guy admits that it is possible to gain social status in North Korea through individual ability, although Mister Guy's admissions are not without reservation:

> [I]n a way, I'm glad to know his drawing skills let him leave his remote village to make a better life for himself and his family. Come to think of it, it's probably the only upside to the whole Asian subcontracting system. The others who wind up in Pyongyang take a far less glorious path. (151)

Later, Mister Guy encounters a young animator who does not join the mandatory screening of a propaganda film in his workplace. When Mister Guy asks for the reason, the young animator asserts, "I don't like movies made here. They're boring" (153). Mister Guy is so impressed that he describes the young animator's words as "the most subversive thing I heard a North Korean say" and "as incredibly bold" (153). No further depiction of the new director or of the young animator follows; nevertheless, the fragmentary anecdotes indicate that North Koreans also desire success and individuality, the same as in Western societies. Mister Guy may not have imagined finding such universality in North Korea, but his encounter with these two North Koreans, along with the anecdotes of Mr. Sin, present moments, albeit brief and transient, when North Koreans are *un*-othered and seen as fellow human beings living in a different society.

The young animator's attitude may preview what the following generations of North Koreans could be like. At the end of his North Korean travelogue, *See You Again in Pyongyang* (2018), Jeppesen describes the soldier who guided him to the Demilitarized Zone and nearby areas during his first visit to the nation in 2012. Jeppesen finds the soldier to be almost the same age as him (early thirties), likely from an affluent family, and "full of questions" (300), about which they have a conversation. Here is Jeppesen's reminiscence of the young North Korean about ten years after Delisle left Pyongyang:

> [W]e find ourselves on common ground, and we both know it, without having to say it. I'm from where I'm from, he's from this place, and there's nothing we can do about it. We are both the products of countries determined to do their own thing, to pursue their agendas and interests with cunning and aggression. Maybe there's a part of both of us that tends to look at the worlds we come from and wonder what's real and what's not.
>
> He looks at me, and I look at him. He smiles and shrugs, says

> something in Korean. My guide laughs.
> "What did he say?" I ask her.
> "Countries are countries," she translates, "But people are people." (300-01)

III. Negotiation between "Our" Belief and "Their" Reality

Pyongyang reinscribes the effect of "our" conventional perspectives on "others" even in the era of globalization. It also evinces that travelling does not necessarily prompt visitors to question "our" previous knowledge of local "others." To stop othering North Koreans, however, is not "to 'whitewash' the behavior of the regime" (Tudor 10). It is a first step toward "an affirmation of the other as both different and the same" (Beck 439). Cumings arrives at a similar point of view and writes, "I have no sympathy for the North, which is the author of most of its troubles" (xi). "But on my infrequent visits to the country," he continues,

> I have been happy—in trying to fathom an undeniable difference, in getting to know ordinary people who say and do the same things ordinary people do in the South, in meeting highly skilled officials who have taken the measure of our leaders more than once (xi).

These experiences lead Cumings to conclude, "*It is their country*, for better or worse—another country." Rüdiger Frank, a German economist, shares Cuming's view, based on his multiple visits to North Korea between 1991 and 2018. In the preface to the Korean translation of *Unterwegs in Nordkorea*, he writes:

> North Korea is certainly not paradise, but it is not hell either. Many people are successful, and many are not
> . . . We should not have delusions about the North Korean regime and the intentions of its leaders, but we should also avoid blind hatred and stereotypical thinking. The North Koreans are not stupid, simple, uneducated, uncivilized, or cruel. At least in such special circumstances, we can do the same, but nothing more. (10)

The views above presuppose the recognition of both differences and commonalities between "us" and "them." *Pyongyang* presents the possibility of identifying North Koreans by negotiating between two conflicting representations of them: On one hand the North Koreans who correspond with Mister Guy's preconceived notion of otherness, and on the

other hand, the North Koreans who do not appear like "them." Both appear in Delisle's text, and it is up to readers which of the two representations they will primarily take into account.

Notes

1. This work was supported by the Ministry of Education of the Republic of Korea and the National Research Foundation of Korea (NRF-2018S1A5A2A02070219).
2. According to Philipp Wassler and Markus Schuckert, North Korea has opened its gates to foreign tourists "gradually, during the last decade," for the purpose of obtaining foreign currency, although the tourism program is "still far from developed" (123). The government aimed to host one hundred thousand tourists in 2014 and two million in 2020, but the goal does not seem to have been achieved. About six thousand Westerners are estimated to have visited North Korea per year until 2017, when the US government banned Americans from visiting due to the death of Otto Warmbier, who visited North Korea but returned in a vegetative condition (Frank 29).
3. As a French-speaking Canadian, Delisle published *Pyongyang* in French in 2003, with the English translation appearing in 2005. Another notable graphic travelogue of North Korea is Yeong Jin Oh's *A Visitor from the South*, which was published in Korean in 2004 and translated into French in 2008 under the title of *Le Visiteur du Sud*. It won the Prix Asie-ACBD in France in the same year. The travelogue portrays Oh's daily life in Sinpo, North Korea over 548 days (2000-2001), when he worked as an engineer on the construction of a light-water reactor.
4. Park's and Kang's books are published only in Korean. The translations are mine.
5. In 2011, Charles K. Armstrong notes, "The study of North Korea is no longer *terra incognita* in the English language world" (357). He presents as evidence scholarly works, refugee testimonies, journalism, expatriate accounts, films, photographs, and other uncategorized texts about North Korea, including Delisle's *Pyongyang*, published in English in the first decade of the twenty-first century. As Armstrong demonstrates, these publications were made possible because of internal changes within North Korean society, the migration of North Korean refugees, and released Chinese, Japanese, and Soviet archives. Despite the ongoing opaqueness of North Korea, Armstrong argues that the production of further works is "not a problem of insufficient information, but rather insufficient motivation and imagination" (369). In 2017, Tudor notes in *Ask a North Korean* that "North Korea is well represented in English language articles and books," although topics are concentrated on politics and refugee "horror stories" (7).

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Joon Ho Hwang is Professor in the Division of English Language and Literature at Ewha Womans University in Seoul, South Korea. He teaches British and American modern poetry, American short stories, and popular culture, and has published articles on modern poems, comics/graphic novels, Hollywood films, and South Korean popular culture.

Kevin Tunnicliffe

Moonlight, Metaphor, and the Influence of Wallace Stevens in Don McKay's *The Book of Moonlight*

In 2000, Don McKay published *The Book of Moonlight*, whose eponymous poem includes an epigraph excerpted from Wallace Stevens' "The Comedian as the Letter C": "The book of moonlight is not written yet" (*Collected* 27). On the back cover of this chapbook, there is a fraudulent quotation, supposedly by Wallace Stevens, that reads, "I wish I had written this book!" Even though the speaker of Stevens' poem asks that room be left for Crispin in the book of moonlight, McKay boldly appropriates both Stevens' poetry and voice in moves that are simultaneously characteristic of McKay's humour and anathema to his poetics (27). A simple explanation might suggest that McKay is just trying to bait his reader, whether they revel in the playfulness or take offence. But any longtime reader of McKay will know that his poetry is rarely simple, and that his humour almost always points to something deeper. Perhaps the very explicitness of McKay's gesture is what gives away the game; after all, McKay could be performing a gesture done "in homage," writing back to Stevens what he has synthesized from his predecessor: "So, this is *for* you but not *about* you," as McKay puts it in "The Appropriate Gesture" (178). In this paper I explore why, in his ninth book of poetry, Don McKay felt the need to write what Stevens, and his infamous hero Crispin, had left undone—and to trace how this epigraph ends up leaving its mark.

McKay is a self-professed "nature poet," a label that may be slightly reductive considering the depth of his oeuvre, but one that nonetheless points toward the wellspring of his poetry. *Don McKay: Essays on His Works*, the first collection dedicated to McKay's work, is full of admiration for the precise, attentive, sensitive, and often humourous language with which McKay crafts his poems. While "everything is grist to McKay's poetic mill" (Levenson 52), however, it is by and large McKay's ability to

let the otherness of nature peek out from behind human constructs that gets the most attention. McKay has become almost inseparable from a particular "community of Canadian poets concerned with relationships among poetry, philosophy, and the environment" (Dragland 881).[1] In the only monograph dedicated to McKay's work (to date), *Ornithologies of Desire: Ecocritical Essays, Avian Poetics, and Don McKay*, Travis V. Mason emphasizes the "biological and ecological specificity evident in McKay's writing" as a way to "[argue] for the capacity of ecocriticism to read across genres and disciplines, to listen to many different stories, to speak/write polyphonically" (xi). Mason suggests that the scientific side of McKay's writing is as important as its literariness. Conversely, despite McKay's references to Heidegger and Levinas within the first handful of pages of the often philosophical *Vis à Vis: Field Notes on Poetry and Wilderness*, Stan Dragland explains that "McKay is annoyed whenever he is labelled an academic poet" (883). However unlikely a connection, this last sentiment ultimately reminds me of Stevens—another poet who refused to parley with academia too much, yet whose erudition bespeaks a deeply philosophical bent and also lands him perennially on university reading lists. While Stevens is not considered a nature poet, his linguistic precision, perceptual sensitivity, and ability to unhinge the constructions of the human mind make him an inspiration for many poets. When McKay invokes his predecessor in "The Book of Moonlight," he makes the connection explicit and casts the whole collection in a new light.

Harmonium, Stevens' first stand-alone collection of poetry, was famously published when the poet was forty-four years old, and "The Comedian as the Letter C" is often considered a dramatization of Stevens' poetic maturation up to its publication. As such, the poem fits into the tradition of "imaginative voyaging" and of the Romantic quest poem, especially in its resemblance to Shelley's *Alastor* (Longenbach 91).[2] "The Comedian as the Letter C" is an extended rumination on Stevens finding his voice as both an inheritor and pallbearer of certain poetic legacies in a new socio-cultural climate. In this light, it makes sense to think of McKay's *The Book of Moonlight* as a meditation on his own development. It also opens a two-way dialogue between these poets. There is a long history of critics tracing Stevens' influences and inheritors. The *Wallace Stevens Journal* regularly publishes special issues on Stevens' literary (and sometimes personal) relations with poets ranging from Robert Frost and Walt Whitman to Seamus Heaney and John Ashbery. Bart Eeckhout and

Lisa Goldfarb have edited a far-reaching and diverse collection of essays on Stevens' influence. Studies like these purport, at times, to hammer out concrete connections or definitive incompatibilities, but at others they make modest attempts to open spaces in which comparisons put into relief otherwise unnoticed or seemingly minor facets of different poets' work. Eeckhout and Goldfarb hold "that influence studies in literary criticism had better retain a tentative, speculative, occasionally even experimental character" (2). Interestingly, tentativeness, speculation, and experimentation are often characteristics of McKay's poetry. Through epigraphs, allusions, and naming, McKay often opens his poems to the voices of others; this intertextuality is an important part of his poetics and effectively puts his oeuvre into open-ended relationships that, like the "angular unconformities" that inspire his *Collected Poems*, expose the myriad layers beneath his poems.[3] Although Stevens was writing half a century earlier, and from an American modernist context, his presence breaches the surface in *The Book of Moonlight*, "spiking" McKay's poems with Stevens' own rich poetics. As *The New Wallace Stevens Studies* (2021) claims, moreover, there is still much work to do to take Stevens scholarship in compelling new directions that better align with decolonial, ecocritical, and other urgent perspectives (3). While Stevens and McKay may already be poetic giants in their respective contexts, putting their work in dialogue with each other may also help to resist and expand the sometimes limiting canonical readings of their work.

My intention in this paper is to hold *The Book of Moonlight* up against "The Comedian as the Letter 'C'" and several of Stevens' other poems, hoping that doing so helps illuminate some facets of each poet's work. Reading these poems in tandem exposes the former as being similarly shaped by the dialectical relation between reality and the imagination, and provides a new perspective on what McKay calls "wilderness" and "home." This reading promotes a broader understanding of McKay's poetics, especially as an inheritor of Stevens' legacy. McKay invokes Stevens so that he can work within Stevens' poetic framework, but in doing so, he makes a significant poetic statement of his own.

With its epigraph from "The Comedian as the Letter 'C,'" McKay's titular poem "The Book of Moonlight" points beyond itself: both as an address to Wallace Stevens and as a link to McKay's inherited poetic history. As Gerard Genette explains in *Paratexts: Thresholds of Interpretation*, "[t]he most direct function" of an epigraph "is one of

commenting—sometimes authoritatively—and thus of elucidating and thereby justifying not the text but the *title*" (156). This is certainly the case with the epigraph to "The Book of Moonlight," which is placed into a context that it seems to fit explicitly. In "The Comedian as the Letter C," Crispin's "book of moonlight" is still unwritten (*Collected* 27). With "The Book of Midnight," McKay arguably writes it. As a result, the function of McKay's epigraph becomes inverted. As Genette elaborates, "[a] rarer effect is the reverse one, when the title modifies the meaning of the epigraph" (157). In a move typical of his poetics, McKay puts his epigraph into question, as the epigraph and title modify the meaning of each other. However, if "The Book of Moonlight" is considered as a dual interrogation of the poet's creative process and (its mirror image) the reader's interpretive process, then its recursive/subversive nature becomes clearer. Because it is a citation, McKay's epigraph functions as a paratext. J. Hillis Miller famously explains the linguistic underpinnings of paratext:

> "Para" is an "uncanny" double antithetical prefix signifying at once proximity and distance, similarity and difference, interiority and exteriority, something at once inside a domestic economy and outside it, something simultaneously this side of the boundary line, threshold, or margin, and at the same time beyond it, equivalent in status and at the same time secondary or subsidiary, submissive, as of guest to host, slave to master. (441)

While some of the language here may be outdated and problematic, Miller's framework seems amenable to McKay's poetics. Seen in this way, "The Book of Moonlight" dwells on this threshold and takes on a dialogic tension with its ancestor.

Published in *Harmonium* in 1923, "The Comedian as the Letter C" is Stevens' first long poem. As alluded to above, the "hero" of the poem is Crispin, who is often thought to be part semi-autobiographical representation of Stevens and part ironic post-Romantic quester. Briefly, Crispin leads a voyage, or "pilgrimage," in search of a poetic home; he leaves stale Bordeaux behind, finds and rejects fecund Yucatan, and then finally settles in the Carolinas. The line borrowed by McKay comes from the middle section of the poem, where Crispin is approaching the Carolinas by sea. It is important to note that Crispin has not yet arrived at his new home:

> The book of moonlight is not written yet

> Nor half begun, but, when it is, leave room
> For Crispin, fagot in the lunar fire,
> Who, in the hubbub of his pilgrimage
> Through sweating changes, never could forget
> That wakefulness or meditating sleep,
> In which the sulky strophes willingly
> Bore up, in time, the somnolent, deep songs.
> Leave room, therefore, in that unwritten book
> For the legendary moonlight that once burned
> In Crispin's mind above a continent. (*Collected* 27)

Keeping this passage in mind, why does McKay write "The Book of Moonlight"? One may well understand the way McKay boldly finishes what was to be left undone for Crispin as a humorous, tongue-in-cheek gesture. If Crispin is Stevens' "hero," and he has yet to arrive in his new poetic home, then could "The Book of Moonlight" be about Crispin, the so-called "arriviste" addressed in the first line? If Crispin is on the verge of finding his poetic voice, is on the "cusp of change" (McKay, *Book* 11) through "his observant progress" (Stevens, *Collected* 27), could not Crispin be McKay's potential hero-voyeur?

Perhaps a better way to frame these questions is to ask why McKay decides to "write" Stevens' unwritten "book of midnight." The answer to this question may become clearer by looking at Stevens' image of the moon more closely. Frank Kermode's influential reading of Stevens assumes an oppositional relationship of sun and moon, pitting sun-reality against moon-imagination (47). I do not dispute the significance or usefulness of this formulation; however, I think there is another way to approach this dichotomy that complicates it, and also layers it with nuance and possibility. By inhabiting the moonlit moment that Crispin experiences before he reaches his destination, McKay borrows/imports some of Stevens' poetic framework. By invoking Stevens' poetic legacy like this, McKay creates his own lunar perspective and pays tribute to Stevens. Let us briefly consider Crispin's voyage. After leaving the excesses of Yucatan ("That earth was like a jostling festival / Of seeds grown fat, too juicily opulent" [26]), Crispin senses that he is on the verge of finding his true poetic home. Approaching the Carolinas at night, Crispin enacts what Harold Bloom calls the *"kenosis* or self-emptying of the poem" (78). This shedding of previous poetic formulations initiates a brief and possibly unique state of receptiveness in Crispin—a state that maps nicely onto McKay's notion of "poetic attention" (as I discuss below). Interestingly, *kenosis* can also refer

to the waning of the moon—a meaning with serendipitous significance: if the moon is most closely associated with the imagination and Romanticism, then this is the moment when Crispin begins to transition to realism and the sun. Here, for the first time in his voyage, Crispin comes "without palms / Or jugglery, without regalia" (28). He has apparently shed his former beliefs; he is neither carrying a cultural burden nor trying to import foreign poetics. He approaches under "the mistiness of the moon," which suggests a blurred or altered picture of the world (27). This misty light provides, simultaneously, an obfuscating veil and a blurring together of things seen. The moonlight, though, leaves an indelible impression upon Crispin; although the moonlight is a thing of "legend," it also initiates a movement or awakening in Crispin's mind that allows for the "deep songs" to arise. This movement is what Helen Vendler calls "a poetry of the transitional moment, of the not-quite-here and the not-yet-gone," a world not of "antinomies" (between reality and the imagination) but a poetic "midworld between them" (47). Crispin cannot tell if he experiences "wakefulness or meditating sleep" and in this transitory state he approaches his destination—both his new home and, possibly, poetic maturity. Significantly, this moment in the poem marks the crucial shift in Crispin's voyage that McKay invokes.

Crispin's approach to the Carolinas marks the "transitional moment" of the poem, both in the poem's structure and in Crispin's poetic maturation. He has not yet settled in a literal or poetic home, and thus a tension remains between sun-reality and moon-imagination. The final two sections of the poem present Crispin embracing realism fueled by locality and quotidian matters as he enters "social nature": he settles down and starts a family/colony, seemingly instead of a new poetics (*Collected* 35). As Hi Simons declares, "The remaining two cantos deal more particularly with that other, cognate theme, the personal relation of the poet to society. And the tone of frustration in the conclusion of this section is due to the poet's failure to solve the problem he undertook to solve" (462). While Crispin does seem to leave behind his fascination with moonlight in favour of sensible and localized reality, lunar vision undoubtedly influences him. While "the book of moonlight is not written yet," the speaker implores the reader to "[l]eave room" for it to be written sometime in the future (*Collected* 27). This yet unwritten book is what I want to examine more closely. While his newfound belief that "what is is what should be" (33) provides a stable source of inspiration, Crispin also finds that "the

quotidian saps" his imagination (34). Moonlight, however, provides an alternative to sunlight, and thus a different way of seeing.

Before arriving in the Carolinas, Crispin finds himself conscious of the "lunar fire" that illuminates his imagination in his new surroundings (27). As Crispin understands it, "[p]erhaps the Arctic moonlight really gave / The liaison, the blissful liaison, / Between himself and his environment" (28). The moonlight is a "blissful liaison" in that it lays bare the role of the mind's imaginative powers in how Crispin experiences, or makes sense of, the world. Vendler explains of Crispin's new perspective, "The effect is of something half-glimpsed, half-seen, and that is, finally, what Stevens achieves over and over: if he has a dogma, it is the dogma of the shadowy, the ephemeral, the barely perceived, the iridescent" (35). For Stevens, this way of seeing can be desirable because it forces the edges of perception to become visible and breaks language free from denotative certainty. Crispin-Stevens may transcend his Romantic influences, as the rest of "The Comedian as the Letter C" suggests. Yet I think that some of the lessons he learned therein continue to operate in his poetic imagination. Perhaps Crispin-Stevens had yet to learn how to synthesize his imaginative powers with the localized reality he encountered. Stevens would later come to realize that overcoming the banality of the everyday would require putting his imagination to use in abstracting reality—even though this reality must always remain the anchor for such abstractions. This moonlit way of seeing—seeing that is free and sensitive—is one way that McKay invokes Stevens. In *Vis à Vis,* McKay explains his own understanding of this "glimpsing":

> [T]here is also the sudden angle of perception, the phenomenal surprise which constitutes the sharpened moments of *haiku* and imagism . . . [I]n such defamiliarizations, often arranged by art, we encounter the momentary circumvention of the mind's categories to glimpse some thing's autonomy—its rawness, its *duende*, its alien being. (21)

While Stevens may not have explained his poetic motivations in these terms, his ability to see what surrounds him without preconceived notions—poetic or otherwise—captures McKay's attention.

Crispin's moonlit approach initiates a temporary state of receptivity and imaginative power unhooked from previous poetic frameworks. As for McKay, "The Book of Moonlight" focuses on the moment of arrival, but it challenges the assumption that the one arriving has the privilege of

discovering something new:

> *Arriviste*, you are the reader
> who has come too early, or too late,
> and lingers in the spill of light
> which might be aftermath, might be
> anticipation.
> . . . . . .
> In the scene you've missed, or are
> about to witness, desire
> and departure rendezvous. No hero happens,
> unless it is you, the creature at the cusp of change,
> the avid unabashed *voyeur*. (11)

"The Book of Moonlight" is peculiar in that it fulfills the prophecy of the speaker in "The Comedian as the Letter C," but does so without instructions or even a request for it to be written. Not only does McKay take this liberty, but his speaker also seems to challenge the "arriviste." It is not difficult to see Crispin as the "arriviste," as somone bent on arriving—though the term may exaggerate Crispin's ambitions—and thus this address helps clarify the context of McKay's poem. But the rest of the first line—"you are the reader"—creates a parallel address to the reader, too. This has the effect of putting the reader into Crispin's shoes, of collapsing the reader's and Crispin's perspectives. McKay aligns reading with creating poetry, which makes "arriving" a metaphor for poetic arrival. McKay conflates perception, interpretation, and poetic creation, considering all of these as necessary acts of the poet-reader who is, in a phenomenological sense, always arriving at a new scene. Exploiting this sense of reading, McKay implies that poetry comes both from the experience of reading other poetry and from reading life—each of which always influences the other. In *Opus Posthumous*, Stevens writes that "one reads poetry with one's nerves" (189) and that "[p]oetry is the expression of the experience of poetry" (190). McKay's poet-reader formulation seems harmonious with Stevens' characterization of reading and expressing poetry. The act of reading is always too early, as "desire," for either what is *anticipated* or for the *correct* reading, always "departs" just before the poet-reader arrives. Reading also happens too late, both because consciousness is always catching up with the senses and because one cannot read without one's prior experiences and knowledge influencing the reading. McKay often focuses on the transitional moment between earliness and lateness, and in "The Book of Moonlight" he channels Crispin as the reader about

to arrive, about to make his *reading*. The only time Crispin is referred to as a "hero" is the moment he lands in the Carolinas (Stevens, *Collected* 28), the moment immediately after his moonlit meditation. In fact, his arrival is the moment that "[t]he moonlight fiction disappeared" (29). Nobody can dwell in this transitional moment for long, and just as Crispin must continue on his journey, "[n]o hero happens" (McKay, *Book* 11) unless the reader-poet commits to a reading-poem and the narrative moves on. Just as Crispin "inscribed / Commingled souvenirs and prophesies" upon landing in the Carolinas (*Collected* 30), McKay's speaker calls upon the reader-poet to finally arrive, to inscribe their own commingling of souvenirs and prophesies.

Homing in on this moment of anticipation, McKay also gestures toward a second sense of belatedness in "The Comedian as the Letter C." Harold Bloom explains of Stevens' early poetry, "[T]he malady indeed was belatedness. Whitman came early, or early enough; but Crispin-Stevens came later. The reader looks in vain for the transumption of this lateness into an ever-earliness, but that will not take place until *Ideas of Order* and afterward" (82).[4] Bloom, here, speaks to Stevens' anxiety about his place next to the great American poets that beat him to establishing new, American poetics: Stevens worries that his "arrival" is too late. McKay recognizes this anxiety, but leaves the addressee ambiguous and then plays on Stevens' later conception of "ever-earliness," which, according to Bloom, will not surface until *Ideas of Order* and after (82). Moreover, if McKay is addressing not only Stevens, but also poets generally, then he, too, must share in the anxiety of finding his place, or of being placed, amongst the literary giants. It is possible, then, to read the final line of "The Book of Moonlight" as a pep-talk: the speaker is urging the reader-poet both to do poetic justice to their subject and to accept that their forebears will always loom large. But, as if to prevent the presumptuous belief that one can manifest one's own "arrival" in either the poetic or biophysical world, McKay infuses the moment of arrival with humour that resonates through the anxiety. By maintaining an ongoing desire for looking, sensing, and seeing, McKay playfully resists the fixity of definition that accompanies the arriviste's arrival.

For both Stevens and McKay, the moon is charged with metaphorical power. If the moon and its light unify *The Book of Moonlight*, then it can also be seen as an exploration of the nature of metaphors, and even language. Similar to the phenomenological uncertainty or defamiliarization

associated with moonlight (due to lower levels of light and the often pale quality of its radiance), metaphor poses a question as to the limits and uses of language. As Kevin Bushell explains in his excellent analysis of McKay's use of metaphor:

> The phenomenological world . . . is a world founded on the surety of consciousness, but it is also a world in which the sensible and the felt have ontological bearing. Transcendence according to this paradigm does not imply transportation to an alternate, alien realm, but rather to new, *hidden* meaning that exists within our immediate world. We need to get past the view of "reality" as a concrete, objectified entity, to understand that metaphor such as McKay's uncovers, or, more accurately, *discovers* the world and leads the reader into new areas of experience and knowing. (71)

McKay conflates the edges of sensory perception and the linguistic manifestation of thought/experience—and to describe what is past this edge, he uses the term "wilderness": "By 'wilderness' I want to mean, not just a set of endangered spaces, but the capacity of all things to elude the mind's appropriations" (*Vis à Vis* 21). As humans, we have the tendency to appropriate our surroundings in order to make them familiar, so wilderness is, by definition, beyond our capacity to "grasp." McKay borrows Emmanuel Levinas' notion of "the 'primordial grasp,'" which indicates the fundamentally appropriative nature of human language and understanding (*Vis à Vis* 22-23). For Levinas, "*Auffassen* (*understanding*) is also, and always has been, a *Fassen* (*gripping*)" ("Ethics as First Philosophy" 76). But, as Bushell explains, "[m]etaphor acts for McKay as a springboard into wilderness, which is never really entered but only glimpsed" (71). While it is desirable to glimpse wilderness, it is an impossible task if one tries to capture one's object with denotative language. In "The Noble Rider and the Sound of Words," Stevens writes, "[A] language, considered semantically, evolves through a series of conflicts between the denotative and the connotative forces in words; between an asceticism tending to kill language by stripping words of all association and a hedonism tending to kill language by dissipating their sense in a multiplicity of associations" (*Collected* 650). But to glimpse wilderness in, as Stevens says, "[a] minor meeting, facile, delicate" (*Collected* 28), is for the possibility to open. The use of metaphor allows for abstraction, which takes place in the imagination. Thus, while a metaphor is not literal, it is just as real to the poet as what his or her senses perceive. In *Opus Posthumous*, Stevens

explains that seeing and thinking are intricately interwoven: "Accuracy of observation is the equivalent of accuracy of thinking" (185). But "accuracy," here, does not mean denotative specificity. Rather, Stevens emphasizes that perception is always bound up in interpretation, which requires paying careful attention to the language that best communicates the observation. The interpretive process is open to metaphorical thinking. As Jan Zwicky elucidates, "[m]etaphor is one way of showing how patterns of meaning in the world intersect and echo one another" (6). "The implied 'is not' in a metaphor," Zwicky continues, "points to a gap in language through which we glimpse the world. That which we glimpse is what the 'is' in a metaphor points to" (10). As Dickinson writes, "[m]etaphor is that pause in language reminding it of its nature as apparatus. Metaphor prevents language from becoming a closed system. It is, essentially, the trickster after his metamorphosis into a trick-turning figure of speech" (78). What both poets take up, here, is that metaphor is a way of seeing and thinking about things; metaphor resists the tendency of language to denote, and in doing so, makes it more creatively potent and intellectually challenging. The poet must carefully expose this "gap" that Zwicky describes: or, as Stevens suggests, "[p]oetry must resist the intelligence almost successfully" (*Opus* 197).

Besides "The Book of Moonlight," there are other poems in McKay's collection that compare to Stevens' work. "Moonlight Becomes You" features a rather conspicuous container, which in this case might capture some moonlight for the artist seeking inspiration:

> If you want
> to carry it home in a jar, a sort of superior
> propane for the stoves and fridges of the arts, it simply
> swims into the wish and
> spikes it. It becomes you. It reads you
> backward . . . (10)

For McKay to choose a "jar" of all vessels to carry this "superior propane" necessitates comparison to Stevens' "Anecdote of the Jar":

> I placed a jar in Tennessee,
> And round it was, upon a hill.
> It made the slovenly wilderness
> Surround that hill.
>
> The wilderness rose up to it,
> And sprawled around, no longer wild.

. . . . . .
It took dominion everywhere. (*Collected* 60-61)

There are a number of possible symmetries here; for example, of the ten times that Stevens uses "wilderness" (this ever-central term in McKay's lexicon), it appears twice in these twelve lines ("Online"). And, true to McKay's overarching address to Stevens in *The Book of Moonlight*, because Stevens' speaker is the "I" that places the jar, McKay's "[i]f *you* want / to carry it home in a jar" positions the poem as a possible response to Stevens' poem (10; emphasis mine). By invoking Stevens in this way, McKay translates Stevens into his own poetic philosophy.

"Anecdote of the Jar" has been discussed widely by Stevens scholars, who often treat it as a compass by which the rest of *Harmonium* can be understood. Buelens and Eeckhout have traced a number of these critical threads; discussing interpretations of the jar itself, they explain,

> Not being a universal nor a culturally established symbol, the jar's symbolic dimension must remain to a considerable extent personal, leaving the reader with a multiplicity of possible identifications. Some will read it as a "surrogate for the human imagination" (Miller 257), others as symbolic of the intellect (Yvor Winters, disputed in Riddel 43), still others as indicative of "the spirit of abstraction" (Lentricchia, *Ariel* 19) or of a wide range of cultural phenomena including "an institution, custom, habit, or form of art or religion" (Legget 200). (52)

While the exact nature of the jar is perhaps impossible to pin down, Stevens evidently rejects the "Aeolian harp-ism" of the Romantics, or the belief that a poet's sensitivity is uniquely suited to capturing the essence of nature. McKay similarly rejects this self-centred compositional method (the moon is windless, after all). He understands that "things" have a life of their own outside of human understanding; therefore, the poet is not "spoken to" (*Vis à Vis* 27). Stevens reworks and complicates this romantic tradition in "Anecdote of the Jar" without fully resolving the relationship between art, artist, and the world. But in so doing, he exposes these problems and brings them to the surface. McKay takes up the same issues and shifts the perspective slightly. Mark Dickinson explains,

> In the Romantic view, nature sung effortlessly through the poet, yet this simply did not accord with [McKay's] experiences as a birder. He became increasingly disenchanted with the Romantic emphasis on emotionalism in which the poet's capacity to be moved by a non-human other threatened to supplant that

> other. For McKay, nature poetry had to avoid this kind of anthropocentrism and the one-way drain of energy it involved. (67)

However, in "Moonlight Becomes You," the moonlight also reads back into the reader, as McKay structures the relationship of viewer/viewed to extend both ways. By projecting a sense of order onto the moonlight, it is possible to trace that projection back onto the viewer—thus allowing the moon to read into the speaker. In perceiving the moon, the viewer allows the moonlight into their apperceptive cycle. So the moon "becomes" the viewer as it momentarily occupies their thoughts and becomes part of their cumulative experience. Like Stevens, and especially Crispin, McKay's speaker recognizes that some of his own "pages" are "heavy with names" or "sticky with praise" (10); in other words, the influence of others will always play a part in how he sees. Interestingly, because the speaker uses the second-person pronoun "you," this poem becomes a generalized meditation on the nature of perception/apperception. Similar to how "Anecdote of the Jar" becomes generalized by being categorized as an anecdote, a brief story that is easily shared, McKay's ambiguous "you" is both specific and universal. This clever sleight of hand allows McKay to enter into the realm of ambiguity, tentativeness, and transition that Stevens so expertly engages, making a potent poetic statement without having to fully commit to a single outcome.

This pair of poems can, I think, help readers recognize Stevens as an influence on McKay's poetic theory. The moonlight in "Moonlight Becomes You," perhaps against the speaker's desire, can be seen as representative of "wilderness" put into tension with the ability of language, or the poet, to take it "home." "Home," for McKay, "is the action of the inner life finding outer form; it is the settling of self into the world," and "it turns wilderness into an interior and presents interiority to the wilderness" (*Vis à Vis* 22-23). Stevens' jar forces the wilderness to react to it—causing the wilderness to surround the jar—but fails to bring about any practical form of order. Because a sustained examination of the poem is beyond the scope of this essay, I will "place" this useful explanation from Buelens and Eeckhout:

> Here the representation of the surrounding wilderness, in relation to which the jar should be able to define its identity, comes into play . . . Its interaction with the jar, moreover, is typically double-edged again. On the one hand, the wilderness responds to the jar by borrowing some of its qualities: the jar's

> own roundness forces the wilderness to "surround" it and the jar's inactive objectivity effectively tames the wilderness . . . On the other hand, the jar is disconnected from its environment, alienated and unable to establish a fertile relationship to it, not giving of bird or bush and not capturing the country's organic essence, as the final line insists. Thus . . . the synecdochic relation between artistic production and the American landscape is both invited and obstructed. It is staged as an unresolved question and an enactment of the very desire *for* cultural linkage rather than as a convincingly established connection. (56)

In the end, both the jar and the act of placing it characteristically resist our attempts at interpretation; but while Stevens' jar is most fruitfully considered as representative of the relation of the art object to reality, McKay focuses more directly on the process of art- or homemaking—suggesting that the process leaves one with an expanded ("larger") understanding of the world, but also with the knowledge that wilderness is ultimately uncontainable, inscrutable, and far bigger than it appears (making one feel "less") (10). This process, for McKay, is called "home-making," a process that describes how one "both *claims* place and acts to *become* a place among others. It turns wilderness into an interior and presents interiority to the wilderness" (*Vis à Vis* 23).[5] "Moonlight Becomes You" goes further than "Anecdote of the Jar" in examining the relationship between art-poet-reality by positing that creating art requires intimacy. One must open oneself up to interpretation via the resulting art object in order to re-present its content.

To put a jar on something is to trap it, to contain it, and McKay and Stevens both reject this goal in their poetics; to see something as it actually is, one must see it in a different "light." Of the nighttime in McKay's work, Joanna Dawson explains, "Night undermines the exactitude of definition and reminds us that there is a point at which categories become obscured, even eclipsed, and that while the mind may try to drape itself over the external world, there is a kind of wilderness in everything which resists transmission" (66). "Moonlight Becomes You" is a reminder that we have the opportunity to see the autonomy of the "thing," though sometimes we need to see it differently, to defamiliarize the thing, to see the reality that is always already present. Poetry, and specifically metaphor, is a way to tap into the infinite possible significations of the signifier, a way to avoid trapping the subject in its denotative "jar."[6] Developing this idea, McKay suggests that "moonlight" not only provides the possibility to

defer signification, but that it also "becomes you." Just as the wolf howls in solitude, so the poet perceives and imagines his or her subject subjectively. In this process, the poet takes the thing in, and, in doing so, not only perceives the thing but also becomes an object of perception as the thing "reads you backwards." Stevens writes of the poet that

> his own measure as a poet, in spite of all the passions of all the lovers of the truth, is the measure of his power to abstract himself, and to withdraw with him into his abstraction the reality on which the lovers of truth insist. He must be able to abstract himself and also to abstract reality, which he does by placing it in his imagination. (*Collected* 657)

McKay more specifically contemplates the ethics of this process of abstracting, of taking-in. For the poet to avoid appropriating his or her subject matter in a way that constricts its autonomy, McKay suggests the need for what he calls "poetic attention," a "form of knowing which counters the 'primordial grasp' in home-making, and celebrates the wilderness of the other; it gives ontological applause. Even after linguistic composition has begun, and the air is thick with the problematics of reference, this kind of knowing remains in touch with perception" (*Vis à Vis* 26-27). Perhaps reasoning like this is what tends to confine McKay to the "nature poet" category, but there is significant continuity here between McKay and Stevens poetically. Thus, it may not be fair to McKay for scholars to emphasize the "nature" and not the "poet."

Part of what defines both McKay's and Stevens' poetics, as aforementioned, is the act of ordering thoughts in the imagination—thoughts whose inceptions are derived almost simultaneously from sensory perception and imaginative abstraction. In "Snow Moon," McKay explores the perspective of the poet-observer:

> With no name
> and no mask. Not the dusty rock,
> not the goddess, not the decor of romance,
> not the face. Express from infinity
> it arrives in a flood of cold desire like a
> tooth, like a voracious
> reader. (*Book* 14)

The poem begins by stripping the moon of all its mythical and cultural connotations, even going so far as to break it away from plain language ("dusty rock"). In place of these limiting, stale, and faulty signifiers, the

moon comes "[e]xpress from infinity," or, in other words, from beyond the denotating labels of human language; every month, the moon takes the shape of an airborne zero, "signifying nothing" in a Macbethian echo. Once this defamiliarization has taken place, the moon is referred to again, but this time through simile: "like a / tooth, like a voracious / reader." By shifting signification to metaphorical language, the poet is admitting that the moon is not these things—and that the moon "transcends language and thought" (Bushell 59). Again, McKay dramatizes this moment of apprehension as a two-way street, with the moon, the great celestial mirror of the sun, becoming like (mirroring) a "reader" who sees it—and by extension the reader of the poem. The moon cannot be fixed into language as a single signifier because it comes "[e]xpress from infinity," which suggests it is *not finite*, or unfinished. However, challenging what might otherwise seem like a poststructuralist sentiment, the moon also "refuses to defer," imposing itself upon the viewer in its inscrutable sublimity (*Book* 14). McKay explicitly rejects seeing the moon as a symbol for the romantic imagination, but also as a mythical or religious figure (goddess), the man in the moon (face), and even anthropocentric diminution (dusty rock). McKay holds up the moon in apposition to a broad range of references, ultimately emphasizing what the moon is not; but in doing so, he shows both how the moon has accrued layers of meaning and how language works as a system of differentiation. Instead of lamenting the slipperiness of this lunar experience, though, McKay works in the comedic mode, ambiguously suggesting either that only a "loon"-atic would actually believe in capturing the moon with denotative language or else that his poetics embraces a little "loon"-acy as a way to destabilize language enough to make room for "ontological applause" (*Book* 14; *Vis à Vis* 26).

That the "Snowy Owls" of McKay's poem are immediately followed by the abrupt presence of "[t]he mind of winter" recalls Stevens' poem "The Snow Man":

> One must have a mind of winter
> To regard the frost and the boughs
> Of the pine-trees crusted with snow;
> . . . . . .
> and not to think
> Of any misery in the sound of the wind,
> In the sound of a few leaves,

> Which is the sound of the land
> Full of the same wind
> That is blowing in the same bare place
>
> For the listener, who listens in the snow,
> And, nothing himself, beholds
> Nothing that is not there and the nothing that is. (*Collected* 8)

The "misery" that is often associated with winter is neutralized by Stevens as his listener shifts his perspective by assuming "a mind of winter." "The Snow Man" has a particularly long and complicated critical history. Bart Eeckhout captures much of this history in his thoughtful chapter on the poem:

> "The Snow Man" thus heightens our awareness of its textual-linguistic status as a something-nothing that is at once determinate and indeterminate, material and disembodied, present and absent—like the vicarious visions and sensations it sets off in the reader's imagination: at one or more removes from reality, yet in its own imaginary and potent way quite real. The poem enhances our awareness, in other words, of the act of reading by proposing that we address the question of how much we are reading—are forced to read—*between* the lines. (*Wallace Stevens* 108)

The ultimate effect of this reading "between the lines" for Stevens is to recognize that no thing ("nothing") has any meaning—emotional or otherwise—except what one thinks of it. In other words, we are always surrounded by "nothing," and it is only our imagination that says otherwise. McKay, by invoking Stevens' "mind of winter," destabilizes language itself, suggesting that understanding language must follow the same processes as understanding "reality." Language, like reality, always already exists outside of human thought. As Stevens' and McKay's poems suggest, each time language or reality is brought to life/experienced by an individual, it is made in their imagination. Instead of Stevens' "snow man," McKay invokes a "snow moon," a presence that both reflects its viewer and remains obdurate in its silent lunacy/"loon"-acy. By recognizing the otherness inherent in reality and language, McKay gives ontological respect and quells the "desire to possess" (*Vis à Vis*, 26).

While I could continue tracing the connections between McKay and Stevens in their poetry, I will try to conclude my thoughts about McKay's

invocations of Stevens in *The Book of Moonlight*. If, as Frye asserts, "[a] writer's desire to write can only have come from previous experience of literature" (14), then we must see all poets, at least in part, as products of their reading. The poems in *The Book of Moonlight* were later included in *Another Gravity* (2000), a larger, book-length collection that won the Governor General's Award (the poems are placed in a new order, among new poems, and the phony Stevens quotation is missing). While this new title erases the immediate reference to "The Comedian as the Letter 'C,'" it also hints at the constant, if gentle, pull of one of its influences. Wallace Stevens drew upon the Shelley, Keats, Mallarmé, Whitman, Emerson, and others for poetic inspiration, and we can see McKay's influences in the same light. The very idea of an epigraph, for example, is to pay homage or respond to the poetics or legacy of another. Every poet will write his or her own poetry, so to speak, because, as Stevens claims, "There can be no poetry without the personality of the poet" (*Collected* 670). By invoking Wallace Stevens, McKay is paying respect to his own poetic inheritance. To pay tribute to one's predecessors is to recognize one's position within a particular history of literature. Of course, respect for being on the edge of this history is also built into McKay's poetics: "Whatever [the poet's] admiration for wilderness, she remains a citizen of the frontier, a creature of words who will continue to use them to point—sometimes at the moon, sometimes simply at the figure of the departed sage" (*Vis à Vis* 87). *The Book of Moonlight* uses its words to point at both the moon and the figure of the departed sage; and even if McKay maintains a playful insouciance, he does so in the spirit of past "comedians" like Stevens' Crispin. "Poetic attention," writes McKay, "leads to a work which is not a *vestige* of the other, but a *translation* of it" (*Vis à Vis* 28). The poet writing with "poetic attention" does not simply remake the poems or poetics he inherits, but translates them. McKay writes what was "not written yet" (Stevens, *Collected* 27), suggesting a translation of his own poetic stance; he realizes his own poetic "arrival," doing so as a mature poet paying his respects. As Frye writes, "The simple point is that literature belongs to the world man constructs, not to the world he sees; to his home, not his environment" (8). Thus, for McKay to envision himself on the "frontier" of a history of literature, he has to "construct" or enact it. In this way, *The Book of Moonlight* is more than a collection of fifteen poems: it is a way for McKay to "glimpse" his own stature as a poet. *The Book of Moonlight* stakes out a claim adjacent to Stevens' oeuvre and proves that Don McKay is a poet

with his own gravity.

Notes

1. For a more recent investigation of philosophy and ecology in the work of McKay and other poets like Jan Zwicky and Tim Lilburn, see Mark Dickinson, *Canadian Primal*.
2. Helen Vendler discusses the poem in similar terms in "Fugal Ruins," the second chapter of her monograph on Stevens, *On Extended Wings*.
3. Here I play with the title of McKay's collected poems, *Angular Unconformity*.
4. Bloom takes a uniquely strong position on "The Comedian as the Letter C" as a poem about the anxiety of influence.
5. McKay's concept of homemaking, here, seems to be inspired by Northrop Frye: "The world you want to live in is a human world, not an objective one: it's not an environment but a home; it's not the world you see but the world that you build out of what you see" (4).
6. McKay writes that "metaphor's first act is to un-name its subject, reopening the question of reference" (*Vis à Vis* 69). In "The Noble Rider and the Sound of Words," Stevens reminds us that "[i]f it is defined, it will be fixed and it must not be fixed" (*Collected* 664).

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Kevin Tunnicliffe is a PhD candidate at the University of Victoria. His dissertation challenges conventional understandings of modernism's shock aesthetic by advancing a version of "anaesthetic modernism."

Chimwemwe Undi

On the Imminent Destruction of Portage Place Mall

not a bomb but leveled still unkeeling
listless or lacking inventory shortly, nothing

shortly, unmade harkening back to blondes
on VHS stockings named for favoured subset of flesh
glitter rides the escalator's churn

  jingle dirges in the backlight specter
backlight blue geometrical impossible
this edifice: "the biggest thing to hit the city

  since the flood" flood displaced in meaning
by a bigger flood mall displaced
in meaning by the flood of us

flood again toxic metaphor begat
by bordering Black and brownness
by bodies blued bluing made buoyant
by the mass of us liquid in our number

to be sure us ≠ this keen city nostalgic amnesiac
supplicant lustrated in silted water ten tented fingers
  breaks for wagging

us ≈ my people connotes a buoyant mass
joyous noise gestures to uncle strangers
in the food court stuffing ears with courage lies

in Dollarama auntie compliments my accent
offers me her son strained plaid polyester

Portage Place First Nation which D says
to mean ≈ my people

people made a demographic disappeared
from municipal imagination struck like noon
inside exit doors locked into exterior walls

before unmaking return again to the blueness
of the light gossamer and permanent to the trees
indoors at that a rube's early wonder

to these planters built for sitting uniformed men
imported from the suburbs to tell us not to sit

to the clock's bright mechanics spiral
torsions only visible coming down the escalator
blunt blade also promised better things

the trouble is how to build it the blue unmade
amidst mist and wind and unhurried anarchy
how to conjure house and universe

even dexterous in this new split tongue
I am full of all the wrong language full of little
but language lungs full of elsewhere's smoke I am helpless

before what can't be helped mouth busied
retuning the questions: what beautiful thing
has ever left me and returned?

what else in the middle distance is burning?

Chimwemwe Undi lives in Winnipeg, MB.

The Measure

Ride off any horizon
and let the measure fall
—lines from a poem, "Ride Off Any Horizon," by John Newlove from
The Fat Man: Selected Poems 1962-1972

Let the measure fall, the measure and the metre both.
Let the calendar pages turn, the pages and the hands
of the clock. Let the roaring of the sun commence,
the sun and all its cousin stars. Let the counting
of those stars be not all-consuming, stars and wishes.
Of wishes there is no end, nor of beginnings. That is
the way of the world, this one and all others,
no matter the measure.

Dave Margoshes lives near Saskatoon, SK

The Last Elk in Burwash, Ontario

Let there be too much. You will know
it when you see it. You will call it
what it is. Most days, the sky seems a kind
of diagram, today's being
the shape of what you will
not know when you need
to most. More and more, I am
tired, desperate, desiring also,
and waiting. For what? For years,
this has been happening. Once, one time,
I stayed late with him. Night normally
a kind of concession, but not
now. That now that now
means then. We were walking
back along the highway. I looked
at the face of my friend who had the face
of a friend. *Who had done this?* His hand
wide along the wide
end of the open elk's neck,

gone because too little

blood left in, too much

time gone, going. The night

was written out above.

What did we know? The field we laid

it down in was blank.

No death was not our own.

Owen Torrey lives in Toronto, ON.

It's Not My Home

it's all there inside us
believe your cousin you stupid boy
lessons in the least of creatures
sickness in the strongest
the blades of grass
crack in the concrete
why not hide together
flee together
child voice quiver
stay strong for each other
deny these cruel dogs that never stop eating
let go and come back
this answer inside
why hide
why hide
your teacher is my teacher
your god is my god
the inverse is an old kitchen table
ashtray soot where i take off and dream
two men circle the issue inside my head
no one tells the truth
i bled and died alone in a burned out basement i forgot existed
there is a path of green
and we are untethered for a moment
the older cousins are mustangs
and they preen in the sun
but i turn back
it is what i know
i know what is at the bottom of the well
quiet sloughs and long driveways
turn the world on its axis child
you are cold black coffee in an urn that hears voices from another time

mosom and nokom minding the baby
you'll never stop crying for them
but i love you now my boy
you are free
forgive me
i am here now
some know where ghosts are

Sarain Frank Soonias lives in Vancouver, BC.

This is the poem you couldn't write

This is the poem
you couldn't write

They took away
the relations - itahkomitowin
(I can only remember kôkhom and mushum)

They took away the stories - miywâcimowina

The conversations - âcimostakewin

But only for so long

the Ancestors – wahkomâkanak - remind us

listen they say, watch for us
pehowin

These are the words
that belong to you –

pamihowina

kiscâyâwin

Amanda Fayant is from Treaty 4 based in Trondheim, Norway.

Unsettle

Do not sell this plot.
Give it back, the way
beach foam returns
its dead-creature
legions in a salty, shell-
spiked row. Dismantle
your house. Strip it
down to bone, then boil
the bones for the birds.
Un-shingle the roof,
bits of tar paper hitting
like hail. Evict your six-
and-eight-legged tenants
with a love as noxious
as fumigated air. Next,
evict yourself to live in
knapsack tents, under
glimmers and mutters
and stories of sky.
Colonize nothing. It is not
your place, even if you
have swabbed your inner
cheek's mitochondria
and proven that these
sixteen miles were once
your great-great-great-
great's farm. No matter.
Do not farm the acres.
And gift them to another
homo sapiens only
if they vow to return
the long-maligned land
back to its whole self again.

Sadie McCarney lives in Charlottetown, PEI.

Mordecai Then and Now: Richler the Quebec Writer

Mordecai Richler Was Here: Quebec's Richler

Andre Furlani

Forum dedicated to the memory of Florence Richler

Mordecai Richler liked to joke that he was world-famous in Toronto, and he was certainly unusual in becoming a national writer before he had been a regional one. Rather than locate him within Quebec, he has been more often either balkanized as an "anglo-Quebec writer" or exalted as an international one. Polemical broadsides against the francisation legislation of the Parti Québécois ensured that Richler's place in Quebec's culture would be resented more than understood. But Quebec has never been homogenous, as his own career demonstrated, and spearheaded by popular new translations of his novels, produced for the first time by Québécois translators, readers have been able to recognize the extent to which he was a Quebec writer.

Mordecai Richler was here, indeed, and in the fall of 2019 a gathering of native, adoptive, and erstwhile Quebecers assessed his legacy at the conference *Mordecai Richler against the World/contre le monde.* Convened by the Richler Library Project, the conference was held on the Sir George Williams campus of Concordia University, which houses the library and office furnishings bequeathed by his widow Florence, and where Richler, perhaps the university's most distinguished dropout, served in 1969 as writer-in-residence. This forum owes its initial impetus to that homecoming,[1] and each contribution affirms that Richler's cosmopolitanism issued as much from the peculiar character of Quebec as from defiance of it. Lori Saint-Martin and Paul Gagné's ongoing translation of Richler's novels for the Montreal publisher Les Éditions du Boréal has overturned stereotypes in Quebec, as the translation theorist and translator Judith Woodsworth writes in her contribution. Where the first translations of his work were by gaffe-prone Europeans unfamiliar with Quebec, the Montreal translators preserve the local character that, in his contribution,

Adam Gopnik stresses is a hallmark of Richler's fiction. Engaging the translators in conversation, Woodsworth stresses how the much discussed new set of translations provides not simply a likeness of the original novels but a textual critique releasing fresh conceptions of Richler's oeuvre. In her essay on translating *Joshua Then and Now*, Saint-Martin describes the lexical choices made to maintain the particular *terroir* of Richler's work, to which Québécois readers have responded.[2] They have been surprised to discover as well that no Quebec writer more pitilessly burlesques the complacent Anglophone aerie of Westmount than he, nor more fervently celebrates the city's east side proletarian vitality, with its boxing rings, hockey rinks, saloons, pool rooms, nightclubs, delis, and contraband stills.

Gopnik, the *New Yorker* writer and erstwhile colleague of Richler, identifies several familiar Richlers, including the hometown chronicler, the diasporic comic romancer in a North American field of self-invention, and the working-class satirist of defunct empire, but he argues for the precedence of the postcolonial fabulist of an ascendant nation. Rather than satirizing the shrunken grandeur of the imperial capital, Gopnik observes, Richler satirizes an aggressively expansive province subject to many of the same pretensions, follies, and false pieties as the metropole. To Gopnik's "Many More Mordecais" my essay adds another, the Quebec writer who, though still unacknowledged, contributed to the Quiet Revolution, embracing the polemical civic role adopted by his francophone literary peers and sharing their opposition to the clerico-authoritarian political establishment, the mercantile dominance of the English elite, and conservative social morality.

An established novelist who, like her father, settled in London, Emma Richler contributes a filial memoir that is equally a searching meditation on inheritance: the ambivalent terms by which a budding novelist draws on her father's daunting literary and personal entail. When, for instance, he responds to her frank admission of psychological disorder by trivializing mental illness, she reminds her father that he poignantly depicted Duddy Kravitz's nervous breakdown, while readers of *Joshua Then and Now* will recall that after the suicide of her playboy brother Joshua's adored wife is institutionalized, her collapse linked to innuendoes of incest.

The memoir also conjures her mother in the last year of her life. Several of Mordecai Richler's books are dedicated to Florence Richler, their first reader and editor, including what Gopnik contends is the great Canadian novel, *Solomon Gursky Was Here*. The book closes with an

acknowledgement to her: "Finally, I would like to acknowledge the help of my wife. Over the years, Florence had to endure this novel in many drafts. Without her encouragement, not to mention crucial editorial suggestions, I would have given up on Gursky long ago." When Linda Morra interviewed her in the Richler library, Florence continued to understate her editorial prominence. She implied that she first saw *Solomon Gursky Was Here* only upon completion, when tasked to read the colossal manuscript in a single marathon, omitting to mention her scrutiny of the many previous drafts. Since Robert Gottlieb, Richler's editor at Knopf, largely refrained from editing closely his friend's prose, it was really Florence who performed that task.

So, while dedicated to Mordecai Richler's work, this forum is dedicated to Florence Richler's memory. I met the couple in 1984, when journalists had been invited to the set of *Joshua Then and Now*. The novel's risibly anglophile garden party was being shot on an estate in the Thousand Islands east of Kingston, Ontario. The crew scurried between interminably repeated shots in the sweltering heat, scores of extras panted under tottering Beefeater costumes, the stars took questions from reporters inside the mansion, and scrums surrounded Richler, director Ted Kotcheff, and producer Robert Lantos on the lawn, where caterers were preparing a luncheon. Though I could not get Richler's attention, a striking woman got mine: seated just beyond the tumultuous set, on the grass under an oak tree, she was serenely reading a book. In a light muslin dress, her face shaded by a wide-brimmed hat, she might have belonged to a scene—not in a Kotcheff-Lantos flick but a Merchant-Ivory production. I approached close enough to recognize the book, Dorothy J. Farnan's recently published biography *Auden in Love: The Intimate Story of a Lifelong Love Affair*. The epigraph of *Joshua Then and Now* is from Auden's "Lay your sleeping head, my love." This, I realized, must be Florence Richler, inspiration of Joshua's glamorous *shiksa* wife Pauline, being played here, between reporters' questions, by Gabrielle Lazure.

Summoned to the luncheon, I stalked Mrs. Richler to the table and gained her permission to sit beside her, where she talked about Auden, biography, the harmonious disarray of the set, her own experience as an actress and model in London, advising her husband on manuscript drafts. From our conversation it was soon clear that Florence Richler was the placidly cryptic heart of this whole tumultuous enterprise. *Joshua Then and Now* was unimaginable without her, and here, where it was being

clamorously reimagined as a film and TV series, she walked aloof and unregarded through the dream she had partly inspired. She graciously permitted me to take notes of our conversation for my article, which I realized had found its proper focus, and I jotted while she talked until a pushy rival tried to cut into my turf. Before I could shove him off I saw that the burly intruder was her husband, volunteering himself for yet another tedious press interview. While Richler answered questions about the screenplay (Lantos wanted a flashier ending), his wife ate and then took her leave, smiling radiantly to us both—but it was not the same smile for both of us. Richler in love, indeed. He had a reputation for truculent irascibility, yet the forbearance with which Richler took my banal questions so that his wife could eat her lunch in peace and then get away with an absorbing book was a consummate act of gallantry.

Auden in Love ended up on Joshua's desk in a scene of the movie, for Joshua writes a homage to the Spanish Civil War Loyalists eulogized in Auden's poetry. But the volume had not yet completed its circuit. Thirty years later, as we unpacked the library that Florence Richler had bestowed on us, where Jason Camlot found the inventory poem included in this forum, I drew from a box Farnan's book, last seen tucked under Florence's arm as she made off for the oak's shade. When, near the end of her life, she again graciously consented to an interview, now with Linda Morra in the Richler library, accompanied no longer by her husband but by another family novelist, her daughter Emma, *Auden in Love* stood on a shelf before her, as I pointed out to her. Though she could no longer see that far, she could still smile with the same radiant ambiguity.[3]

Notes

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2. For an English translation of Saint-Martin's essay, see https://canlit.ca/article/one-sentence-one-world-translating-mordecai-richler/.
3. For Linda Morra's interview with Florence Richler, see https://canlit.ca/article/the-book-is-certainly-better-for-it-florence-richler-in-interview/.

Andre Furlani is Professor of English at Concordia University and the author of Beckett after Wittgenstein *and* Guy Davenport: Postmodern and After *(both Northwestern UP). Forthcoming are* Pilgrim's Gress: The Beckett Walk *(Cambridge UP) and* Foot Prints:

The Return of the Pedestrian in Contemporary Literature and Art *(Bloomsbury).*

Many More Mordecais

Adam Gopnik

I want to consider how Mordecai Richler, by virtue of being intensely wound up in a particular locality, becomes global and in many ways a kind of planetary writer. This is the miracle that literature works on us again and again. W. H. Auden wrote that a writer's dream is to be like a valley cheese, local but prized elsewhere. This is exactly where we begin to understand Richler's work.

I travelled in Canada for two weeks in 2019, vending my political book *A Thousand Small Sanities: The Moral Adventure of Liberalism*, and one of the most striking and innovative changes to have occurred since previous homecomings, of course, is the public recognition of unceded First Nations territory. This invocation is now part of the fabric of a Canadian public event. Hearing the land acknowledgement wherever I spoke, the question kept popping mischievously in my mind: What would Mordecai make of this? It seemed to me exactly the kind of Canadian piety towards which Mordecai would cast a particularly caustic and in some sense impatient eye. Not because he would have been impatient with the idea of recognizing the essential swindle at the heart of the Canadian adventure. Far from it, since the idea of recognizing the priority of Canada's Aboriginal Peoples is at the core of what for me is his greatest novel, *Solomon Gursky Was Here*.

For several months I had been rereading Richler's work, and when one immerses oneself in it one becomes acutely aware that he is forever engaged in a kind of pointed war with piety. Not simply with cliché but with anything that operates as piety. By piety I mean a thing that people say by rote in order to gain a kind of false reputation as moralists. This is the core fault that Richler's writing assaults again and again. This made me begin to think if we could articulate or define the difference between piety and morality. Because this is the difference at the heart of so much of his writing. And it is simply and straightforwardly that piety is morality that has been passed on to us by tradition or by enforced assignment, whereas morality, in life as in all of Richler's novels, is the thing that we each have to painfully instruct ourselves in without the assistance of tradition or social

assignment.

There are many Mordecais to locate as one reads his work. Certainly if one grew up like me as a young Jewish Anglophone in Montreal and desperate to become a writer, the first to read and value is the local Richler. It is Richler who made this odd little piece of unceded land a part of the common imagination of the literary world. Anyone who came of age in Montreal and loves Montreal passionately immediately recognizes in his work references to places, locales, traditions, peoples. It immediately affects one with the thrill of recognition. It may seem a small or insignificant part of a novelist's task simply to get down a place. This basic, semi-transcendental journalistic work of getting a place right, getting down correctly the nature of life on Saint Urbain or on Saint Lawrence, is not the craft that tends to be most valued in academic literary studies right now. For me as a writer, and I think it would be true for any writer, this is a fundamental task: the business of taking a place from your experience and turning it into a part of a reader's imagination. This is the essential ju-jitsu of all literature and not to be slighted or treated merely as a kind of reminiscence or part of the nostalgic discourse of a particular text. We read Mordecai with enormous pleasure because he recognizably gets a piece of Montreal down right.

Yet we also read him in larger ways. We seek as we do with every writer to place him in a context or family tree that captures his peculiar qualities. The first Mordecai that anybody living in America will think of is the Richler who seems to belong to that great efflorescence of Jewish American writers that began in the 1940s—including Saul Bellow, Philip Roth, and Bernard Malamud. It is natural for us to view Richler as one more member of that generation, but I think that is fundamentally a mistake. It makes him secondary to a generation of writers whose ambitions and literary strategies were very different from his. Philip Roth admired Richler, but saw him, interestingly, not as a Canadian writer but as a British writer. A mistake but I think a very telling one, in its way. In all of their variety, those Jewish American novelists took as their central subject the deep exploration of the self: the self struggling to be free from the limits of a tribal past; the self struggling to define itself through sexual adventure; the self struggling at the end of life (in Bellow and Roth particularly), with the limits of the human animal. Yet they tend deliberately to be relatively short on elaborate social detail. My friend James Wood, the literary critic who writes for the *New Yorker*, once said, very cogently I think, that one of the things that is

striking about Bellow and Roth is that when in their fiction a character goes to a tea room the tea and sandwiches are never described. Life exists at a different level of philosophical reference and impassioned soliloquy.

One of the startling things as you reread Richler's novels is how dense they are with exactly that kind of telling social detail. This may sound like a terribly petty example but good books are built up out of tiny discriminations, and one of the things really striking in rereading, for example, *Barney's Version* or *Solomon Gursky Was Here*, is how filled they are with the names of restaurants. Richler particularizes the places where his characters dine, name by name, from the Troika downtown to the Sapinière outside Montreal. Though these particulars may appeal to some of us because we love seeing places we know referenced, they also appeal to readers unfamiliar with them exactly because they do the novel's work of inventorying an entire field, locating the action socially in a world of place names and relations. This is a particular kind of social novel, the novel of manners, which is very remote from the ambitions of novelists like Roth, Bellow, Malamud, or even someone like Joseph Heller, whom I know Richler very much admired. Heller is a comic and satiric novelist but presses his work always to the edge of a kind of surrealist fantasy, whereas Richler's work is always rooted in the specific, minutely particularized apprehension of the real.

This is one way in which, it seems to me, Richler's work is not most fruitfully read alongside that American generation. However, Roth's suggestion that we should see him in effect as a kind of British novelist has a certain pregnancy, because it is certainly true that Richler came of age in the 1950s alongside a whole generation of British satirical writers: Kingsley Amis, Malcolm Bradbury, and, in another way, David Lodge; and in still another way, Simon Gray in his diaries: the single voice that most resembles the voice in *Barney's Version* and elsewhere. There is certainly a commonality there, and I remember from my many conversations with Richler about writing that he tended to single these writers out as people he knew and admired and with whom he felt some kinship. One sees why that might be so, for the writers of that Amis tradition are all involved in exactly that business of battling pieties, the pieties of empire and of the class system. They also tend to take as their subjects the ascent of someone, usually a young man, from the working classes into the literary or educated world, as Richler does in *The Apprenticeship of Duddy Kravitz* and elsewhere.

However, it has always seemed to me that at the same time there is a fundamental distinction to be made. All of those British writers, interesting though they are, are engaged in an active diminution. They are all taking the inherited tradition of the British novel and wilfully making it fit into a smaller compass, which seems to them to correspond more cogently to the limitations of British life that they are experiencing. It is the same enterprise that we see in the great poet Philip Larkin. They are very much writers of the "Suez generation," the moment of the loss of empire, and they bear witness to it with enormous wit and often with great poignancy.

This particular kind of satiric enterprise is, however, not really what Richler is about in his novels. And I think it is no accident and of enormous significance—for reasons that, as I know as a working writer, have as much to do with feeding your children and finding a place to live as with literary ambition—that he chose to return home rather than remain in Britain. Whereas the enterprise of that generation of British novelists involved these acts of miniaturization, making the material of the novel smaller and more pointedly satiric, Richler had a very different story to tell. It was not about diminution; it was about a particular kind of expansion. It was about seeing the people with whom he had grown up, seeing Montreal and indeed Canada itself assume an ever larger and more significant role in the world. At the same time he saw the phony pieties and impostures that this particular kind of expansiveness could generate. In this way he belongs, I think, not to the novelists of colonial shrinkage but to the novelists of the postcolonial cringe. He belongs to the generation of novelists in English who made their work out of the friction and the tension of a provincial life that was newly becoming cosmopolitan.

Still another of these many Mordecais is the Italian novelist. When I was in Rome and Bologna in the spring of 2019, the first question every journalist who interviewed me asked, when they found out that I was Canadian, much less that I was from Montreal, was, "Did you ever meet Mordecai Richler?" Because in Italy, as is well known, Richler is a highly significant figure, an enormously popular writer with an immense literary reputation. This reputation and popularity rest, oddly, like a ballerina on a single toe, primarily on *Barney's Version*. The novel has become a kind of testament of grouchiness for two generations of Italian readers. I was fascinated and tried to understand, asking back to the journalists, "Why is it that Richler seems so at home as an Italian writer?" The answer that struck me most was when a writer from the liberal newspaper

La Repubblica said, "Oh, it's because he reminds us of Fellini." He explained that in Italian culture there is a place for the divine fools. Italian culture, he said, "loves the inspired grouch." They love the idea of a man in late middle age whose accumulation of sins, violations, betrayals, and wrongdoings nonetheless provide him with a kind of worldly wisdom that one can truly rely on, that rings true. It is certainly true that the Fellini of *Amarcord* or *8½*, for all their differences, bears an oddly similar tone to Richler: a tone of meaningful disillusion, of weary worldliness that does not reduce itself simply to resignation. The Italian Richler is a Richler that can teach us about all the other Richlers.

The Richler that, in a certain sense, interests me the most, or is the one that I think will be most pregnant and available, most powerful and pointed, for this generation and for readers to come, is the one that relates and tries to make sense of the postcolonial experience. As different as they are, if we place Richler alongside V. S. Naipaul, the ambition of their novels is to recognize, to the great annoyance of the people back home, the limits of provincial society, and at the same time to recognize the ascent from the provincial background as always crucially, at times fatally, affected by the imprint of that background. This is a very different drama than that of the British satirists, who are writing about the encroachment of circumstance on what had formerly been a more powerful culture.

This is also very different from the story that Jewish American novelists typically tell about the quixotic adventures of the self. This is a story about trying to make sense of your own history, recognizing its limits, recognizing the provincial nature of many of its pieties; a story going to the capital and seeing just as clearly that the capital is itself a provincial place of another kind. This is a theme that comes up again and again in Richler's work. *Barney's Version* spends a surprising amount of time in Paris, where Barney Panofsky goes as a young man. In fact, most of the book's foundational scenes take place in Paris, very beautifully and lovingly described, again including a repertory of cafes and restaurants, from the Mabbillon to the Old Navy. Anyone who has spent time in Paris will be startled to see so many small *endroits* named. However, the experience of Paris, indeed the experience of London and elsewhere, is not in *Barney's Version* one of having rubbed up against a superior civilization whose values have to be imported home. On the contrary, Richler's heroes discover that Paris and London are simply other versions of Montreal, governed by the same appetites, ruled by the same human limitations.

Therefore, one can have wide-ranging human experiences as richly in the native provincial town as in the much longed-for capital.

This is a very different vision, one shared with a whole generation of postcolonial writers, including V. S. Naipaul, with whom Richler also shares an often-misanthropic humour. A more fruitful comparison is with the Australian novelist and critic Clive James. At the same age as Richler, James too had felt the undeniable urge to get to London as fast as possible, only to find that the idealized London literary world and Britain were in a sense replicas of all the things left behind in Australia. This led him back to Australia, where, in ways that Richler too would have been familiar with, he found himself a particular object of resentment for having gotten away and made a reputation abroad.

My first job in the literary world was as the literary editor of *GQ* magazine, which, I am aware, is a little bit like being the poetry editor of *TV Guide*. One of my tasks was to take Mordecai and another columnist for *GQ*, Wilfrid Sheed, a friend of Richler's and a great literary hero of mine, out to lunch at the Four Seasons restaurant once a month. I was about twenty-five at the time, and Bill Sheed and Mordecai took it on themselves to drink me under the table every month on the month. Then as now, drinking me under the table could be accomplished with a thimbleful of vermouth, and they managed to make me limp my way back to the office month after month after month. It was one of the striking things to me as a young man at those lunches to realize how particular the gifts of a novelist were. Richler was above all a dramatic novelist. Wilfred Sheed was a wonderful writer, sentence by sentence one of the wittiest and most captivating writers of his generation. Yet he was not very successful as a novelist, as I know because I edited one of his novels. This was simply because the basic dramatic gift that a novelist has to have was absent from him. I say that with complicity because, as I have discovered in trying to write novels, it is absent from me as well. One of the things that makes Richler's work so intensely realized and one of the reasons it translates so well, as into Italian, is because the crucial building blocks of his work are always dramatic. In the first twenty-five pages of *Barney's Version* the central conflicts are all beautifully articulated, such as the rivalry with McIvor and Barney's longing for Miriam. That capacity for dramatic structure is too easily overlooked when we concentrate on the satiric aplomb and gaiety of his writing. Those of us who are essayists at heart struggle for the episodic quality that Richler intuitively possessed.

Richler's scenic sense often serves the idea of a true marriage and family. In rereading the range of his writing, one thing that is striking is the degree to which, far from being misogynistic, as he is often accused of being, Richler is almost painfully uxorious. The novels repeatedly turn on the possibility of a happy marriage. It makes *Barney's Version* a much more deeply human book than is sometimes remembered. Barney's love for Miriam is the mainspring of the novel's action. The sincerity of this conjugal attachment would have been totally alien to a writer like Philip Roth, for instance. Barney has made a terrible error in his life by letting Miriam get away, and all of his actions involve trying to get back this one true love he has abandoned. In trying finally to make sense of all these Mordecais, the one who remains with us most is the moralizing Mordecai.

In rereading his works, it is extraordinary to see how animated they are by an effort to define a good life: how it is, to return to my initial theme, that we discard false pieties and find a genuine human morality. In no book is this more powerful than in the book that is, I believe, the epitome and the height of his postcolonial and indeed planetary occupation, for me his finest work and perhaps the great Canadian novel, *Solomon Gursky Was Here*. Richler said once that *Solomon Gursky Was Here* was the first South American North American novel. By this he meant in part that it was a work of magic realism as practised by celebrated South American writers, in which a basic mechanism is supernatural and unreal. Richler's novel involves, for instance, haunted ravens, a character who lives for more than two hundred years, and a secret bond between the Jews and the Inuit, depicted as essentially the only decent people in Canada. With all these magical qualities, and while masquerading as satire, the novel is really struggling to suggest, in a way that is all the more moving for that struggle, what is the nature of a good life. The novel finally suggests that it is a life open to appetite, to the affirmation of life itself. The Inuit in *Solomon Gursky Was Here* are not in any sense noble savages. They do not occupy a superior moral plane. On the contrary, they are people who are preoccupied with sex and food and their own ritual life, and who are infinitely smarter and shrewder than the poor British explorers who wander into their territory and manage to become marooned by their own stupidity. The Inuit are infinitely cannier and cagier, but they do not presume to occupy a plane of higher being. What makes these characters so enormously appealing is the fact that they live on the plane of normal human appetites. It is in their voracity and love of the world as it is that

they form a strange, comic, and yet very potent alliance with the Jewish trickster figure of Solomon Gursky, which articulates a new vision of what the Canadian experience is.

In one of the most moving moments in *Barney's Version*, the mask of Barney Panofsky slips slightly, when in the middle of the book he intrudes a quotation from my literary hero, Dr. Samuel Johnson. The mask slips because I am not entirely persuaded that Barney Panofsky would be as familiar with Johnson's work as was Mordecai Richler. In the passage Barney cites, Johnson declares it essential that the biographer or historian emphasize all of the flaws and human limitations of our heroes as well as praise their virtues and heroism: "If nothing but the bright side of characters should be shown, we should sit down in despondency, and think it utterly impossible to imitate them in *anything*. The sacred writers (he observed) related the vicious as well as the virtuous actions of men; which had this moral effect that it kept mankind from *despair*" (Richler 277). This is an enormously earnest and, in some ways, enormously traditional morality for Richler to emphasize at the very heart of the novel.

This leads me to a final comparison, one final coordinate that we might offer on this map of many more Mordecais. This is to put Richler in opposition to the other great Montreal apostle of English literature whom my generation revered, Leonard Cohen. I have not been able to find Richler writing on Cohen, nor Cohen writing on Richler, even though their lives clearly intersected in time and place. Having watched the documentary *Marianne and Leonard*, one part of me can imagine Richler writing a wonderful satirical novel devoted to Cohen's particular ascent. The combination of appetite disguised as spiritual yearning, lust representing itself as a higher form of poetry, are things that he would have found absurd in many ways and, I think, would have loved to take apart. Yet at the same time it seems to me there is between them a deeper commonality that, for lack of a better word, I can only call Canadian. If one compares Cohen to his great American counterpart Bob Dylan, for instance, it leads one to the same place as when one compares Richler to his great American counterpart Philip Roth. In both cases, the Canadian and not the American writer seems to be on a *larger* and more ambitious journey of self-discovery, of self-exploration, of quixotic assertion of one's own talent and ability. Though the Canadian apostle may seem more narrow in compass and more limited in purpose, it seems to me that in both cases it is Cohen and Richler who ultimately open up to the reality of our broken nature

with a broader kind of humanity. They are able to see with a great equipoise that what makes people interesting and what makes them matter is not their impracticable aspirations to existential transcendence but exactly their perpetual immersion in their own frailty. The famous, beautiful lines of Leonard Cohen's song "Anthem" haunt me as they haunt many:

> Ring the bells that still can ring
> Forget your perfect offering
> There is a crack in everything
> That's how the light gets in[.]

And I hear Richler responding in turn, that the good thing about the light is exactly that it lets us see the cracks so clearly. Seeing the cracks is what the light of literature intends to do.

Work Cited

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Adam Gopnik is a long-time staff writer for the New Yorker *and the author of numerous books, including* Paris to the Moon, Through the Children's Gate*, the CBC Massey Lectures* Winter: Five Windows on the Season*, the children's novel* The King in the Window*, and* A Thousand Small Sanities: The Moral Adventure of Liberalism.

This Living Hand

Emma Richler

Not so very long after the death of my father, my mother let go of her flat in London SW3 off the King's Road in Chelsea, and sold the cottage on Lake Memphremagog in the Eastern Townships of Quebec, followed by the Montreal apartment at the Château in Sherbrooke Street, diagonally opposite the Ritz-Carleton Hotel. Mummy, you sold all our houses. Where did she go? My mother went to Toronto, purchasing a charming little house on the edge of a leafy park in Cabbagetown shortly before her eightieth birthday, eight years after my father's death. Or "demise," as my mother preferred to say where his end was concerned. The faintly fustian formality of this word in its non-legal sense somehow obscured the brutality of its other meaning, and of death itself, perhaps, shrouding it in Keatsian "mists and mellow fruitfulness" (249). Perhaps. But my father did die. Daddy died, Mummy. He really did.

I flew from London to Toronto in 2019 for my mother's birthday, and I think a lot about her little house on the edge of a leafy park in Cabbagetown, with its exquisite miniature gated garden of stone cherubs and trickling water feature and sculpted juniper trees and slender elegant upright viburnum, and its profusion of white flora, the David Austin Old English Rose, the jonquil, iris, aquilegia, allium and tulip, the ranunculus, peony, rock cress and daphne, and the clematis, *Dicentra*, azalea, and philadelphus, all of which fragile proud whiteness is punctuated, mostly by her front door, with beacons of blue, of agapanthus and *Ajuga reptans*, *Platycodon grandiflorus* and scilla. At the rear of her house is an enclosed patio, another space for statuary and glowing white flowers punctuated with blue, and a trellised fence above which one sees only treetops and verdure and hears the breathing of runners and the burbling of children and the play barking of dogs. I stood with my brother Jacob in the middle of her living room, filled with wholly unfamiliar furniture, none of which came from any of our houses, and we watched a sparrow hawk in a tree waiting to take flight with a glorious and predatory spread of its wings. My mother wondered aloud, Could she see it too, did we think? But my mother is virtually blind, this affliction coming soon after my father's death. His demise. What does my mother see? What does she not see? In her little house in Cabbagetown, where she never lived with Mordecai, I believe she does not see him on the staircase with his wooden tea tray on his way to and from his desk, she does not see herself tidying up the astonishing mess he was capable of making when refreshing his teapot or preparing the simplest of snacks. Daddy could not cut a tomato and place it on a plate without leaving cabinets and drawers open, without spraying seeds and juice on all available surfaces, on kitchen worktop, cutting board, and floor, there to adhere to his socks or bare feet the better to traipse the mess through the house. I used to tell him it was a good thing he was no criminal, because he left clues everywhere and the most hapless of sleuths would find him. Daddy left clues everywhere. So where is he now?

My mother, I learned, did not like an empty chair at her table. I think she did see him there, even in the house where he never lived, and so she removed all chairs but her own when she was certain to be dining alone, most likely while listening to music, replacing the chairs only in expectation of company. My mother played musical chairs. But, Mummy, if you see Daddy in unoccupied chairs, in a house he never lived in, did you then buy this house for no reason? Is he here?

Displacement. While a student at Victoria College, University of Toronto, self-conscious in my new and unaccustomed disquiet, unhappily removed from home, and from Montreal and the francophone education and circle of friends that had become so integral to me, I would meet my father at the top of the Park Plaza for drinks on his visits to the city. I observed him one day looking down over Avenue Road from the rooftop bar, smiling wryly. "The streets are so straight," he said. "Look how flat, Em. There's so much money here," he laughed. Toronto was not his place, not a true place of his, and I thought of this as I walked the streets that October 2019, to and from the libraries at the University of Toronto and my mother's little house. I thought of how I do not see him on the streets here as I do in Montreal, and I thought too of how disagreeable he must have found my unhappiness of all those years ago when we sat in a lofty hotel bar looking down upon the broad rectilinear roads of the city that led all the way to a lake as great as any sea. My father mistrusted depression, disdained it. He didn't believe in it. Life is what you make it, he was fond of advising. The world, he told us, is not waiting for you. But you wrote about it, I said one day, in rising tones. *J'accuse*. In *The Apprenticeship of Duddy Kravitz*, Virgil crashes the van Duddy gave him licence to drive, in spite of his epilepsy. A revolted Yvette walks out on Duddy, who lies around in a flat full of unwashed dishes, tossing and turning in a tangle of dirty sheets, days-old orange juice sticky between his toes. Daddy, you knew. Perhaps, then, it was the depression in me he disdained. Depression, they say, is anger turned inwards. Fruitless. Furthermore, if the subject engaged my father at all, it engaged him more in the lives he imagined than in those too very close to home. Writers are selfish, they are selective, changeable in their enthusiasms, and they can also write about things far from actual experience. Ian McEwan, for instance, did not have to bury his mother in cement, let alone cut up a body in small pieces in order to write about it, unless there are things to do with Ian McEwan of which we are not yet apprised. So who is to say what a writer knows or does not know?

In my father's last several years there was a different quality to the silences we assumed over drinks in bars and cafes at the close of the working day. I had found my calling, one might say, and what had once abraded and distressed me in the world were now sources of inspiration, and so we sat now in professional companionability as well as filial and paternal affection. Daddy, I found my place in the world, an empty chair to sit in.

On that trip to Canada I was invited to speak at the conference titled *Mordecai Richler against the World*. If my father pitted himself against the world, it is because he found it wanting. He was certainly no victim. I dare say most writers fight for something, are angry about something, but some authors are angrier than others. Jane Austen, say, was not so cross as Percy Bysshe Shelley, who sent his *Declaration of Rights* out to sea in bottles and into the air in fire balloons, and, earlier, had been sent down from Oxford more for bloody-mindedness in refusing to confirm or deny co-authorship of the pamphlet *The Necessity of Atheism* than for its content. But no matter what exercises you as a writer, it is best not to sit down at your desk in a state of rage, or even random discontent. Just like a boxer, you are likely to get hurt if you step into the ring with uncontrolled violence, or bearing a grudge. Don't do it. Here's how to sit down at the desk. Eat a pleasing breakfast, perhaps a small platter of geometrically sliced fruit in carefully chosen codes of colour. Have a little dish of Turkish yogourt on the side with a dash of French honey from the Pyrenees and a sprinkling of milled seeds and dried goji and Incaberry. The writer should then use dental floss and brush the teeth and kiss the beloved and bash off to work, emptying the brain, to begin with, of all personals and peripherals before filling it up again, letting all the people in. This prescription works for me, though it may not suit everyone. Some prefer toast. My father preferred toast. He rose very early, trying in vain not to wake my mother. He burst out of the bedroom and marched to the kitchen to make a tremendous mess in the course of coffee and toast preparations. He favoured toasted bread with tomato and red onion and mayonnaise. I cannot swear that he always remembered to brush his teeth before kissing my mother and proceeding upstairs with his tray of lemon tea, splashing as he went, but never mind. "Bye-bye!" he would call out loudly, on his way upstairs, as if lighting out for distant lands unknown. And then he would empty his mind and fill it up again, letting all his people in.

In the Charles Dickens Museum in Doughty Street, Holborn, one can see the famous portrait by Robert William Buss called *Dickens' Dream*. In it, Dickens sits by his desk, eyes closed and legs crossed, coattails neatly separated, one mule-slippered foot resting on a low round hassock. And all around him, on the floor, on the desk and walls, on his lap and about his handsome head are characters and scenes from his novels. Most of the room is drawn in sepia, but the characters and scenes nearest to Dickens' chair are deeply coloured and suspended in a cloud of blue-tinted mist,

an emanation, no doubt to illustrate the veritable force field of Charles' dreaming and thinking, and showing how the emanations were at their fiercest right by his head, quite like the blue of a flame, blue being the hottest part of a flame and an indicator of efficient combustion. The writer's imagination is highly combustible and most efficient at its oxygen-rich core. It is best not to touch the writer when imagination is occurring, lest you burn your fingers. Charles Dickens died from a stroke at home at Gad's Hill Place, Kent, at the age of fifty-eight on June 9, 1870. Buss painted *Dickens' Dream* five years after Dickens' death. Buss drew characters from *The Pickwick Papers* to *The Mystery of Edwin Drood*, Dickens' last and unfinished novel, unfinished due to his death. His demise. My father died on July 3, 2001. I do not know what he left unfinished, but I am certain it was something. I think that novelists, by definition, what with the novel meaning "new" and the novelist striving for the newer and better with each book, and his last sentence already old as soon as written, I think the novelist is fated to die with his work unfinished. Percy Bysshe Shelley was a keen if imperfect sailor and perished tragically in his eccentric and poorly ballasted boat in the Gulf of La Spezia in 1822, one year after John Keats died from ravaging consumption—or tuberculosis—at 26 Piazza di Spagna, Rome. When Shelley's body was recovered from the sea, his face and hands devoured by fishes, a folded-back book was found in his coat pocket, thrust there hastily in the midst of reading. It was a copy of Keats' final publication, the volume called *Lamia*, containing the unfinished poem *The Fall of Hyperion: A Vision*. "Poets," Shelley famously wrote in the posthumously published "A Defence of Poetry," "are the unacknowledged legislators of the world" (90). Shelley also left a work unfinished, due to the upsetting of his boat, a searing epic poem entitled "The Triumph of Life." The triumph of life, Daddy!

Mordecai's Dream: I see my father at his desk and all his characters in suspension around him, those close to his great tousled head most deeply coloured in a cloud of blue mist. On the desk is a pot of tea on a tray and lemon pips encrusted in a puddle of juice. My father wears dark slippers like Dickens', but they are not mules but full slippers with mashed-down backs. He was regularly given expensive new pairs at Christmas by my mother. "Daddy! Why not ask Mummy for slippers *without* backs? You always mash down the backs." "But I like to mash down the backs," said my father. So there. Like Dickens, too, Mordecai had political views and was a consummate essayist, by turns polemical: *This Year in Jerusalem*, O

Canada, O Quebec, Impure Wool Society, "tongue-troopers."

At my mother's house I bumped into the eminent John Fraser, long-term Master of Massey College at the University of Toronto. He sat with her discussing choral music, gooseberries, Parisian tea blends, politics, and, interestingly, Ian McEwan, whom John had just been with in Italy at a music festival. McEwan, who never buried his mother in cement, or cut up a body in small pieces, unless I am much mistaken. Mummy explained to John why we were going to Montreal and he asked, what is the theme of the event? "Mordecai Richler against the World," I told him. "Who won?" he asked, quickfire. Who won, indeed?

As an alumna of the University of Toronto, I am allowed to use its superlative library services and I chose to prepare my piece for the event at a round glass table in front of a large disused fireplace in a corner of the biography section of Hart House Library. Of course I look for my father on these shelves, but between *Scorned and Beloved: Dead of Winter Meetings with Canadian Eccentrics*, by Bill Richardson, and *Louis 'David' Riel: Prophet of the New World*, by Thomas Flanagan, there is nothing. And no titles are missing as this is not a lending library. In the Canadian essays section at Hart House, with its heraldic symbols and deep-set wood-panelled alcoves, I pass a facing-out book on a stand each morning that compels my attention, though I endeavour to avoid it, due to its disquieting jacket image: a composite photograph of Margaret Atwood and Mordecai Richler, with Peggy's face comprising the top half and Daddy's the lower, making up, I decide, a sort of gryphon, creature of legend, half eagle, half lion, king of birds and king of beasts respectively, and a figure of majesty. Peggy and Daddy are a gryphon. I decide so. Daddy, you are not here in this library, not really. There is but a shadow of you.

What is the title of this conference, this symposium? Mordecai Richler against the World. Who won?

Ghosts. The first of the three spirits in Dickens' *A Christmas Carol* is the Ghost of Christmas Past. "These are but shadows of the things that have been. They have no consciousness of us," says the Ghost as he takes Scrooge away and into his past with a grasp that, "though gentle as a woman's hand, was not to be resisted" (29-30). In ghost stories, spirits return for many reasons. They come to bid farewell, to right a wrong, or with diffuse intentions, some coming, quite simply, when called up by the living. They enjoy churchyards and old houses, moorlands and estuaries, disused railways and overgrown gardens, and signal their presence by way of mists

and shadows, sharp sounds and sudden breezes, and in the flickering of flames in fireplaces and the light of candles. In more modern tales, they might ring one up on the telephone, and one night, not long after my father's death, Daddy stood on my digital bathroom scales at three o'clock in the morning, the light shining in the darkness of my bedroom where I had left them, indicating a measurement of 0.0 kg. Ha ha ha, I heard him laugh. Feel how large my presence is, Emma, though I am now weightless.

The last time I saw my father was on the eve of my return to London at the end of the Canadian book tour for my first novel, a tour for which, some months earlier in London, before he fell mortally ill, he had tried to prepare me, over drinks at a favourite cafe near Sloane Square. "You can order breakfast in your room. It's okay to do that, you know. Don't go without food. And you are allowed to call home. Tell your publicist when you need a rest, you don't have to be so polite. Don't think you'll be able to write. You won't. Accept it. And when they ask you—and they will—why you live in London, don't get flustered." My father then told me an anecdote about Mavis Gallant. He said that when she was asked pointedly on a Canadian tour just why she lived in Paris, she replied, "Have you been to Paris?"

The last time I saw my father, at supper at my sister-in-law's house, I hugged him near the vestibule where he was seated in an armchair in the window, and I felt the shock of his attenuated frame as he pushed me away gently, because I had lingered a moment too long, held him a little too tightly, which was his preserve as the father, and not mine. I wept in my hotel room later that night, not because my father had become so thin, shape-shifting, indeed, but because he had stopped writing and had seemed to me so detached, already absent. My father had assumed a mask; he was almost gone from his living body.

There are two masks of John Keats, with four years between them, a life mask and a death mask, and in neither is he smiling or frowning, though heaven knows he had plenty to anger him, beginning with the death of his father in a riding accident when Keats was eight years old, followed by the death of his mother from tuberculosis six years later, an illness through which the fourteen-year-old boy Keats nursed her fearlessly, cooking and cleaning and keeping vigil in her bedroom, and reading aloud from novels. When she died, he returned to school in Enfield, where he was observed to suffer from a violence of sorrow. John left his desk during lessons and hid in the alcove beneath the raised platform on which his teacher sat.

John held his hands to his head, his grief unbound. Eight years later, Keats resumed the role of nurse for his beloved brother Tom, the youngest of three Keats boys, and the violence of John's sorrow was unsurpassed because Tom died likewise of the family disease, the tuberculosis that will ravage his eldest brother in Rome only twenty-six months hence. John Keats, physician turned poet. Physician, heal thyself. Keats never healed himself. There was so little time. "The gradual sand that through an hour-glass runs— / A woodland rivulet—a Poet's death" (287).

John Keats against the world. Who won? The life mask of Keats was cast by his friend the artist Benjamin Robert Haydon in December 1816, shortly after they met for the first time on October 31, Keats' twenty-first birthday, and exactly 203 years before I delivered the talk in Montreal. The nose is strong and the lips full and sensuous, and one longs to see those large hazel eyes open, and the brilliant glare, the intensity of that light. Towards the end of 1819, his year of singular creativity, Keats scrawled a seven-and-a-half-line poem in the margins of the manuscript of a long and unusually light satirical piece. Keats was in love and, as always, deeply aware of time and mortality:

> This living hand, now warm and capable
> Of earnest grasping, would, if it were cold
> And in the icy silence of the tomb,
> So haunt thy days and chill thy dreaming nights
> That thou would wish thine own heart dry of blood
> So in my veins red life might stream again,
> And thou be conscience-calm'd—see, here it is—
> I hold it towards you. (365)

Keats died in Rome, nursed by his friend, the artist Joseph Severn, his lungs in such shreds it was thought astonishing he had endured so many months at all. He died on February 23, 1821, and the following day, just as the furnishings and decorations were being stripped and burnt for fear of infection and according to Roman law, a cast maker, possibly Canova's mask maker Gherardi, made casts of Keats' face, foot, and hand. This dying hand. There is so much to see in these two masks, so much to think regarding the years between, but, for me, the most evocative portrait of the poet was drawn by Severn at three o'clock in the morning on January 28, when Keats' face is not yet masked, but full of light and shade. "These are but shadows of the things that have been . . ." In the drawing, Keats' sleeping head is angled on the pillow towards the viewer and his auburn

curls are sweat dampened, and one notes the faintest line of hair above the upper lip of his sensuous mouth. There is a large vibrant shadow on the wall, thrown by his head, cast, no doubt, by a candle that is out of the picture, somewhere in the foreground, throwing a shimmering shadow, a trick of candlelight, which is bluest at its core, an emanation, blue as the spreading scilla at my mother's door. Mummy, is he there? Do you see him?

Poets are the unacknowledged legislators of the world. My father had been dead over eighteen years when I attended the conference in Montreal, yet it took me until then to grasp why my mother preferred the word "demise" to the word "death." The word "demise," in its legal sense, signifies the conveyance or grant of an estate for life, or for a period of years, by will or lease. A writer's legacy is a complex thing. It can be found, in my father's case, in my mother—his muse and lover, and remarkable editor—and in the family he left behind, far too soon, and in his things, even in the graciously intended but unrecognisably tidy Richler library at Concordia University. But what a writer conveys above all, what demises to us, for a period of years, or for life, by will or lease, as we choose, lies in the pages of his work, written in his living hand. This living hand—see, here it is—I hold it towards you.

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Emma Richler is the author of the short-story collection Sister Crazy *and two novels,* Feed My Dear Dogs*, and* Be My Wolff. *A third novel is forthcoming.*

Une phrase est un monde : traduire Mordecai Richler

Lori Saint-Martin

Traduire, c'est créer une nouvelle œuvre dans l'esprit de la

première.[1] S'éloigner de l'original juste ce qu'il faut, puis, avec de nouveaux mots, s'en rapprocher de nouveau. Rien n'est donné une fois pour toutes : ce qu'on fait au début d'un roman risque de ne pas convenir deux phrases plus loin, à plus forte raison pour un autre livre. Et tout mot, toute phrase, toute image peut opposer à la traduction une résistance absolue. La solution doit être locale—elle doit résoudre une difficulté particulière—mais aussi globale, en harmonie avec l'ensemble de l'œuvre. Chaque fois, il faut se lancer dans le vide, avec respect, intégrité, admiration et terreur. Mais un jour, il faut en finir; il faut décider, oser, donner le texte à imprimer.

Paul Gagné et moi avons consacré plusieurs années à un projet merveilleux, grandiose : traduire ou retraduire les grands romans de Mordecai Richler.[2] L'œuvre de Richler regorge de difficultés de traduction : la variété des tons et des voix, le défi de capter en français un Montréal vécu et rendu en anglais, l'humour, les blagues et jeux de mots, les références juives, les diverses strates géographiques et historiques, les innombrables clins d'œil littéraires et culturels, allant des poèmes d'Auden à des slogans politiques et publicitaires aujourd'hui oubliés. Richler était un grand conteur et sa prose paraît simple, spontanée, limpide, presque parlée; elle *coule*, apparemment sans effort. Dans un sens, la principale difficulté réside justement là, dans ce naturel à réinventer.

Certains critiques laissent entendre qu'il ne faut jamais « remanier » la phrase à traduire, que tout changement est dénaturation et trahison. Je pense au contraire qu'il faut parfois changer le texte *pour qu'il reste le même*. Tout l'art consiste en savoir quand—et comment—rester près de l'original. Pour donner une idée de notre démarche, j'ai choisi une phrase en principe assez facile, dépourvue des problèmes les plus courants (jurons, intertextualité, jeux de mots, doubles sens), pour montrer à quel point la difficulté est partout.

La voici : « In those days, of course, Izzy no longer drove his battered Ford V-8 down St. Urbain, chasing after the ice-truck, peddling refrigerators ». Du point de vue du décodage, cette phrase ne pose aucun problème, même si « ice-truck » appartient à une autre époque; ici comme ailleurs, la prose de Richler est d'une grande clarté. Mais comment rendre la phrase en français ? Voyons d'abord ses particularités : d'une part la perspective temporelle inhabituelle, mais absolument caractéristique des grands romans de Richler (« In those days, Izzy no longer . . . »); d'autre part sa concision et son caractère concret, *matter-of-fact*, qui vient tant des adjectifs et substantifs (« battered Ford V-8 », « ice-truck »,

« refrigerators ») que des participes présents (« chasing », « peddling »).

Le complément circonstanciel de temps « In those days », accompagné d'une action appartenant à un passé lointain (« Izzy *no longer* drove »), recèle un sens complexe, caractéristique de l'ensemble de l'œuvre de Richler. Il montre la distance entre l'homme pauvre et ambitieux d'autrefois et le millionnaire qu'il est devenu; plus qu'un simple marqueur temporel, c'est la mise en relief d'une ascension d'autant plus spectaculaire que les débuts dans la vente ont été dérisoires. Cette tournure est liée à un trait essentiel des romans de la maturité de Richler, qui jouent sur deux ou trois trames temporelles alternées : le mouvement rétrospectif des « petits gars de la rue Saint-Urbain », parvenus à l'âge mûr et devenus des hommes du monde riches et célèbres, mais toujours hantés par le souvenir de l'école secondaire Fletcher's Field et des *delicatessens* de la Main. Leur ambivalence se traduit, sur le plan narratif, par ces retours en arrière intimement liés au présent; le personnage ou le narrateur balance entre deux époques—voire trois, avec celle de la narration—et l'évocation de l'opulence actuelle d'Izzy côtoie la remémoration d'un passé des plus modestes qui, sans être précisément idéalisé, inspire une grande nostalgie. On pense ici à Duddy Kravitz qui, ayant réussi au-delà de toutes ses espérances, commande du caviar au restaurant pour montrer qu'il est un fin connaisseur, mais préfère le foie haché de son enfance.

Ce balancement entre passé et présent, réussite actuelle et désir d'un passé révolu, marque donc autant l'histoire du roman et les personnages que le style. La phrase que j'ai donnée présente en fait trois temps : celui de l'écriture au présent, celui, intermédiaire, auquel appartient l'épisode relatée, où Izzy était déjà riche (« In those days » et non « Nowadays »), et celui de ses débuts peu glorieux. Tentons donc une première version française qui colle de près à l'original :

In those days, of course, Izzy no longer drove his battered Ford V-8 down St. Urbain, chasing after the ice-truck, peddling refrigerators.	À cette époque, bien sûr, Izzy ne conduisait plus sa vieille Ford V-8 le long de la rue Saint-Urbain, poursuivant le camion qui livrait la glace, vendant des réfrigérateurs.

D'emblée, notons les étoffements obligatoires. S'il existe aujourd'hui un « camion à glace(s) », c'est celui qui propose de la crème glacée. En anglais, par contre, pas d'ambiguïté : le produit transporté ne peut être autre chose

que de la glace. Et « le long de » est moins économique que « down », mais qu'y faire ? Enfin, « conduire le long de » est plus lourd et moins usuel que « drive down »; les verbes de mouvement en anglais sont plus souples et donnent plus d'informations (« stomp out », « fly in »). Par ailleurs, la traduction plus ou moins littérale du segment temporel, « À cette époque, bien sûr, Izzy ne conduisait plus depuis longtemps . . . », est à la fois plate et obscure; la séquence temporelle (qui marque aussi, comme on l'a vu, une relation de causalité : Izzy a cessé ces activités parce qu'il a fait fortune) ne ressort pas nettement; si on dit, par exemple, « À cette époque, bien sûr, Izzy avait depuis longtemps cessé de conduire . . . », c'est encore plus long et à peine plus clair. Par ailleurs, l'usage des participes présents fait qu'une phrase parfaitement naturelle en anglais paraît bizarre et forcée en français. Je sais par expérience qu'ils seront rejetés à l'étape de la révision, ainsi que le « À cette époque »; on vous demandera de refaire la phrase ou, pire, on le refera à votre place. Et de fait, cette phrase manque à la fois de clarté et de relief; elle est terne, elle n'a pas la verve de l'original.

Notez que je ne défends en rien une version moderne des belles infidèles ; on ne peut tout changer au nom du « génie de la langue française ». Seulement, on est ici devant une difficulté particulière du style de Richler. Ses phrases ressemblent à des boîtes remplies à craquer, dont le contenu menace toujours de déborder, mais conserve de justesse un équilibre savant : noms, lieux, moments passés et présents, compléments circonstanciels de tous genres. Des phrases de journaliste, pourrait-on dire, très *who-what-when-where-how-and-sometimes-why*, amalgame d'éléments empilés les uns sur les autres comme une tour sur le point de s'effondrer mais qui tient toujours. Pour reproduire tous les éléments dans une phrase française, on doit parfois les agencer autrement, refaire l'équilibre. Si on y manque, on créera l'impression d'une bizarrerie syntaxique qui n'existe pas dans l'anglais, et on faussera cruellement la voix de l'auteur. Dans de tels cas, ne pas changer, c'est en fait dénaturer.

Voici donc une version qui paraît logique—et, surtout, plus richlérienne—en français :

In those days, of course, Izzy no longer drove his battered Ford V-8 down St. Urbain, chasing after the ice-truck, peddling refrigerators.	Elle était révolue depuis longtemps, bien sûr, l'époque où Izzy vendait ses réfrigérateurs en poursuivant, au volant de sa vieille Ford V-8, le camion qui livrait la glace rue Saint-Urbain.

Voyons comment nous avons abouti à ce résultat. « In those days » (on imagine l'accent tonique sur *those*) dit, plus clairement que « À cette époque » ou même « À cette époque-là », que l'époque en question est très différente à la fois du présent et d'un passé plus ancien encore. La tournure du début de la phrase française, légèrement plus emphatique que dans l'original, mais tout de même près de la langue parlée (« Elle était . . . l'époque »), est très courante en français, tout comme la formule anglaise est commune et idiomatique, et elle rend par un autre moyen stylistique l'idée d'opposition entre différents moments de l'action. En plus, j'ai l'impression qu'une tournure affirmative (« vendait des réfrigérateurs » au lieu de « ne faisait plus » cette action) exprime mieux le mouvement dynamique de l'original.

Deuxième changement, l'ordre des éléments a été remanié. Certains y verraient un péché mortel (« la phrase doit forcément finir avec les réfrigérateurs, comme en anglais »), mais les diktats de ce type ne peuvent avoir valeur d'absolu : plus la phrase est courte et simple, plus on sera porté à la garder telle quelle puisque la structure de base (sujet-verbe-complément) ne varie pas entre les deux langues; plus la phrase est longue, complexe et chargée, plus il est probable que des changements s'imposeront. Ici (mais c'est loin d'être le cas pour l'ensemble de la traduction; nous « foisonnons » très peu, en fait), la traduction est plus longue que l'original (31 mots contre 22), mais à peine plus longue que la version littérale (29 mots). Le rallongement est surtout dû aux étoffements obligatoires dont j'ai parlé (« au volant de » pour « drove », « camion qui livrait la glace » pour « ici-truck ») et qui marquent une différence entre l'anglais et le français. Dans le cas de « Elle était révolue depuis longtemps, l'époque où Izzy…» pour « In those days, Izzy… », j'ose affirmer que la tournure, bien que plus longue, est plus claire, plus naturelle et plus idiomatique en français que le calque « À cette époque, Izzy ne conduisait plus . . . »

À mon avis, la traduction proposée précise, sans trop la forcer, la logique d'Izzy : vendre aux ménagères un réfrigérateur à 2,00 $ par semaine alors qu'elles donnaient 1,80 $ pour la glace (prendre de vitesse, donc, le camion qu'il suit, et qui disparaîtra alors qu'Izzy triomphera). Du point de vue lexical, « vendait » est plus neutre que « peddling », mais on ne pouvait utiliser « colporter », qui s'applique aux objets qu'on peut transporter avec soi; on aurait pu dire « vendre à tempérament », mais la suite du texte le montre et de toute façon, la phrase est déjà assez chargée. Le rythme de

cette phrase n'est pas celui de l'original; en revanche, elle est bien rythmée, elle coule naturellement et, comme la phrase anglaise, elle fait image. Il est vrai que la chute est différente : on finit avec la mention de la rue et non celle des réfrigérateurs. Que la phrase française se termine ainsi sert tout de même le propos de l'auteur, pour qui la « rue Saint-Urbain » (tellement emblématique pour Richler qu'il a intitulé un de ses livres *The Street* en son honneur) est le centre de l'univers, le symbole de sa vie vraie et recréée dans la fiction, le point de départ de tout trajet et l'objet d'un retour attendri qui s'effectue dans et par l'écriture. La traduction répond donc au projet d'ensemble de l'auteur, réitéré à chaque ligne du roman, tout en reproduisant le mouvement fluide entre passé et présent qui le définit, comme le dit le titre original du roman d'où la phrase est tirée : *Joshua Then and Now*.

Et voilà pourquoi il ne suffit pas de coller de près à la phrase anglaise (ordre des mots, usage des gérondifs) pour faire une bonne traduction. Celle que je propose me semble beaucoup plus près de la phrase anglaise et de ce qu'elle évoque qu'une version plus littérale. Bien sûr, là où on peut « coller », on colle; mais parfois, il faut s'éloigner un peu, voire considérablement, pour se tenir au plus près : toute la difficulté de l'affaire, toute la beauté de l'affaire consiste à savoir quand et comment. On pourrait sûrement faire encore mieux : on aurait pu dire par exemple « de sa Ford V-8 toute cabossée », mais on a remplacé par « vieille » au dernier moment parce que ce mot, bien que moins coloré que « battered », donne à la phrase un meilleur rythme. Je regrette un peu les mots « toute cabossée », mais je comprends aussi pourquoi nous les avons enlevés.

Cet exemple et bien d'autres le montrent, dès qu'on ne traduit pas mot à mot, on « remanie », on va ailleurs. Forcément et, en général, heureusement. On peut aller trop loin, mais ne pas aller assez loin, c'est en fait aller dans une mauvaise direction : celle d'un texte traduit qui est un simple calque ou qui rate les effets que réussit l'original. L'important, c'est de saisir la musique d'un texte pour la rejouer du mieux possible sur cet autre instrument qu'est la nouvelle langue. Ce qui distingue Richler, c'est moins l'ordre dans lequel il présente ses éléments que le naturel avec lequel il les enchaîne, la rapidité de ses phrases, l'image qui surgit : dans ce cas, le trajet le long de la rue Saint-Urbain, le voyage à la fois concret et métaphorique. Tout cela, j'espère, je crois que nous l'avons capté.

Je ne donne pas cette traduction comme définitive ou parfaite; j'hésite encore quand je la regarde; elle a sans doute des défauts. Une autre

traductrice aurait produit une version différente, meilleure, moins bonne ou aussi bonne, tout dépend des critères et des goûts. Nous-mêmes, à un autre moment de notre vie, aurions fait autrement. J'ai simplement voulu restituer quelques étapes d'un parcours, montrer les questionnements, les doutes, la réflexion et toute l'amoureuse attention qui entre dans la traduction d'une seule petite phrase.

Notes

1. For an English translation of this essay, see https://canlit.ca/?post_type=article&p=66627&preview=true.
2. *Solomon Gursky* et *Joshua*, 2015; *L'Apprentissage de Duddy Kravitz* et *Le Cavalier de Saint-Urbain*, 2016; *Le Monde selon Barney*, 2017. Ces traductions sont publiés à Montréal chez Boréal. *Solomon Gursky*, *L'Apprentissage de Duddy Kravitz*, *Le Cavalier de Saint-Urbain* et *Le Monde selon Barney* sont également publiés en France par les Éditions du Sous-sol. La traduction de *Son of a Smaller Hero*, intitulé *Fils d'un tout petit héros*, est la dernière à paraître (2022).

Lori Saint-Martin is Professeure en études littéraires at Université de Québec à Montréal. She has published six volumes of criticism, including La Voyageuse et la prisonnière: Gabrielle Roy et la question des femmes *(Boréal), as well as three collections of short fiction and the novel* Les Portes closes. *With husband Paul Gagné she has translated six of Mordecai Richler's novels and over seventy other English titles, including works by Maya Angelou, Margaret Atwood, Alistair MacLeod, and Naomi Klein. The couple have received three Governor General's Awards for translation, among numerous other prizes.*

Remaking Richler for French Canada: Translation as *Remaniement*

Judith Woodsworth

Marcel Proust's *Remembrance of Things Past*, Gustave Flaubert's *Madame Bovary*, Fyodor Dostoevsky's *The Brothers Karamazov*, Leo Tolstoy's *Anna Karenina*, and Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* are some of the works that have been translated into English anew, or "retranslated," sometimes by writers in their own right, like Lydia Davis, who has tackled both Proust and Flaubert. These achievements have been hotly debated in literary magazines and painstakingly analyzed in academic journals. While the notion of "retranslation" itself has become somewhat of a trend in translation studies, the actual phenomenon is far from new.

Many canonical works, such as the Bible and the *Arabian Nights*, have been abundantly translated and transformed over time, the object of multiple adaptations for different audiences and media. The works of Mordecai Richler, a more recent and less canonical author but a giant of Canadian letters nonetheless, have similarly undergone a major retranslation into French.

Translation is always a complex event, set in a particular cultural context and geographical space, with a range of sociological and political factors that govern the actions of translators as well as various agents—publishers, editors, funding agencies, and reviewers—who initiate the act of translation and influence its outcome. The act of retranslation has meanwhile been investigated since Antoine Berman formulated his influential "retranslation hypothesis." For Berman, first translations are usually "assimilating," in that they attempt to erase the foreignness of a work of literature; over time, however, this deficiency tends to be corrected as (re)translations become increasingly faithful to the original text. This hypothesis has been amply discussed and contested.

A prominent Montreal publishing house commissioned the French translation of Mordecai Richler's novels some years after they had already been translated, mainly in France. Two representatives of les Éditions du Boréal, managing director Pascal Assathiany and literary editor (*directeur de l'édition*) Jean Bernier, invited a pair of translators to lunch and stunned them with an invitation to translate a series of Richler's books. The chosen couple, Lori Saint-Martin and Paul Gagné, collaborators in translation as well as real-life partners, were by this time among the most accomplished and decorated translators in Canada. Both flabbergasted and intimidated, the translators were delighted to take on the project, which they saw as the opportunity of a lifetime, a unique and rare "gift," as they revealed in an interview with me in August 2021 on the patio of their home in Montreal's Notre-Dame-de-Grâce neighbourhood. There were no other candidates, to their knowledge, and they were under the impression that the project would not have gone ahead had they not accepted.

Saint-Martin and Gagné have been translating books together since the early 1990s, beginning with the publication of Daphne Marlatt's novel *Ana historique*, for which they received the John Glassco Translation Prize awarded by the Literary Translators' Association of Canada for a debut translation. However, their career did not take off until their translation of Ann-Marie MacDonald's *Fall on Your Knees* (*Un parfum de*

cèdre) earned them their first Governor General's Award in Translation in 2000. They now estimate that they have translated around 120 books. By the time Boréal came calling, the duo had already won a fistful of prizes, including a second Governor General's Award for *Dernières notes* (2007), their translation of *Last Notes and Other Stories* by Tamas Dobozy. Before devoting himself full time to co-translating some of Canada's most esteemed writers, Gagné had worked for several years in an agency, translating a million words a year, mainly for the federal government. Saint-Martin is a professor of literature at the Université de Québec à Montréal, as well as a novelist and short story writer.

On the table during that pivotal lunch was a set of five books: *Solomon Gursky Was Here* (translated as *Solomon Gursky* in 2015); *Joshua Then and Now* (*Joshua*, 2015); *The Apprenticeship of Duddy Kravitz* (*L'Apprentissage de Duddy Kravitz*, 2016), and *St. Urbain's Horseman* (*Le Cavalier de Saint-Urbain*, 2016). At the time, the publisher did not yet have the rights to *Barney's Version*, so they were going to do *Son of a Smaller Hero*, which was dropped when *Barney's Version* was acquired (translated as *Le Monde selon Barney* in 2017). At the time of our interview, they were in the process of completing the reinstated translation of *Son of a Smaller Hero*, released in 2022 under the title *Fils d'un tout petit héros*, for a total of six books. For *Solomon Gursky* and *Le Monde selon Barney* they have garnered two more Governor General's Awards.

All these titles had been translated previously, mostly in France, although a translation of *Duddy Kravitz* had come out in Montreal in 1976. *Barney* had been translated by French translator Bernard Cohen not long before and was even released in paperback as recently as 2018. Many errors have been detected in these earlier translations, inventoried in multiple critical and scholarly pieces, even framed by translatological concepts—notably domesticating versus foreignizing approaches—with reference to such theoreticians as Berman, Lawrence Venuti, and Henri Meschonnic. Bernard Cohen, chided for never having set foot in Quebec, has had his wrist slapped for translating Lower Canada as *le Canada inférieur* (instead of *le Bas-Canada*) and the well-travelled road to the ski hills *Autoroute du Saint-Laurent* (instead of *Autoroute des Laurentides*, or Laurentian Autoroute) (Côté). Much has been made of another slip-up in *Barney*: the translation of the nickname of beloved Quebec hockey player Maurice Richard, the "Rocket," as *la Fusée*, a misstep that understandably miffed francophone readers in Quebec (Martineau 60). Readers *chez nous* have

been particularly touchy about mistakes associated with their favourite pastime, as evidenced by Lysiane Gagnon's column in the Montreal daily *La Presse*, in which she salutes Saint-Martin and Gagné as translators capable of finally getting things right, calling out the French translator's reference to our prized hockey trophy as the *tasse Stanley* instead of the *coupe Stanley*.

Boréal's project has generally been well received and perceived as a step forward. Writing in *Le Devoir*, Catherine Lalonde deplores how long it has taken for Quebec readers to have access to a "respectable" translation of *Solomon Gursky Was Here*, which like the other Richler novels had suffered from disgraceful made-in-France translations ("*pitoyable*" is the word she uses). And she heralds the "new French voice" of translators Saint-Martin and Gagné (Lalonde).

Make It New

"New" has been the operative word and guiding principle of the project, as the red wrap-around band on the cover of the published volumes indicates.[1] It would be a Quebec translation, for a Québécois readership: it was supposed to be an up-to-date translation of six works, all done by the same person (or two persons in this case) within a relatively short period of time, so that there would be a certain coherence and unity of voice. The publisher's intentions are indicated in the following blurb for *Solomon Gursky*: "This new French translation, by Lori Saint-Martin and Paul Gagné is the first to be made in Quebec. The francophone reader will therefore rediscover the wealth of references to Canadian and Québécois reality made by Richler."[2] As the next books were released, they were accompanied by similar statements emphasizing the newness of the translation and its faithfulness to the original work of Richler.[3]

The Canada Council for the Arts, which has long promoted and funded literary translation in this country, does not usually support retranslations. As Saint-Martin and Gagné point out, Pascal Assathiany had to make a special case to the Canada Council, arguing that the Hexagonal French versions were outdated and not suited to audiences here. The project was thus quite deliberately pitched to the funders as "new" and also marketed as such.

It has become somewhat of a national sport to poke fun at the bloopers and clunkers in former made-in-France translations. However, once they received their marching orders from Boréal, the homegrown translators

were not at all concerned with previous translations. They made a point, in fact, of consciously ignoring them—not even peeking. They emphatically maintain that this is not "retranslation" in the usual sense, but rather a "new" translation, by which they mean that they are not proposing to rewrite or revise an older, faulty text.

Though This Be Madness

From the outset, Gagné has refused to read the existing translations. Not out of laziness, he insists. Rather, he fears that it would "contaminate" his mind. He feels that the only possible approach has been to act as if there were no previous translation. Editor Jean Bernier may have occasionally taken a look, out of curiosity, but the translators claim they never did, not before or after. Not that previous translations were totally bad, they say. Rather, they are not comfortable with going through someone else's work and cherry-picking the good parts, the *trouvailles*. Their translation is not a "palimpsest" with a little bit borrowed from someone's translation, and a little bit from another; it is not a reading done in France and not a reading done thirty years ago, but another reading done here and now.

Co-translators for three decades, Saint-Martin and Gagné have worked out how to produce a prodigious volume of translation in a short time (*Gursky* and *Joshua*, issued the same year, total an astonishing 1,200 pages). Over time, they have obviously developed a highly efficient method of working together, reflected in the seamless way in which they answered my questions, the conversation flowing effortlessly as they finished each other's thoughts and sentences, almost as if they were speaking with a single voice.

Gagné dedicates himself one hundred percent to the task of translation, while Saint-Martin sets aside some of her time to carrying out the duties of her "day job" as a professor (although Gagné makes a point of highlighting her outstanding capacity for work, which makes it possible for her to add translation to the "million things" she does). Gagné writes a first draft and edits it online, after which he prints it out and hands it over to Saint-Martin, whose job is to do a "bilingual revision." In other words, she checks Gagné's French translation against the English original, word by word and line by line. Gagné calls her his "safety net" because, as an Anglophone, she is likely to catch idiomatic expressions he might have missed. Saint-Martin's rewrite involves manipulating the text, moving it away from a strictly literal rendering. According to Saint-Martin, Gagné has an aptitude and preference for translating, while she is better as a reviser.

Gagné concurs and says he hates reading his material over again. When corrections come back from the publishers, Saint-Martin takes over. She is the one who will negotiate with editors and proofreaders. They both feel happy with the model. One person, working alone, doesn't always have the distance or the stamina to handle larger projects.

The Labours of Translation

The translators use the word "intimidated" several times in the course of our conversation, showing immense respect for the author they are translating and gratitude, as well, to the literary community for the attention bestowed upon them ("*choyés*" is the term they use). They are modest about their own work, although infinitely thoughtful. The term "difficult" comes up, too, as a leitmotiv. All translation, they say, is difficult. Gagné recalls that the countless texts he translated in a previous life were difficult, but that literary translation is even more so because in addition to the sense, you have to be attentive to the style and humour of the original. Not only must you be aware of the context in which the original book was composed, you must also understand your target audience. "When I think about it all," he says, "it gives me a headache."

They underline the fact that no translation is ever perfect or totally bad. They are reluctant to find fault with their fellow translators, past or present. The craft of translation is undervalued as it is, even regarded with suspicion. There's no point in adding to the negative perceptions by criticizing the work of others. They do raise the question of "voice," on the other hand, hypothesizing that an author is better served by a single translator rather than a cacophony of voices ("*bruit des voix*"). The previous French versions of Richler were done by disparate translators, at different times. At Boréal's request, they took on a set of the greatest Richler novels, which they agreed to complete within a relatively short period of time. The effect was sure to be different, more coherent, and more effective.

Although these translations were intended for Quebec readers, the publisher also partnered with a French publisher, Éditions du sous-sol. "*Québécois, oui et non*," they say. Of course, the translations were to have a Quebec focus, tone, and vocabulary. But there was a "small constraint": the text was also meant to be transparent and readable for an international audience. Enter the French copyeditors: *bleuets* (blueberries) become *myrtilles*; *un stationnement* (parking lot) is changed to *un parking*; and *chandail* (sweater) is replaced with *pull*. Things can't be too Québécois or

the books won't sell. The Montreal team draws the line at inserting France-specific slang like *nana* and *flic* or curses like *putain de*. Saint-Martin, who handles the French editors for the most part, feels, however, that they have maintained a light-handed approach. And compromises could be made by choosing terms that are recognized as specific to Quebec, but included in the authoritative French dictionary, *Le Robert*.

"Son nom sent encore le soufre"

While the translators immediately earned accolades for their work, the reception of Mordecai Richler was more problematic. As Lysiane Gagnon points out, Richler is still a controversial figure in Quebec; she says, literally, that "his name still smells of sulphur." Caustic and prickly, he was not particularly well liked by his own people, Quebec Jews and Anglos. And he got the backs of Quebecers up even more by writing vitriolic pieces, in high-profile American publications such as *The New Yorker* and *The Atlantic Monthly*, decrying Quebec's language laws and nationalist agenda. Yet polemics are strikingly absent in the novels, Gagné notes. Criticism of French Canadians, as Richler calls them, boils down to at most two or three paragraphs in any given novel, unlike the sustained satire on his own social group. Moreover, in a novel like *The Apprenticeship of Duddy Kravitz*, the only character who elicits our sympathy is actually the French Canadian Yvette. Richler's political writing generated a firestorm, however, to the point where he was a literary *persona non grata* on his own turf. Someone had even said to Saint-Martin and Gagné, "You can translate Richler all you like, I will never read someone like that."

Why then would Boréal choose to translate such an antipathetic author? It could be argued that the Montreal publishing house has always been open to the voices of minorities. The press has been a trailblazer in Indigeneity, published much English Canadian literature in translation, while also promoting Quebec writers with nationalistic tendencies. Richler's "irreverence," as the translators put it, possibly held some appeal. It was perhaps a bit of a gamble, but one that seems to have paid off. Lysiane Gagnon concludes her diatribe by suggesting that the time has come to celebrate Richler, Montreal's most eminent writer (along with Michel Tremblay), and internationally among the most renowned Canadian writers. In announcing its choice of Pascal Assathiany as a recipient of the 2018 Ordre de Montréal, the city of Montreal explicitly recognized the Richler translations: "His translation program, which helped

francophone readers rediscover Mordecai Richler, has also revitalized and showcased Montréal's cultural diversity" ("Pascal Assathiany"). Though the translators are uncertain about how well the Richler translations have sold in Quebec, in France they have been a runaway success, on bestseller lists and the front pages of major literary magazines, where Richler has been touted as a great Canadian and Québécois novelist.

The Art and Science of Translation

Over the last half century, an impressive body of knowledge has emerged on translation, running the gamut from anecdotal musings to quasi-scientific theories. Saint-Martin has read a great deal of translation theory in connection with her courses at UQAM, but for all its interest she has rarely found it useful or applicable when immersed in translating. Considering himself less theoretically inclined, Gagné admits that translation theory bores him to tears. Translation theories may well nourish the mind, inform the way in which we perceive translation, they conclude, but, says Gagné, "When confronted with a concrete translation problem, you're on your own. Although, there are two of us. We have each other, and that's comforting."

And yet, Saint-Martin deftly conceptualizes her craft and articulates her choices, precisely because she has been steeped in theoretical reflection. She has been working on a compilation of observations on the translation process titled *Un bien: éloge de la traduction littéraire*, recently released by Boréal. In it, Saint-Martin also addresses the links between writing and translating. Translating is good training for writing and writing is good training for translating, she opines. Translating is always a kind of writing; it is rewriting, except that when you write you are the one who decides. When you are translating you are in the service of someone, something else. You are borne by a movement, but you are not in the driver's seat; you recreate something that was already there. "In the book that we are completing [the translation of *Son of a Smaller Hero*], there isn't one word of French," she told me:

> In our version, there is not one word written by Richler. At the same time, it's his book. It makes you dizzy to think of it. The paradox of translation. Translation is spectacular. It is banal and at the same time it's something. *Barney's Version* is not our book; *Le Monde selon Barney* is his book and our book.

The Shifting Sands of Translation

There is no definitive translation. The process of *remaniement* or "recasting," to use Saint-Martin's term, is never-ending. Words, phrases, and the text as a whole are refashioned over time, with successive versions reshaped for new audiences. "*Un ouvrage n'est jamais achevé . . . mais abandonné*": Paul Valéry's adage that a literary work is never finished but only abandoned can be applied to a translation (Valéry 1497). Infinite revisions are possible until the translator simply surrenders it. The translation circulates as a new work for new readers until such time as circumstances set off another translation, in another time and space.

The "discourse of lack," according to which retranslations are needed because the previous one(s) were in some ways deficient (Massardier-Kenney 73), has come to be replaced by a more positive view of translation. Retranslations, seen as new readings, can unleash the power of translation to create new works of literature. Since modernists such as Pound exhorted writers to "make it new," translation has progressed from a subordinate act of (re)writing to a generative art. Saint-Martin and Gagné take their place in this tradition, placing value on their "amorous attention" to the original text. As acclaimed as the new Richler translations are, they may not be the last. But they will have fulfilled an important function by helping to construct a new component of Quebec literature—anglo-Québécois literature—which has been borne across the linguistic divide to take its place among the increasingly diverse works available to francophone readers in this country and beyond.

Notes

1. See the cover of *Le Monde selon Barney*, which is promoted as a "new translation by Lori Saint-Martin and Paul Gagné" on the Boréal website: www.editionsboreal.qc.ca/catalogue/livres/monde-selon-barney-2578.html.
2. The translation is mine. See "Solomon Gursky" : « Signée par Lori Saint-Martin et Paul Gagné, cette nouvelle traduction française de *Solomon Gursky Was Here* est la première à être réalisée au Québec. Le lecteur francophone pourra donc y retrouver toute la richesse des allusions de Richler à la réalité canadienne et québécoise. »
3. See, for example, "Joshua."

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Judith Woodsworth is a Professor of translation studies in the Département d'études françaises at Concordia University. She has published widely on translation theory and history and is noted, in particular, for Translators through History *(with Jean Delisle), which has been reissued and translated into several languages since it came out in 1995. She has also translated two Quebec novels into English, as well as a work of nonfiction,* History of the Jews in Quebec *by Pierre Anctil. Her recent publications include the monograph* Telling the Story of Translation: Writers Who Translate *(2017) and the edited volumes* The Fictions of Translation *(2018) and* Translation and the Global City: Bridges and Gateways *(2021). She was founding president of the Canadian Association for Translation Studies, of which she is currently an honorary member.*

Saint Urbain's Quiet Revolutionary

Andre Furlani

I

Adam Gopnik identifies three familiar Richlers, the Montrealer, the diasporic Jew, and the London expatriate, before arguing for the predominance of a fourth, the colonial émigré who returns from the declining imperial capital to an economically and culturally expansive homeland. Yet there is at least one more Richler. Gopnik restricts his analysis to English parallels, but Richler also has a place in Quebec's Quiet Revolution. Like many artists and intellectuals in the province's vanguard, including Jean-Paul Riopelle, Fernand Leduc, and Mavis Gallant, Richler

had decamped for Paris and other parts of Europe to escape ultramontane rule, bigotry, and parochialism, and he repatriated in 1972 the better to affront its legacy.

Like those artists Richler was hostile to State paternalism, religious orthodoxy, censorship, and social cant. As a social progressive critical of conservative religious dominance (his grandfather Yehudah Yudel Rosenberg had been a prominent rabbi as well as prolific writer), Richler was not unlike those francophone coevals who repudiated clerical authoritarianism. He favoured what, in the Automatist manifesto *Refus Global*, published in 1948 but rediscovered in the 1960s, Paul-Émile Borduas hailed as an anti-Establishment realm of social as well as artistic liberty, spontaneity, and eros. Richler was flagrantly contemptuous of Anglophone predominance in Quebec, celebrated what for that class was plebeian culture (including snooker, saloons, and boxing), descried moral repressiveness, and advocated secular schools and social welfare.

Repudiating the aesthetic disinterestedness canonized by his modernist precursors, in fiction no less than in squib, feuilleton, and newspaper column, Richler seized the mantle of campaigner and mobilizer that the Quiet Revolution fostered, as prominently characterized by such writers as Gaston Miron, Hubert Aquin, and Gérald Godin. Quebec became a crucible for an abrasively engaged literature by highly visible renegades whom Richler joined. Though his promotion of Michel Tremblay is well known, Richler's overlooked continuities with firebrands like Aquin, Jacques Godbout, and such fellow *Juif* Québécois iconoclasts as Régine Robin correct stereotypes of the Quiet Revolution as a homogenous catalyst for nationalist culture and political independence. Though adversarial to separatism, Richler joined many of his prominent francophone contemporaries in embracing the persona of polemical public intellectual, and like them wrote ambivalent novels about deeply conflicted renegades.

One impetus for the present re-estimation of Richler as a Quebec writer stems from his embrace of the dissenting civic conception of authorship he shared with leading French associates—a dissent with which on many questions he agreed. In the introduction to his 1970 Penguin anthology *Canadian Writing Today*, which contains translations of work by twelve French authors (including the emerging Marie-Claire Blais and Réjean Ducharme), Richler denounced, for instance, the institution of the Governor General, which "is not part of the indigenous tradition, a tradition struggling to emerge, but a divisive reminder of colonial

dependence, justifiably resented by the new militant French-Canadian writers, say Hubert Aquin, Jean-Guy Pilon, and Jacques Godbout, all of whom are represented in this anthology" (21). Marie Leconte notes that Québécois and anglo-Quebec literature "are discovering a way of mutual belonging" (76), and Richler's unlikely early role should not be discounted in that enterprise. Readers of Lori Saint-Martin and Paul Gagné's ongoing and popular new translation of the novels for Les Éditions du Boréal have discovered that the most acerbic of Quebec's anti-nationalists was one of its quiet revolutionaries as well.

II

Published in 1980 and freshly translated by Saint-Martin and Gagné in 2015, *Joshua Then and Now* takes place during the 1976 Quebec election that, for the first time, brought to power a party pledged to sovereignty. While silent on the Olympic Games hosted that very summer in Montreal, even as its protagonist is a popular sportswriter, the novel celebrates the 15 November victory of René Lévesque's Parti Québécois as just vengeance on the province's pampered and chauvinistic Anglophone elite:

> As far as that party's young activists were concerned, the reconquest had begun and now it would be the turn of the English-speaking to make bricks out of straw. But in the West End, where the English-speaking had ruled with impunity for years, each day's news was more disheartening than the last. Joshua salvaged some joy out of imagining the terrified burghers of Upper Westmount waking each morning to read in the *Gazette* that yet another company's head office had done a midnight flit, its spokesman saying, "The move of our head office to Toronto has been on the drawing board for years and has nothing to do with the present political atmosphere in Quebec." (176-77)

One of the few unbiased characters remarks, "certainly we have been made to feel insecure, but how exciting it must be to be young and French Canadian right now" (178), while affluent moral hypocrites like the philanderer Seymour pretend regret at having missed out on the glories of the Spanish Civil War that the Parti Québécois triumph conjures. Another character mocks the hysterics of "old Jews so scared they moved their furniture against the door. The next morning you had to wait in line to get into your safety deposit box" (177).

Joshua hastens to a posh Westmount perch to see his old Saint Urbain

schoolmate, now a wealthy but dyspeptic dentist: "Aglow with ill will, Joshua sought out Pinsky on Summit Circle. 'Well, Irving, just in case you didn't know, the value of your house has dropped twenty percent. So far'" (177). Joshua ventures, "if you ask me, René Lévesque's not such a bad fellow." The founder of the Parti Québécois easily attracts the admiration of Joshua, a chain-smoking, boozing, and womanizing war-zone journalist and progressivist adversary of a political establishment that unites Catholic clergy and English capital. This provokes Pinsky's invective against French Canadians, ironically accusing them of the bigotry he himself vents. A year later Pinsky's vehemence continues: "'Your friend Lévesque was shitting on us again. He said the Jews were edgy. They're bums, every one of them. A bunch of know-nothing pricks. A Jew in their mind is a stereotype'" (307-08). To this reciprocal stereotyping Joshua challenges him to leave Quebec, which seething yet spineless Pinsky has not the courage to do.

While Quebec experiences epochal social and political change, Joshua's smug circle of prosperous English friends play out the largely frivolous proxy wars of mid-life crisis. Like Richler's other fiction, *Joshua Then and Now* levels jeremiads at the institutions of English power. Its political class is corrupted by dovetailing commercial interests that insinuate the British class system through influence over education. Thus the rector's address at the posh private school Selwyn House makes a mockery of idealism, while McGill University is presented as exclusionist and hypocritical. Not only is the British securities trader Trimble a conniving vengeful cuckold, he is not even British, just a masquerading Montreal barber's son who hosts opulent annual Guy Fawkes parties, "resoundingly British" in every detail, culminating in Windsor fireworks: "[T]he unmistakable images of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II and Prince Philip leaped and spluttered before they illuminated the troubled skies of loyal Westmount, a colony besieged" (272).

The novel revels in that siege, as affluent friends discover that neither their class nor ethnic fellowship affords them welcome in Toronto. The novel includes a lengthy satirical digression on one Torontonian, Canada's longest serving Prime Minister, who is annually jeered by Joshua's burlesque William Lyon Mackenzie King Memorial Society. That contempt is partly explained by King's lasting notoriety in Quebec, in part for imposing conscription after the United Kingdom declared war on Germany in 1939: a war French Canadians overwhelmingly refused to wage. Rarely in the era's French Canadian fiction is the animus against the traditions,

values, privileges, and complacency of English-speaking Quebec as caustic as here. Indeed, it was exceeded only by Richler himself in his next novel, *Solomon Gursky Was Here*, where disparagement of the anglo-Quebec elite is extended to pitiless satire of the Westmount arrivistes originating in his own cultural community.

III

Richler included in *Canadian Writing Today* translated excerpts from the novel *Le Couteau sur la table* by Jacques Godbout, a celebrated *indépendantiste* writer and filmmaker. *Knife on the Table*, which Richler's publisher Jack McClelland had published in Penny Williams' translation a year earlier, responds ambivalently to the violence of the Front de libération du Québec. Like Joshua Shapiro, or Jake Hersch in *Saint Urbain's Horseman*, Godbout's anonymous narrator is a self-divided man who, while attracted to insurgency, displaces political militancy onto dubious surrogates and personally balks at violence.

Having left the army, Godbout's narrator vacillates between a Westmount and a working-class francophone lover, until his inertia is dispelled by the death of the latter woman on a motorcycle he had taught her to ride, and after the FLQ « *a fait sa première victime*, » a harmless stoker at an army recruitment centre (155). He breaks with his bilingual English girlfriend, whose father is in fact a Czech Jew and whose mother is Irish, and he anticipates joining the armed national struggle. Yet the knife stays on the table, and he joins the ranks of Richler's posturers, like St. Urbain's elusive horseman Joey, who does not bring Nazi Josef Mengele to justice or lead a Zionist brigade. The young Joshua buckles before the erstwhile Nazi propagandist Mueller, childishly vandalizing his Ibiza property rather than confronting him, a failure with consequences for the Jewish émigrées at whose inn Joshua lodges. And when twenty years later the shame compels his return to Ibiza, what ensues is not cathartic violence but the breakdown of his forsaken wife back in Montreal. During the filming of the screen and television adaptation of *Joshua Then and Now*, producer Robert Lantos implored Richler to add a narrative climax absent from the novel (Foran 515), but the screenwriter could devise nothing since Joshua is incapable of sustained meaningful action. The sense of frustrated or dissipated purpose in both Richler's and Godbout's novels is projected structurally as well: often short chapters out of chronological sequence, a discontinuity mirroring the meandering and stalled intentions of the

protagonist.

In *Canadian Writing Today*, Richler also includes an excerpt from Hubert Aquin's first novel, *Prochain épisode*. Aquin had been notoriously detained in 1964 on suspicion of terrorist activity after issuing a communique, published in two Montreal dailies, declaring clandestine combat at the head of an armed cell of the FLQ. Five months earlier its military faction, the Armée de libération du Québec, had raided the barracks of the Régiment des Fusiliers Mont-Royal, directly across the street from Aquin's old Catholic school, École Jean-Jacques Olier, on Montreal's avenue des Pins, where Aquin was then lodging. A month later the Shawinigan barracks were also raided. Aquin pleaded suicidal depression and Judge Claude Wagner, not otherwise known for clemency to suspected insurgents, had him hospitalized instead of incarcerated. Aquin claimed to have written *Prochain épisode* while in medical detention, like the novel's anonymous narrator.

Published within a few months of *Le Couteau sur la table* in 1965, and in 1967 translated by Penny Williams for Jack McClelland, *Prochain épisode* coincided with further FLQ violence and, like Godbout's novel, was regarded as a prophesy of separatist insurrection. Though an abject failure at insurrectionary violence, Aquin's anonymous narrator foresees a terrible beauty, rather like the terrorist of Leonard Cohen's "First We Take Manhattan": "Après deux siècles d'agonie, nous ferons éclater la violence déréglée, série ininterrompue d'attentats et d'ondes de choc, noire épallation d'un project d'amour total . . ." (144).[1]

Aquin's narrator and Richler's Joshua have generational affinities that their political loyalties only partly obscure: consigned to hospital beds, obsessed with both forsaken love and a failed vendetta in Europe, they live in suspension in a Quebec convulsed by sovereigntist activities parliamentary and paramilitary. Each is a vacillating political idealist who acts out the contradictions of an obsolescent model of masculinity. Each yearns to commit an act of political retribution only to squander the opportunity. Joshua is the author of a homage to Catalonia, a popular panegyric to the Republicans of the Spanish Civil War, settling in 1953 in Ibiza out of enduring fascination with the conflict. In Canada the Civil War had united French and English liberals, volunteers rushing to Catalonia under the banner of the Mackenzie-Papineau Battalion. Rather than fomenting rebellion against the Franco dictatorship, however, Joshua entangles himself as a post-Holocaust Jew in local rivalries and eventually

is ensnared and humiliated by the shadowy German émigré Mueller, whom he suspects perpetrated Nazi atrocities. Joshua's futile return to the island almost twenty years later, on the pretext of writing an introduction to a new edition of his book on the Spanish volunteers, coincides with the mental breakdown of his neglected wife, disconsolate after her adored brother, a broker under investigation by the Securities Commission for malfeasance in a duplicitous associate's investment firm, fatally crashes his plane.

Aquin's narrator, like Joshua, leaves a politically divided Montreal to settle a score in Europe. He is an *indépendantiste* secret agent motivated in part by shame to retaliate ethnic and personal humiliations, but he is no more successful a revanchist than Joshua. Their puerile indignation—Aquin's narrator admits to the "*rage d'enfant*" (113)—makes them all the more susceptible to manipulation. Joshua spars with the loathed Dr. Mueller, who sets traps for the brash Canadian innocent. Just as Aquin's narrator reconnoitres his victim's Alpine premises, Joshua spies on Mueller's hilltop chalet, nearby burying a knife, *le couteau sur la colline*. Eventually both men break into the property of ambiguous targets with German surnames. Aquin's agent fails to assassinate the federal counter-espionage official, while Joshua merely vandalizes the house, which becomes a pretext to force him out of the country—Mueller's very intention. The ineffectual and enfeebled men hole up, returning to empty beds: the beautiful blonde agent K. does not make her hotel rendezvous while the beautiful blonde wife Pauline deserts her irresponsible husband. Around both women swirls suspicion of duplicity: K. is likely a double agent while Pauline's affection for her chic brother Kevin may be incestuous. Both women assume the uneasy status of symbols. The narrator explicitly equates K. with the Quebec nation: "*[P]ar mes mots, je pose mes lèvres sur la chair brûlante de mon pays*" (56); "*je trouve la terre meurtrie et chaude de notre invention nationale. Mon amour, tu m'es sol natal*" (119).[2] This political gendering was common in Quebec by the mid-1960s, as in the idealization of doomed Madeleine in *Knife on the Table*, but ironized in a novel where K.'s real loyalties are inscrutable. Pauline, like Godbout's Patricia, is an equally uncertain cipher of Quebec. The issue of patrician Westmount yet of mixed French-English heritage, Pauline weds the Jewish son of a striptease artist and a former prizefighter collecting for the mob, only to be lured back into the upscale world of her brother.

Joshua and Aquin's agent represent the insecurities, frustrations, and

resentments of two historically subjugated, marginal societies that, in Quebec, are subordinated to the economic and political interests of the Anglophone ruling class. Richler and Aquin dramatize masculine fantasies of resistance and reprisal that end in chagrin and torpor. The narrator of *Prochain épisode* is in a mental ward, a Nabokovian inmate reporting a botched scheme in which he has probably been the stooge. Indebted, convalescent, overdrinking, and unable to complete a contracted hockey book, hobbling Joshua is rescued by a *deus ex machina* that abruptly restores to him an abruptly and inexplicably rehabilitated Pauline.

If Richler and Aquin both appeal to the category of beauty, it is for different ends. The epigraph of *Joshua Then and Now* is W. H. Auden's line "Lay your sleeping head, my love," which stanza ends "Let the living creature lie / Mortal, guilty, but to me / The entirely beautiful" (Auden 107). Corruption and inconstancy do not invalidate beauty, a domestic field in Auden's poem as it is in Richler's novel. In *Prochain épisode*, beauty is erotic, clandestine, and providential: "*Mon récit est interrompu, parce que je ne connais pas le premier mot du prochain épisode. Mais tout se résoudra en beauté. J'ai confiance aveuglément, même si je ne connais rien du chapitre suivant, mais rien, sinon que il m'attend et qu'il m'emportera dans un tourbillon*" (143).[3] The consummation of a resurgent national history will be beautiful, in whatever form it takes, be it the renewed federalism of the Constitution Act of 1982, the sovereignty-association of the 1980 and 1993 referendum proposals, or the outright independence demanded by the FLQ.

IV

Richler was not alone among Jewish Montreal writers who publicly challenged the nationalist ideology that subordinated the progressive politics of the Révolution tranquille into a campaign for sovereignty. An émigrée from France whose parents had fled Poland prior to the German occupation, Régine Robin remained until her 2020 death an outspoken advocate for cultural and linguistic diversity in Quebec. The polyglot Robin responded enthusiastically to the heterogeneity of Montreal, which in her work flouts the imposed homogeneity of Parti Québécois language legislation. A graduate of the École normale supérieure and a doctorate in History from the Sorbonne, she joined the Department of Sociology at the Université du Québec à Montréal, an intellectual locus of separatism. Between the first Parti Québécois government and the defeat of the

second referendum on sovereignty-association, she published the novel *La Québécoite* as well as books on minority identity, diasporic writing, Kafka, Yiddish literature, and the failure of socialist realism, for the latter of which she received the 1987 Governor General's Award. Rather than fearing proximity to the dominant culture of North America, Robin incensed nationalists by urging creative dialogue and cultural crossbreeding ("*métissage*"). She provocatively wrote in the afterword of the 1993 edition of *La Québécoite* of "*cette grande chance d'être en Amérique, près de l'anglais (on me pardonnera ce sacrilege. La proximité de la langue anglaise est un bonheur pour l'écrivain et non un stigmata, un danger ou une tare)*" (221).[4]

The protagonist of *La Québécoite*, published in 1983 and translated by Phyllis Aronoff as *The Wanderer*, is a quadruple alter ego whose fraught immigration to Quebec is told in four variations, each time to a different quarter of the city, from immigrant neighbourhoods to tony Outremont, a francophone equivalent to Richler's abominated Upper Westmount. The novel employs not only pedestrian but also textual flânerie to represent the city's threatened diversity, such as collagist juxtaposition of voices, styles, media, and languages. This cacophonous and hybrid representation of the city contradicts cherished nationalist notions of "*souche*" or "*pure laine*" ethnic purity. Her flâneuse, reminded of Mordecai Richler as she walks the city, inventories effaced English signs banned by the language laws recently legislated by the Parti Québécois, FLQ pamphlets, bilingual menus in delicatessens, and television program listings, the clash of cultural inheritances audible in the names of streets and metro stations. She notes the suicide of Hubert Aquin, and the horror he would have felt at having a university pavilion named in his honour (127). Instead of taking sides on the *question nationale* she walks the city noting the ideological differences. Conscious of the ethnic divide that permanently bars her assimilation, her anonymous protagonist navigates the alterity thriving in what Robin punningly calls *l'entre-dit* (143), a potentially illicit or forbidden (*interdit*) zone between (*entre*) languages. As laws enforce the use of French by erasing English signage and restricting access to English schools, Robin appeals to this vacancy between the lines as a space for dissent.

Sovereigntist Quebec's predilection for the heraldry of monarchical and ecclesiastical absolutism disorients Robin no less than Richler, writers who expected the liberal secular society to shatter pre-French Revolutionary idols rather than repurpose them to erase diversity in

favour of a monocultural adherence to State-defined *valeurs Québécoises*. Meanwhile the contradictory basis of such collectivist values is an exclusionary ethnic hierarchy. Sensitive to this shibboleth, her protagonist bitterly acknowledges, "On ne devient pas Québécois" (54).[5] The emancipatory gusto of the *Oui* side in the 1980 referendum thus cannot quell her distrust of nationalist nostrums:

> *La peur de l'homogénéité*
> *de l'unanimité*
> *du Nous excluant tous les autres*
> *du pure laine*
> *elle l'immigrante*
> *la différente*
> *la déviante.*
> *Elle hésiterait.* (133)[6]

The division into confessional school boards "Catholic" and "Protestant," a national holiday celebrated on the Nativity of Saint John the Baptist, the establishment of a miniature Academie française to police deviations from the dominant language, the white fleur de lys against blue, the illuminated crucifix on the summit of Mont Royal and behind the Speaker of the House in the *Salon bleu* of the National Assembly, and all three of these tarnished symbols incorporated into the national flag, are to her jarring petrifications of the Counter-Reformation: "*[L]a fleur de lys a pour elle d'étranges connotations: royalistes, antisémites, nobliaux imbus de leurs anciens privileges*" (134). She struggles to reassure herself otherwise: "*Elle saurait pourtant que les symboles ont une histoire, qu'ils peuvent inverser leur signification, qu'ils circulent d'étranges façons*" (134-35).[7]

To State-imposed cultural uniformity, Robin, responding to the macaronic "*patchwork linguistique*" of the "Ville schizophréne" (82), substitutes the plural voice:

> *tout juste une voix plurielle,*
> *une voix carrefour,*
> *une voix de l'autre au brisant du texts*
> *la parole immigrante.* (167)[8]

Although Richler does not indulge in the heteroglossia of Robin, limiting even the use of Yiddish phrases, his work aligns with this inclusive paradigm of culture and identity. For both writers the Quiet Revolution was an incomplete social democratic project, stalled by a retrogressive construction of ethnic identity and oblivious to the everyday alterity and

hybridity of modern Quebec. Robin shares Richler's commitment to a model of citizenship that does not risk regression to the nativism with which the earlier anti-modern isolationism of *L'Action française* and *L'Action catholique* had been tarnished—the xenophobic strain epitomized by the novel *L'Appel de la race*, published in 1922 under a pseudonym by the former association's co-founder, Abbé Lionel Groulx.[9] Richler's insistence on Groulx's anti-Semitism was directed at the separatism that venerated his memory, for instance, by naming one of the largest Montreal metro stations in the cleric's honour.

When Richler exposed the contradictions of an emancipatory political agenda that, under the guise of protection of the dominant language, revived the insularity of the otherwise repudiated Duplessis era, he was by no means without francophone supporters, but Quebec nationalists who shared his liberalism could not denounce Bill 101 with impunity. Part of Richler's present relevance in Quebec results from Premier François Legault's nationalist CAQ government's legislation to enforce restrictive State secularism and extend francisation, promoting conformity to ideologically driven "Quebec values." Though dead for twenty years, Richler remains the most consequential adversary to nationalist social engineering.

Richler gets situated in opposition to Québécois political self-affirmation at the cost of his allegiance to many of the tenets of the Quiet Revolution. A misapprehension fostered by the ascendency of the Parti Québécois is that the unifying objective of the Révolution tranquille was sovereignty, despite its inception in the 1960 Jean Lesage Liberal government and the defeat even of the qualified referendum proposals for sovereignty-association. In the conventional construction of the reform era, where culture is regarded as an instrument of separatist mobilization, a clarion text such as Gaston Miron's *L'Homme rapaillé*[10] is made to obscure the contributions of those who did not equate a pluralist movement for equality, free speech, economic development, and secularized social welfare and education with a project of unilingual statehood. One result of diverting diverse reformist currents into a narrowly *indépendantiste* channel is to obscure the impact of those whose liberalism conflicted with the perceived exclusionary bias of the independence movement. Once this misconception is removed, Richler's affinities with his French contemporaries become pronounced, and *le cavalier de Saint-Urbain* becomes a quite voluble Quiet Revolutionary.

Notes

1. "After two centuries of agony, we will burst out in disordered violence, in an uninterrupted series of attacks and shocks, the black fulfilment of a project of total love" (124).
2. "[W]ith my words I place my lips on the burning flesh of my country" (52). "My love, you are my native land" (105). (Williams omits the preceding sentence, which I translate as "I find the bruised and hot earth of our national invention.")
3. "My story is interrupted, for I do not know the first word of the next episode. But everything will resolve itself in beauty. I have blind faith, even if I know nothing of the next chapter except that it awaits me and will carry me off in a whirlwind" (124).
4. These lines from the afterword translate as follows: "[T]his good fortune of being in America, near the English (one will excuse me this sacrilege. The proximity of the English language is a blessing for the writer and not a stigma, a danger or a taint)."
5. "One doesn't become Québécois" (39).
6. The fear of homogeneity
   of unanimity
   of the Us that excludes all others
   of the pure
   She the immigrant
   different
   deviant.
   She would hesitate. (107)
7. "And the *fleur de lys* has strange connotations for her: royalist, anti-Semitic, a petty nobility imbued with its ancient privilege . . . She would know, however, that symbols have a history, that they can reverse their meanings, that they circulate in strange ways" (109).
8. just barely a plural voice
   a crossroads voice
   a voice of the other where an underwater rock breaks
   the flow of the text
   immigrant words. (137)
9. See Anctil, *Antijudaïsme*.
10. Miron writes, for instance, in "*L'homme agonique*," "*[J]e retrouverai ma nue propriété*" (*L'Homme* 79): "I will have my bare property again" (*Embers* 17). In "*Pour mon repatriement*," he writes, "*[U]n jour j'aurai dit ouì à ma naissance*" (83): "[O]ne day I'll have said *yes* to my birth" (23).

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Poem Found in an Inventory of the Library of Mordecai Richler

Jason Camlot

Contents as recorded in July 2013 into an Excel spreadsheet, during working hours, on the office premises of Vêtements Peerless Clothing Inc. (producer of fine men's tailored clothing), 8888 Pie-IX Blvd., Montréal, Québec, H1Z 4J5.

Box 43

1 wooden document inbox with miscellaneous desk realia including:

2 metal letter openers in leather holders
1 stapler
cigars [complete and partial] in Ziploc bags

1 eraser
assorted clips
1 "World's Greatest Dad" plaque, clear plexiglass with blue lettering

1 Davidoff tobacco box
1 compact disc of music by Wolf Krakowski, Polish Canadian Yiddish singer-songwriter
assorted film negatives

assorted matchbook covers
etc.
[further cataloguing required]

1 Mordecai Richler passport, 1994-1999
1 fly-fishing reel in blue case [later removed and returned to Jacob Richler at his request]
1 James Keller & Sons Ltd. cream-coloured marmalade jar filled with used pencils and pens [wrapped in beige packing paper]

1 Vat 69 Scotch whisky glass with paper clips and pens inside [wrapped in beige packing paper]
50+ pieces: padded envelopes, blank paper, collapsed manuscript boxes, etc.
1 black and white photograph of Mordecai Richler at his desk

1 typed sheet of white paper with the line "now is thew timve for aLL GOOF men to come to the aid of the party" [sic]
1 postcard Elm Street, Woodstock, VT
1 royalty statement from Random House Canada for Barney's Version, September 1997

2 black and white photographs
1 The Blending Box tobacco tin [square in shape]
1 book, The Observer's Book of Heraldry by Charles MacKinnon

20+ pieces: receipts, invoice slips, deposit slips, etc.
9 assorted owner's manuals for telephones, exercise bike, and Smith Corona typewriters
1 novelty writing pad from Baron Byng High School reunion

1 blue WH Smith notebook, 88 pages, narrow ruled, the first twenty pages filled with notes in the handwriting of Mordecai Richler
20+ pieces: assorted notes, invitations, and letters addressed to Mordecai Richler
1 brown envelope with typescript for essay opening with the words, "Some years back in New York . . . ."

1 book, Jacob Two-Two Meets the Hooded Fang, Tundra Books

1 book, As a Man Thinketh, by James Allen
1 map, Sinai Interim Agreement, 1975

1 free map, Sightseeing Boston's Freedom Trail
1 orientation map of Vancouver, British Columbia
30+ pieces: miscellaneous flyers and papers [arranged in a bound packet]

1 packet in brown plastic case of two photos depicting Mordecai Richler in Jerusalem

Jason Camlot is Professor of English and Research Chair in Literature and Sound Studies at Concordia University in Montreal. His recent critical works include Phonopoetics: The Making of Early Literary Recordings *(Stanford 2019). and the co-edited collections,* Unpacking the Personal Library: The Public and Private Life of Books *(with Jeffrey Weingarten, WLUP 2022),* Collection Thinking: Within and Without Libraries, Archives and Museums *(with Martha Langford and Linda Morra, Routledge, 2022), and* CanLit Across Media: Unarchiving the Literary Event *(with Katherine McLeod, McGill Queen's UP 2019). He is also the author of five collections of poetry, most recently,* Vlarf *(McGill Queen's 2021). Jason is principal investigator and director of the SSHRC-funded SpokenWeb research partnership <www.spokenweb.ca> that focuses on the history of literary sound recordings and the digital preservation and presentation of collections of literary audio.*

This year's *Verse Forward* poetry reading featured Junie Désil, Lillian Allen, and Fiona Tinwei Lam. Each poet brought with them their unique perspective and experience, with a focus on activism, decoloniality, and experimentation. Hosted April 28, 2022, on Zoom, the conversation with emcee Phinder Dulai invited the audience to think about the politics of race and the violence of colonialist pasts and presents. Junie Désil's "no one looks at ghosts," Lillian Allen's "The Village Corner—Yorkville, Toronto," and Fiona Tinwei Lam's "Covenant" all testify to the potential of poetry to resist narratives of oppression and encourage readers to discover the power in their own voices.

To watch this year's recording of Verse Forward, as well as past productions, please visit canlit.ca/resources/events/verse-forward-poetry-on-the-front-lines/.

Junie Désil

no one looks at ghosts

what do you write - what do those words mean
when your reading cadence measured
slow your voice rich and radio friendly
the material not so much
i'm no longer that young idealist
protesting the WTO, yelling at a line of federal agents
pulled down in time by those in the back
before a stream of burning liquid sears my eyes
sadness

instead
on the train watching cherry blossoms whiz by
Thom Yorke's falsetto a repeated reminder
*this is f*cked up.*
on a two month down in the sinkhole of depression
partially functional

listening to the beats drop mournful angst on the playlist labeled
yt gal music

stored collection of downlifting tempos
on a loop sway alongside complicated loss
or in bed - cocooned sadness
the tired adage a counterbeat:
depressed folks see the world as is
i'm certain the sheets have shifted
to accommodate the bed's depression shaped by my skin and bones
i've been a funk of pain

stare at the ceiling my artist's canvas
amongst the popcorn
exhaled worries a surrealist vision of where we're headed
no one looks at ghosts whose maw gape open
shout warning
our world is on fire i've collected tired selfish fears
ash rains through closed fists

form charcoaled letters perhaps we'll read the signs first no one sees ghosts

nor do they hear them

Junie Désil lives in Vancouver, BC.

The Village Corner—Yorkville, Toronto

Pan down Cleve Street, Café El Patio
Neil Young and Rick James mainlining
Music like you've never seen guitar and hipster-kool
All those dreamy riffs power verses curving
Duke Redbird's eloquence rooted in the land
down Hazelton Lane, Lightfoot whispers
Sylvia & Ian Tyson, a mood away
Folk, before folk was young

Cobble stoned streets and laneways huddle
With roomers too eager to accept free love
Like a panhandler's loot
Crawling all over time like there was
Never a clock or calendar invented
Time lived as easily as one should
Servant, not master

Let the building build themselves
Let the City managers go to their stinking boring lives
We will take their children and turn them
Into freedom lovers, make them babble
And inhale holy grass.

Not far from the Riverboat
Buffy Saint Marie grooves inditements
soldiering-on universally, calling us awake
As Joni Mitchell grooms flower-power
tuning strings in Vera's rooming house
readying to burn vocal tracks at the Penny Farthing

At the Bohemian Easy, Dan Hill's afro stood out
Margaret Atwood, bp Nichol, Gwendolyn McEwen

carving worlds out from the old
David Donell already gone rouge
Michael Ondaatje's awkward tongue
finding the two Billys
Billy da Kid and Billy da Holliday, that is

bp channels Bissett; 'piss on it, we'll free the syllable
Liberate it from its puritan hell!'
Poets making a joyful wave and foaming at the mouth
New voices, new-new voices, something wonderfully lush
New meaning to Canadian

This land, rich with raw rounding words
Flying out of skin
Shocking and comforting and at home all at once
- community

Although many have dreamt of exotic shores
And came on boats and planes from fog
Or their parents did
 yes, your parents did
'cause this land is promise

This land, this land.
trampled and stolen
swollen like a kept woman's song
That was how we freed ourselves to be ourselves
With language storming the barricades
                language flaming in our hands

Lillian Allen lives in Toronto, ON.

Fiona Tinwei Lam

Covenant

> *6. No poultry, swine, sheep, cows, cattle, or other livestock shall be kept on the premises.*
> *7. No person of the African or Asiatic race or of African or Asiatic Descent (except servants of the occupier of the premises in residence) shall reside or be allowed to remain on the premises.*
> —Excerpt of a restrictive covenant on a West Vancouver property similar to those still registered on properties throughout British Columbia

No "other"
No "race"
    All allowed

All of African or Asian descent
    shall reside
    shall remain

All shall allow
    all to remain

Note: In this poem, I use erasure to address the erasures caused by past exclusionary and restrictive policies based on the concept of race, specifically restrictive covenants on property. Restrictive covenants which prohibited people of African and Asian descent from living in BC homes (unless they were servants) were standard, not only in West Vancouver's British Properties, but also in Edgemont, Westmount, Upper Capilano, and the Vancouver neighbourhoods of Shaughnessy and Kerrisdale. (See "West Van councillor aims to scrub racist land title rules," *North Shore News,* Jan. 21, 2020, https://www.nsnews.com/local-news/west-van-councillor-aims-to-scrub-racist-land-title-rules-3115307). Similar restrictive covenants are still registered in Land Titles Offices across the province, although legislation was enacted to declare them null and void in 1978. Two high school students took steps to officially remove one in 2019 on a 1908 house in Port Alberni, BC owned by Alan Webster Neill, a Member of Parliament who "supported the Indian Residential School System as an Indian agent and was pro-Japanese internment and opposed Asian immigration." (See https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/british-columbia/port-alberni-vancouver-island-racist-covenant-property-title-1.5277395) Restrictive covenants were used elsewhere in Canada and North America. But the anti-erasure theme of this poem can refer to other legal measures that explicitly supported racial segregation, displacement, deportation, and exclusion to create, maintain and enforce whites-

only spaces (e.g. Head Tax legislation, The Chinese Exclusion Act of 1923, the eviction and internment of 22,000 Japanese Canadians, forced relocation measures undertaken against the Innu of Davis Inlet, the Squamish of Senakw, Black Canadians in Africville in Nova Scotia, and the exclusion of the South Asians on board the *Komagata Maru*, and the displacement of First Nations through the creation of Indian reservations, among numerous examples).

Fiona Tinwei Lam lives in Vancouver, BC.

Everyday Life in the Fur Trade

Barbara Belyea, ed.
Peter Fidler: From York Factory to the Rocky Mountains. U Press of Colorado $59.95

Reviewed by Jean Barman

In writing *Iroquois in the West*, published by McGill-Queen's University Press in 2019, I drew extensively on historically contemporary accounts. None was more revealing of Iroquois everyday life in the fur trade than Peter Fidler's descriptions of their encounters with local Indigenous peoples in 1802, in what is now Saskatchewan. I came upon Fidler's account in Alice Johnson's finely edited *Saskatchewan Journals and Correspondence of Peter Fidler, 1795-1802*, published in 1967.

In consequence it is a special pleasure to welcome, half a century later, Barbara Belyea's finely edited collection of the journals of the talented Peter Fidler for 1790 and 1792-1793, as he was beginning his career in the North American fur trade. As set out in Belyea's introduction and commentaries, Fidler brought to his position as a journal writer and as a cartographer with the Hudson's Bay Company both practical skills and an intelligent, clearheaded approach to what he observed, surveyed, sketched, mapped, and wrote about. Fidler's daily entries sometimes contain maps, technical measurements, and descriptions, which are included in the published edition.

Peter Fidler copied detailed daily entries into notebooks, two of which are reproduced in *Peter Fidler: From York Factory to the Rocky Mountains*. Along with records of the ordinary business of travel, daily entries are wide ranging, including descriptions of encounters with local Indigenous peoples and of the natural world from plants to the everyday lives of buffalo. As we read along, it is almost as if we are there, such was Peter Fidler's talent with words and descriptions:

> 10th Monday—Light Breezes at ENE with a continual rain 'till 3pm, & at 4PM 4 Canoes more Embarked for the upper settlements. Inds Drnkg. It is a general rule, that every spring & fall when the Head Master passes here, the Indians all meet; as they always expect a treat of Liquor at those times particularly if they have been industrious in killing furs in the Winter. (77)

This short entry in Fidler's first journal for September 10, 1792, is illustrative of so much about history—the density, complexity, and seeming inconsequence of its raw materials, the insights those materials offer into ordinary existence and into the larger trends or developments in the past, and—perhaps most of all—the pitfalls scholars face when undertaking interpretation of single entries and of their significance.

In 1792 Peter Fidler was young, in his early twenties, born near Bolsover, England, and contracted by the Hudson's Bay Company for four years, initially as a labourer, but acquiring soon after his arrival in North America the duties (if not the title) of a writer or clerk. He also possessed skills as a surveyor, possibly gained during service at sea, which were indispensable for collecting the data needed for the creation of maps. In September 1790, Fidler began three years of almost constant travel that took him into the heart of the

fur country, reaching as far west as the foothills of the Rocky Mountains. The present book is a transcription, with an introduction and copious annotations, of the two daily journals Fidler kept, the first of his travel from York Fort to Buckingham House running from July to October 1792 and the second of his sojourn among the Peigan, now Piikani, people from November 1792 to March 1793.

The entries for the 213 days recorded in the two journals are the raw materials of history—some being just a line or two of text (September 5), and others covering several pages (December 31). The content, succinctly recorded, is often both monotonous and repetitious in subject: the weather, geographical features, conditions of travel, with human beings occasionally appearing (more so in the second journal). The life described is no less monotonous and repetitious, not to mention exhausting and challenging—day after day of slog work. The entries leave the reader with a deep admiration for Peter Fidler's persistence, self-command, and attention to duty.

The same admiration must be felt for the editor, Barbara Belyea, a retired professor at the University of Calgary, for her devotion to the long and demanding task of transcription and annotation. Belyea's care and thoroughness are attested by the length of the annotations that, with the introduction, amount in length to twice that of the journals themselves. Fidler's two journals have interest and utility for more than historians of the fur trade. Anyone who is an explorer of sorts—a walker, hiker, canoer, or outdoorsperson—will find the text comforting, and possibly a model for their own jottings, given the evocative word descriptions of physical features and of everyday life complemented by the hand-drawn maps.

Flippin' the Script

Charity Marsh and Mark V. Campbell, eds.
We Still Here: Hip Hop of the 49th Parallel. McGill-Queen's UP $37.95

Reviewed by Prasad Bidaye

For a long time, Canadian hip hop culture has been obsessed with the idea of arrival: the dream of local rappers getting signed, achieving commercial success, and moving crowds globally. Drake's current stardom is the key indicator not only that this culture has arrived, but also that it has come a long way in the thirty-plus years since the videos of Maestro Fresh Wes, Michie Mee, and the Dream Warriors were in rotation on MuchMusic. On the surface, the publication of *We Still Here: Hip Hop North of the 49th Parallel* echoes this history of arrival in the parallel universe of hip hop scholarship. The declarative tone of its title marks an important moment in the field, when an entire book can be devoted to the study of Canadian hip hop culture.

Let's be clear: this book is not about the usual players. Drake is only mentioned a handful of times, and, while the aforementioned icons of the early nineties receive a lot more shout-outs, they are not at the centre of the discussion. To any self-proclaimed hardcore hip hop purist, the fact that kid-friendly K'naan (of "Waving Flag" fame) receives an entire chapter of study might spark the kind of "screw face" response that Montreal rapper True Daley references in her reflections on Toronto, the metropolitan centre of

Canadian hip hop culture.

Let's be even more clear: such editorial decisions are what makes *We Still Here* an energizing collection of hip hop scholarship. The eleven articles edited by Charity Marsh and Mark V. Campbell are not historical so much as historiographic, which means they are not tied to a grand narrative of Canadian hip hop history, one that usually begins and ends in the 6ix. Instead, they document stories and engage in analysis that pushes all of us—scholarly and non-scholarly—to rethink Canadian hip hop, just as the plurality of our national culture might stimulate us to rethink Canada.

At different points, *We Still Here* invokes the concept of knowledge as "hip hop's fifth element," following the quadrivium of lyrical, turntablist, dance, and aerosol arts, and it pursues this element by repeatedly embodying the other adage of "flippin' the script." For example, while the first essay by Campbell focuses a great deal on Toronto, it is chiefly concerned with the architecture of a virtual 6ix that exists online in the Northside Hip Hop Archive. Campbell's approach also shifts the focus away from memorializing T-dot rap to theorizing acts of memory-making and the construction of an archival environment that is as participatory and non-finite as the Internet itself.

The most important script that is flipped in the eleven essays of *We Still Here* is around Indigenous hip hop scenes. The studies of community arts projects like Beat Nation in Vancouver and Crossing Communities in Winnipeg as well as rappers like Samian and JB the First Lady are not merely included; they are at the forefront of this collection. This inversion of Canada's settler-Indigenous dynamic signals an extension of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's calls to action by addressing the need for mainstream hip hop's reconciliation with Indigenous hip hop artists, audiences, and activists.

Through this intervention, we learn about how aspects of hip hop are used to achieve more than a sense of voice and agency for Indigenous youth, just as they have for Black and other racialized youth since the culture's early beginnings in the Bronx. In her study of Crossing Communities, Charlotte Fillmore-Handlon highlights how collaborative hip hop performances have transformed a group of youths' sensibilities around the gender stereotyping of rap as male and of dance as female. Liz Pryzbylski presents a bifocal close reading of Samian's "Plan Nord," examining both how the song employs Inuit throat singing in ways that challenge ethnomusicological analyses of transcultural, fusion music, and how its lyrics voice critiques of extractivist projects in Northern Quebec.

What is really interesting about this particular set of discussions within *We Still Here* is how they engage the complexity of Indigenous identities, particularly at a time when the discourse of Indigenous Ways of Knowing and Being is becoming increasingly visible in Canadian institutions. As essays by Marsh and Margaret Robinson show, hip hop is indeed a tool used by Indigenous youth for reconnection with ancestral traditions and therefore as a weapon against the long history of cultural genocide. However, it is also a tool used to authenticate experiences of and struggles with urban life—ironically through an art form that the corporate music industry has categorized as "urban," but one that nevertheless enables a critical dialogue with elders who may have "fears that hip hop is a sign of assimilation."

While those invested in settler concepts of Canadian identity may be inclined

to interpret these studies of Indigenous hip hop as a reflection of the country's multiculturalist ethos, I read them as signposts to a new sense of the hip hop underground, and I think we would be naively nationalistic to assume that this underground is confined within Canadian borders. In this way, *We Still Here* pushes global hip hop scholars to consider Indigenous contributions in Australia, Asia, and Africa, let alone the United States.

Yet, the script is flipped here too because Indigenous hip hop is clearly not presented as a pure or hardcore form. Rather, it is part of the larger discursive explosion in *We Still Here,* where the peripheries of Canadian hip hop are revealed but never contained, and where each study opens up a new possibility. For example, when the narrative of the collection returns back to Toronto in Mary Fogarty's "Following the Thread," it is with a focus on breakdancing, rather than rap, and when Alexandrine Boudreault-Fournier and Laurent K. Blais discuss the art of beat producers in Montreal, the descriptions of sound take us close to the blurry edge of electronic music. And when Campbell interviews rapper True Daley about her artistic journey through the music industry, the orality of her narrative is playfully digressive like a freestyle rhyme, reminding us that raw anecdote can hold an important place in scholarly discussions of any kind.

Ultimately, *We Still Here* goes beyond the fifth element of knowledge production and takes a subjective turn back to the reader, who may be a scholar, but is more likely a hip hop fan. I would never describe myself as the most hardcore listener, but reading through these essays, I found my lived experiences represented multiples times: in the paragraphs on CHRY (where I once worked), the interview with Gizmo (who went to my high school), and the brief discussion of Sikh Knowledge (with whom I once DJed a wedding). This is not about bragging points; it is my conviction that anyone's experience of reading this collection from cover-to-cover (which I highly recommend) will inspire the kind of memory-making that proliferates throughout *We Still Here* and will most definitely not end here.

Communal History

Raymond A. Rogers
Rough and Plenty: A Memorial. Wilfrid Laurier UP $24.99

Reviewed by Ruth Bradley-St-Cyr

Grief, an unpopular, unwanted emotion, is central to *Rough and Plenty: A Memorial*, a book that marries life writing and environmental history, using concepts of "enclosure and dispersal," to craft an alternate history of Canada. As brilliant, evocative, and narratively complex as a Stan Rogers song blended with the gritty, exacting realism of George Orwell's *The Road to Wigan Pier*, this book grabs you slowly, but then won't let go, as it draws portraits of communities now lost in the "merciless and self-congratulating power of progress and improvement" (14).

Life writing is usually, as the author acknowledges, "individualized and reflective" but Rogers has chosen the difficult path of creating a narrative voice that is "collective and situated." Names are not often given, characters are not usually drawn, and yet two

communities emerge—Highland crofters made refugees by the "clearances" and inland fishers in the Nova Scotia that became home to so many of those refugees—to create "a submerged history made up of collective voices in the landscape" (278).

In the words of the displaced crofters, "Every good piece of land was taken from us and we were planted on every spot for which no other use could be found" (114), a fate so familiar that it begs the question as to whether those same Scottish Lairds also devised the systematic removal of Canada's Indigenous people from "every good piece of land." We learn that inland fishing is a communal pursuit, despite the apparent separateness of fishing boats, because the "potential for things to go wrong . . . can overwhelm you" (35). We learn that "kelping," which involves wading into the freezing spring sea to scrape its bottom in a bleak parody of farming, "is a tyranny beyond all others" (102).

Those who watched CBC's *Canada: The Story of Us* in 2017 and were alarmed by the portrayal of business interests as the ones "building" this country will feel a kinship with *Rough and Plenty*. As Rogers writes, "This history is not one of settlers taming . . . the wilderness. Rather, it is one of dispossessed and displaced souls flung about by powerful forces" (14) where "humans and nature are reduced to playing the role of the passive material (human resources and natural resources) that serve the dominant market relationships" (279). Sir John Franklin, explorer of the Northwest Passage, for example, is not "hailed as a hero of Victorian culture," but rather denounced as "the cause of a cascading storm of suffering for all who came across him" (129).

In this genre-bending book of life writing, Rogers challenges the "increasingly hardened self–other dichotomies based on an identity that is skin-encapsulated" (282), leading the reader to imagine a post-racial world where community is defined by the landscape, by the nature that we have been displaced from and may once again inhabit if we would only begin to see that we have all been exiled in some way—First Nations, settlers, new immigrants and refugees—by powerful forces that seek "the greatest good for the smallest number" (214).

"i hold a hyphen between my fingers": Kaie Kellough's Crossings

Kaie Kellough
Dominoes at the Crossroads. Véhicule $19.95

Kaie Kellough
Magnetic Equator. McClelland & Stewart $19.95

Reviewed by Cornel Bogle

In his two latest publications, the Guyanese-descended, Vancouver-born, Prairie-raised, Montreal-based writer Kaie Kellough ushers readers into the frenetic and fraught subjectivities of Caribbean Canadians. *Magnetic Equator*, a collection of poetry that earned Kellough the 2020 Griffin Prize, and *Dominoes at the Crossroads*, a collection of short fiction, offer extended engagements with the motif of bifurcation in both the material and the cultural spheres. Both texts explore a range of divisions: experiences in the Global South and the Global North; multinational identities; rivers, seas, oceans, and waterfalls separating nations, regions, territories, and cities; and gaps in temporalities

which separate the past, present, and future. Indeed, as with his previous publications *Maple Leaf Rag* (2010) and *Accordéon* (2016), Kellough demonstrates an interest in documenting ongoing processes of creolization, appropriation, and transculturation throughout the Americas in order to elucidate the paradoxes of modernity.

Magnetic Equator comprises ten long poems: "kaieteur falls," "mantra of no return," "high school fever," "exploding radio," "bow," "zero degrees," "ghost notes," "alterity," "essequibo," and "the unity of worlds." As is to be expected of Kellough—whose poetics are deeply influenced by the sonic and experimental forms—*Magnetic Equator* is formally diverse, employing free verse, concrete poetry, list poems, visual poetry, found poetry, and prose poetry. Through formal multiplicity, Kellough's collection pays homage to canonical Caribbean and Canadian poets.

The poems in *Magnetic Equator* document experiences in (and/or make allusions to) varied geographies, namely Guyana (particularly Georgetown and the Potaro-Siparuni region) and Canadian cities. The invocation of multiple geographies serves many functions, one of which, specifically, is to signal the dispersal of peoples around the world as a result of colonization. In "mantra of no return"—which quotes Dionne Brand's *A Map to the Door of No Return*—Kellough produces an anaphoric and alliterative litany:

> people arrived from portugal. people arrived from africa. people arrived from india. people arrived from england. people arrived from china. people predated arrival. people fled predation. people were arrayed. people populated. whips patterned rays into people. people arose. people rayed outward to toronto, london, boo york. people raided people. people penned the past. . . . people fanned their spreading. people cleaved unto people. people writhed over / under people. people arrived over / under people[.] (*Magnetic Equator* 8)

In this section of the poem, Kellough moves from the word "arrived" to signal the place of arrival without ever naming it. The place, of course, is the Caribbean, where people "fled," "were arrayed," "populated," "arose," "rayed," "raided," "penned," "fanned," "cleaved," "writhed," and then once again "arrived" (8). Kellough offers a catalogue that signifies how the history of the Caribbean is very much concerned with movement, both forced and voluntary. He is keen to remind us, however, that this history of movement is also always inflected with bifurcated power relations, particularly those of domination and subjugation, as evidenced by the emphasis through repetition of "over / under" (8).

The geographical references additionally serve to invoke literary traditions with which Kellough has affinities. In "zero degrees," Kellough alludes to Robert Kroetsch's *Seed Catalogue* and appropriates its catalogic form through the incorporation of lists and by using the left-hand margin as a generative source for an elaborative poetics which occupy the right-hand margin. The appropriation of Kroetsch's form situates Kellough not only within a Canadian poetics, but also, and more specifically, within a Prairie literary tradition. This affinity is further particularized in "high school fever," which employs a confessional voice to disclose experiences of adolescence in Calgary during the 1980s, including episodes of alienation and suicidal depression:

> blackout into this suburb
> blundering out of time, this shithole built by bitumen

. . .
in between periods, in between
vaseline and sperm-slick fingers under the covers, i was the only
boy who did not dream of sex with the stanley cup, but of
suicide[.] (19-20)

Kellough situates the speaker's adolescence within the now tainted, environmentally degraded, petrocultural, toxically masculine (and thus homophobic and racist) settler-colonial landscape of Alberta.

Kellough's writing, which is included in Karina Vernon's groundbreaking anthology *The Black Prairie Archives* (2020), can be said to offer a "strategy for claiming a space for blackness on the prairies" (Vernon 8). Kellough situates the persona of "high school fever" within a genealogy of Black Alberta:

speakers don't give a shit about john ware,
the black cowboy, or teenage auto-erotic
asphyxiation that ended in unintentional
suicide, circa 1990
or me. (*Magnetic Equator* 22)

Placing the persona alongside John Ware, a Black cowboy and community leader who migrated to Alberta in the late nineteenth century, Kellough points to the ongoing erasure of Black presence from the Prairie imaginary. However, the literary traditions of Canada, the Prairies, and more specifically the Black Prairies are not the only ones Kellough locates himself within. One could argue that he is most interested in that of the Caribbean and its diaspora. The notes to *Magnetic Equator* lay bare these affinities as Kellough informs readers of his source texts and inspirations, including Derek Walcott, Walter Rodney, Dionne Brand,
V. S. Naipaul, Maryse Condé, and Kamau Brathwaite. These references orient readers towards an understanding of this collection as belonging to a tradition of Caribbean diasporic writing—a tradition that has long sought to articulate, interrogate, and indict the discombobulations of being, and the mystifications of belonging, that were inaugurated in 1492 and compounded by the transatlantic slave trade and indentureship throughout the Americas.

If *Magnetic Equator* is concerned with the dispersal of people across the Americas and the divisions that result, *Dominoes at the Crossroads* is primarily interested in generative points of contact. Kellough's collection of short fiction explores the motif of confluence and cross-cultural encounters that Austin Clarke inaugurated, within the Caribbean Canadian literary tradition, with his 1967 novel *The Meeting Point*, which focuses on the experiences of Caribbean migrants in the urban space of Toronto. Many of the stories in *Dominoes at the Crossroad*s are set in Montreal and consider the lives of Caribbean migrants and their descendants. The opening story, "La question ordinaire et extraordinaire," takes the form of an academic paper delivered by Kellough's imagined great-great-grandson in the twenty-second century. In the "Post-Climate Crisis Period," the city of Montreal has been renamed "Milieu"—French for "middle." The story simultaneously performs an analysis of the historical transformations the city has undergone and offers a reading of Kellough's own work:

> Kellough's notion of the future is informed by the city's Black history. The future is encoded in the past, and in certain events that decide our lives for us. One such event was the 1734 burning of the city, attributed to the enslaved woman Marie-Joseph Angélique . . . She destroyed the city, but her act forced the citizens to reimagine and rebuild. That history-altering act was carried out by a member of a population that was consistently marginalized. It is telling that today, with much of Old Montréal submerged, her story is prominent, and she is venerated as an ancestor of Milieu. (*Dominoes* 22)

Kellough's framing of a radical futurity forces readers to consider the already radical present that has been shaped by Black people in Canada. The charges made by Black people, Indigenous people, and people of colour against ongoing colonialisms have made the urgent political task of the moment one concerned with "reimagin[ing] and rebuild[ing]" (22). This is a pertinent lesson that the story imparts to readers by foregrounding Black Canadian radicalisms and fugitivity, as does the story "Petit Marronage," wherein a jazz musician journeys across Canada in a narrative that moves across time to intersperse the experiences of the musician with surrealist narration by Marie-Joseph Angélique and a fugitive slave in Fredericton in 1816. Contemporary readers may engage with *Dominoes at the Crossroads* with a prescience of Black activist politics following a year of highly visible protests throughout the Americas that renewed calls for abolition and the end of the world—that is, the end of institutionalized and quotidian structures of racial capitalism and white supremacy.

Many of the stories foreground the roles of Black Canada and the Caribbean within a transnational Black radical tradition. Despite its crucial relationship to resistances to transatlantic slavery and the plantation economy, the Black radical tradition is often cast in the popular and intellectual imaginary as an American project tied to the civil rights era and the Black Power movement. Consequently, the understanding of the Black radical tradition circulates today as masculine and proprietorially African American, erasing histories of Black queer, trans, and cisgender women, as well as those of other national, regional, and transnational figures and movements. Against this backdrop, Kellough's collection animates a number of questions—namely, what does it mean to pursue radical Black politics in Canada, as opposed to the US?; how can we understand Black resistance as always inflected by gender and sexuality, especially as practices of historiography often erase these vectors of radicalism from the Black radical tradition?; and lastly, what is the relationship of the narrativization and aestheticization of Blackness to the Black radical tradition?

In "We Free Kings," a story with autobiographical traces, Kellough's narrator asks his Haitian friend Camilo how he "acquired a Spanish name"—to which Camilo responds "that his parents . . . named him after the Cuban revolutionary Camilo Cienfuegos" (*Dominoes* 129). The narrator continues:

> He told me about Cienfuegos, how beautiful the man was, how he looked like a Cuban military bohemian, and we laughed at that. Cienfuegos always wore fatigues and a cowboy hat over his wild hair. He had an African's curly beard, Camilo thought, and wondered where the Africans were in his lineage. He also noted that after the Haitian Revolution, in the lean years

> following the retreat of the French, many Haitians fled to Cuba, seeking more favorable conditions. Camilo's theory was that it was those Haitian migrants who delivered the Cubans their revolutionary consciousness. (129)

Not only are linkages between Cuba and the Haitian Revolution invoked in this passage, but Kellough also performs a queer reading of Caribbean radicalisms in his focus on "how beautiful the man was, how he looked like a Cuban military bohemian" with "wild hair" (129). Through aesthetic commentary, these characters make themselves recognizable within the archive of Black militancy.

Moreover, in the title story, Tamika, the daughter of Grenadian migrants to Scarborough, visits the island along with the narrator to conduct research on the Grenadian revolution. However, their distance from the revolution is cause for self-indictment: "Our academic interest in a revolution in the Caribbean now seemed like an entitled desire" (*Dominoes* 62). Tamika's narrative is taken up later in the collection in "Ashes and Juju," in which the narrator encounters an interview with Tamika in the Caribbean community newspaper. After reading the interview and learning about Tamika's research on Grenada and her past research on the 1969 West Indian student occupation at Sir George Williams University (now Concordia), the narrator is enthralled by the encounter with Black radicalism in Montreal.

This recuperation of Tamika's research is telling of how Kellough considers the importance of the circulation of Black Canadian history. Tamika's research is not the same as being a militant activist; however, it creates a context for the circulation of knowledge that can frame pursuits for Black liberation in the present and the future. Kellough prods us to be attentive to what narratives and poetics ask of us as readers, and to move ourselves towards a greater awareness of the histories and politics of the spaces we inhabit, even as those histories and politics necessitate crossing dividing lines and meeting each other in unexpected places.

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Indigenous Resurgence

Bevann Fox
Genocidal Love: A Life after Residential School. U of Regina P $21.95

Hartmut Lutz, Florentine Strzelczyk, and Renae Watchman, eds.
Indianthusiasm: Indigenous Responses. Wilfrid Laurier UP $29.99

Reviewed by Stephanie Butler

Bevann Fox's *Genocidal Love*, originally self-published as *Abstract Love* (2011), is a lightly fictionalized memoir centred on Fox's experience of abuse in residential school, the Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement claims process, and decades of relationship challenges in the aftermath of survivance. Using an avatar, Myrtle, Fox poignantly traces the impacts of residential-school abuse (sexual, physical, cultural, and

spiritual) on her (at times abusive) relationships with men as an adult. One former white non-Indigenous partner, Bella, transitions from male to female as their relationship ends. While it is, perhaps, realistic that Myrtle struggles to accept her former partner, she repeatedly misgenders Bella and does not distinguish between gender and sexual orientation (claiming Bella is transgender rather than bisexual, when the former refers to gender while the latter refers to sexuality; it is not uncommon to be both transgender and bisexual). It seems appropriate to attribute Myrtle's difficulty in accepting Bella's transness not just to their sexual and romantic relationship, but also to the ongoing imposition of patriarchal settler-colonial gender roles (an insidious form of settler-colonial violence). It is, otherwise, obvious how important an ongoing friendship with Bella is to her. The impacts of abuse, and colonial patriarchal attitudes toward women's bodies, are unflinchingly addressed in her bold yet humorous portrayal of women friends' endeavours to achieve sexual pleasure. Myrtle's grief over the death of her son has resonance for readers who have experienced similar losses; it is an assertion of the preciousness and sacredness of Indigenous lives in defiance of ongoing genocide.

The text sensitively starts with a content warning, which implies an expected readership of fellow survivors and their kin. Fox frames the story and its effects as (potentially) healing for herself and her audience—as a way "to bring back something lost." Daniel Heath Justice, in *Why Indigenous Literatures Matter* (2018), echoes this sentiment by articulating how Indigenous "stories can be good medicine" to "heal the spirit as well as the body, remind us of the greatness of where we come from as well as the greatness of who we're meant to be, so that we're not determined by the colonial narrative of deficiency" (5). Fox and her protagonist Myrtle are survivors, and the narrative—through all its pain, trauma, and grief—is life-affirming. This book, I would argue, thereby contributes to what Aubrey Jean Hanson identifies, in "Reading for Reconciliation" (2017), as Indigenous resurgence via the literary arts. "Resurgence, unlike reconciliation," constitutes "a socio-cultural movement and theoretical framework that concentrates on regeneration within Indigenous communities. It validates Indigenous knowledges, cultures, histories, ingenuity, and continuity" (74). Although colonialism is acknowledged, relations between Indigenous peoples and settler-colonizers are not centred in resurgence. Instead, resurgence "focuses on Indigenous communities as sites of power and regeneration" (74)—it "is about people in their own communities nourishing their own traditions, languages, worldviews, stories, knowledges and ways of being" (75). While residential-school abuse, colonial violence, and intergenerational trauma are addressed in Fox's narrative, community, close relationships, and healing take centre stage.

However, as a white settler scholar residing in Canada, I am confronted with questions about who should read Fox's text and how. Yet, as Hanson articulates, drawing on the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's educational calls to action, non-Indigenous people in Canada need to engage critically with Indigenous perspectives, the residential-school system, settler colonialism, and Indigenous successes. For fellow settlers or non-Indigenous people embracing the ethical imperative to read, learn from, and even teach such a text, Helen Hoy's *How Should I Read These?* (2001) and Robert McGill's "Against Mastery" (2016) provide useful examples of the necessary processes of humility and critical self-reflection. If we are willing to reflect on our own potentially

flawed interpretations, and guard against how our readings of Fox's text may unwittingly reinforce anti-Indigenous stereotypes, there is, I would argue, a place for non-Indigenous readers provided we approach the text respectfully and with an understanding that it was created more for fellow survivors than for us.

Such questions about the ethics of readership and non-Indigenous consumption of Indigenous culture and art are central to *Indianthusiasm: Indigenous Responses*, edited by Hartmut Lutz, Florentine Strzelczyk, and Renae Watchman. While this collection engages critically with academic literature and debates about Indigenous literatures and the ethics of readership, it has a wider non-academic appeal. The book establishes a foundation for understanding German interest in North American Indigenous peoples. Despite my own Swiss German heritage, relationships with German friends and colleagues, and expertise in Second World War British-German relations, until I read this book I had no idea that there was such a thing as German "Indianthusiasm."

Indianthusiasm comprises a series of interviews conducted by the co-editors with Indigenous artists and writers from North America who have lived, studied, or worked in Germany. Interviewees included Ahmoo Angeconeb, Jeannette C. Armstrong, John Blackbird, Warren Cariou, Jo-Ann Episkenew, Audrey Huntley, Thomas King, David T. McNab, Quentin Pipestem, Waubgeshig Rice, Drew Hayden Taylor, and Emma Lee Warrior. Each was asked if they were aware of German "Indianthusiasm," had encountered it, what they thought of the phenomenon, and if they had engaged with or responded to it in their own work.

Interviewees were asked about widespread interest in Indigenous cultures and knowledges among Germans, which led to one of the collection's most striking conceptual arguments. In conversation with Episkenew, and as clarified by Lutz, it emerged that German "Indianthusiasts" may be influenced by a desire to connect with pre-Christian traditions and ways of being with nature. As Lutz explains, many earlier Germanic traditions were misused by the National Socialists and so have stigma attached to them. "Indianthusiasm" emerged as a response to a desire both to escape feelings of guilt over the genocidal violence of National Socialism and to connect with pre-Christian and pre-capitalist modes of coexisting with nature. In the introduction, the co-editors also acknowledge Adolf Hitler's appreciation for German novelist Karl May's stereotypical representations of Indigenous peoples in North America and how German "Indianthusiasm" historically was a response to Germany's thwarted colonial ambitions. Nonetheless, the conceptual influence of systems of anti-Indigenous genocide in North America on National Socialist anti-Jewish genocide in Europe is absent from this narrative. Moreover, National Socialist plans for genocide in North America, had they occupied these lands, and their implications for Indigenous peoples, are not mentioned.

Yet this deeply engaging and critical text centres on the ethical implications of German "Indianthusiasts" positioning themselves as arbiters of authentic Indigeneity in ways that threaten to replace Indigenous peoples in some manifestations, while providing work and study opportunities for actual Indigenous peoples in others. The Indigenous artists, writers, and academics interviewed refuse to be limited to this framework of engagement, instead largely insisting that their work is designed for Indigenous audiences and not in response to German appropriations. Both Fox's text and this collection

necessitate ethical self-critical reflection from settler and non-Indigenous audiences. It is not enough for settler and non-Indigenous peoples to read Indigenous literatures or engage with Indigenous knowledges; substantial harm can result from misreading, appropriation, and false claims to Indigeneity.

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A Labour of Love

Benjamin Lefebvre
The L. M. Montgomery Reader: Volume One: A Life in Print. U of Toronto P $39.95

Reviewed by Irene Gammel and Jaclyn Marcus

"Children are refreshing. Stories about them are," L. M. Montgomery told the reporter of the *Boston Traveler* in 1910 during her visit to that city. After the instant international success of her 1908 novel *Anne of Green Gables*, and aided by her Boston publisher L. C. Page and Company, Montgomery quickly became the subject of many news articles, typically involving interviews with her. She obliged, aware that they helped cultivate her readership. These interviews were often conducted by letter, her answers quoted in short articles. Some of these articles are anonymous, while others are signed by the journalists, and others still appear under Montgomery's name. They appeared in newspapers and periodicals such as the *Boston Journal* and the *Editor*; in *Canadian Bookman*, *Chatelaine*, and *Maclean's*; and in more local papers, such as the *Toronto Star Weekly* and the *Guardian* (Charlottetown). They also appeared in religious papers such as *Zion's Herald*, a Boston Methodist magazine to which Montgomery had contributed short stories long before *Anne of Green Gables* was published. From this vast array of articles from 1908 to 1944, some ninety interviews, opinion pieces, and articles have been collected and reprinted in *The L. M. Montgomery Reader: Volume One: A Life in Print* (2013; paperback 2020). It offers an invaluable scholarly resource and contextual fodder for scholars, students, and fans.

Chronologically structured, the early interviews take readers into Montgomery's retrospective account of how *Anne of Green Gables* came about. "Origin of a Popular Book," published in the *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* in 1908, quotes the author: "During these weeks I 'brooded' my story, and somehow Anne began to take possession of me. It is a mistake to say I 'created' her" (36). Emphasizing the risk-taking inherent in writing a novel, Montgomery explained: "In view of her [Anne's] then uncertain future, I felt that I could not afford to take time from my regular magazine work for it; so I wrote the book in the evenings or at any odd spare time when I felt in the mood." When one of the authors

of this review, Irene Gammel, researched her book *Looking for Anne of Green Gables: How L. M. Montgomery Dreamed Up a Literary Classic* (2008), exploring how the novel came about, these pieces of interviews—not yet available in *The L. M. Montgomery Reader*—were important sources that had to be located through archival research. They helped piece together Montgomery's process of writing, shaping, and finally publishing the novel. While these newspaper articles are not without errors and inconsistencies, there is a remarkable steadiness in Montgomery's telling of the story—revealing also her predictable silences.

Indeed, these articles underscore the duality of Montgomery's responses. In her public statements, she was like a public-relations officer who set clear boundaries. This is evident when the editor of *Everywoman's World* begged Montgomery to share some of her personal romance stories for a long biographical piece published in the Toronto periodical in 1917, posthumously reprinted as *The Alpine Path*. Montgomery categorically refused, and yet, as readers of her journals know, she took this request to heart more privately, promptly adding a lengthy list and account of all her beaux to her journal, which she meant to be published posthumously.

The L. M. Montgomery Reader: Volume One contains additional biographical gems. Some essays penned by Montgomery—such as her 1911 "Seasons in the Woods," in the *Canadian Magazine*, and her 1917 "My Favourite Bookshelf," in an unidentified periodical—demonstrate her love of nature, reading, and, of course, her Prince Edward Island home; they depict her poignant memories of her girlhood and her belief in youth as carriers of hope across generations. In contrast, the unsigned "Says Woman's Place Is Home," printed in the *Boston Post* in 1910, reveals that she refused to lend her newly gained fame to the then-controversial women's suffrage movement. As Montgomery stated: "I am a quiet, plain sort of person, and while I believe a woman, if intelligent, should be allowed to vote, I would have no use for suffrage myself. I have no aspirations to become a politician. I believe a woman's place is in the home" (51). Likewise, in "'I Dwell among My Own People,'" published in 1921 and again in 1925, Montgomery celebrates the blending of different cultures in Canada. "Such are my people," she writes, "with the fire and romance of the Celt, the canny common sense of the Lowlander, the thrift of the English, the wit of the Irish, all beginning to be blended" (354). Yet she also universalized her personal story, with "Canadian" constituting this blend of identities, but problematically excludes Indigenous peoples, Black people, the French, and myriad other immigrant groups that were then building the country. These writings are ripe for postcolonial critiques, highlighting the need for revisionary readings in the continued study of Montgomery's works.

Thanks to the volume's editor, Benjamin Lefebvre, a long-time Montgomery scholar and researcher, a generous apparatus of headnotes and explanatory notes accompanies each article. Lefebvre excels in sleuthing, not only identifying literary allusions and historical figures, and tracking quotations from Montgomery's own work, but also decoding archaic words and flagging misquotations and factual errors. Just as intertextuality always reigned supreme in Montgomery's work, so it does in Lefebvre's approach to annotating this collection.

Both scholarly and accessible, *The L. M. Montgomery Reader: Volume One* is the first

part of a trilogy edited by Lefebvre. *Volume Two: A Critical Heritage* collects some twenty previously published scholarly articles that trace Montgomery's legacy, while *Volume Three: A Legacy in Review* collects more than three hundred reviews of Montgomery's work, offering her readers and critics the last word. Comprehensive and generous, *Volume One: A Life in Print* is a true labour of love. This collection will be an invaluable resource for decades to come.

A Very Timely Anthology

Dane Swan, ed.
Changing the Face of Canadian Literature. Guernica $25.00

Reviewed by Suzanne James

Dane Swan opens this anthology of more than seventy poems and short prose pieces by bluntly reminding readers that—until very recently—in Canadian literature "the recognition of authors from non Anglo Saxon cultures (in more than a token manner) . . . has been abysmal" (12). He sets out to celebrate "diversity" rather than multiculturalism, using this term to embrace a wide range of writers from diverse places, and of diverse ethnicities, abilities, and genders. Swan makes a convincing case, in both the foreword and the rest of the collection, that diversity is not simply a nod to political correctness or inclusivity. As he confidently announces, "[t]he more diverse a nation's writers are, the wider the breadth of people who feel they are part of that nation" (14).

Although this is not a collection of work from novice writers—the contributors all have previous publications to their credit—the pieces included are almost exclusively new to anthologies of Canadian writing. Using broad criteria for inclusion—the quality of writing, as well as how effectively the texts engage readers—Swan presents the work of thirty Canadian writers, most of whom (I suspect) will be unfamiliar to scholars, instructors, and readers. Outlining his process, he explains that fifty writers were invited to contribute to the anthology, many of whom "said yes, and most submitted work that was accepted" (298); however, Swan provides no clue as to the editorial process involved in narrowing so many submissions down to the work of only thirty writers.

The chosen pieces emphasize reflexive personal writing and first-person narratives, with more creative non-fiction than would appear in a traditional literary anthology. No doubt challenging a reader's inclination to classify or categorize, Swan eschews any obvious or conventional organizational principle. Instead, writers are simply numbered from one to thirty, followed by the titles of the texts which follow. Biographical introductions remain short, typically identifying a place (or places) of residence, previous publications, a place of employment or study, hobbies, marital status, or the focus of an individual's writing. No direct references are made to age or ethnicity.

Not surprisingly, many of the works explore issues of identity, often in the context of contemporary Canadian society. They sometimes predictably challenge concepts of belonging and the ubiquitous "where are you *really* from?"-type questions, though they also explore contradictions and more subtle fluidities of place and belonging. While I'm reluctant to identify favourites in a collection which challenges categories and hierarchies,

here are a few entries I find especially compelling and memorable, followed by a brief quotation from each.

The persona in Adam Pottle's evocative narrative poem, "School for the Deaf," describes how

> When you speak or try
> to speak, it's like laying an egg through your mouth,
> like balancing a tire on your throat,
> like lifting a barbell with your tongue,
> hoping it doesn't tip or catch on a corner. (23)

The second of Sennah Yee's "5 Haiku for/from Canada" declares: "you're frightened that I've / flourished right in the hyphen / that you've slapped on me." And Jennilee Austria's "The Kayaking Lesson" explores racism, Canadian-style, in a deft and comical way. After Chris, a kayaking instructor, has proudly shown off his two sentences of Tagalog—"May-gan-da ka! May-hal ki-ta!" ("'You're beautiful' and 'I love you'")—the narrator reflects: "I rested my paddle across the kayak, pretending to stretch my arms. My mom told me that if men ever said things like that to a Filipina, it was because they were trying to marry one" (212).

What lingers are the voices. As the best anthologies do, this one left me seeking more words from these writers; I found myself following up on websites and publications, noting names and titles, thinking about potential course readings. The entries are works which we, as scholars, critics, and instructors of Canadian literature and culture, *should* know and *should* teach. Swan closes the preface with this pronouncement: "Congratulations Canada, you finally have a literature that looks like the people who inhabit you. Do not take this moment for granted" (15). Buy this book, share it, and, if you have the opportunity, teach it!

Little but Resilient

Eli MacLaren
Little Resilience: The Ryerson Poetry Chap-Books. McGill-Queen's UP $37.95

Reviewed by Robert G. May

Between 1925 and 1962, the Ryerson Press published the Ryerson Poetry Chap-Books, a collection of two hundred slim volumes featuring the work of scores of Canadian versifiers, from Confederation Poets such as Charles G. D. Roberts and Marjorie Pickthall, to modernists such as Dorothy Livesay and Al Purdy, to later figures such as Milton Acorn and James Reaney. The Chap-Books were the brainchild of Lorne Pierce, whose long career at the Ryerson Press was shaped by his tireless efforts to keep the series going, often against the overwhelming odds of balancing poets' strong personalities with the discouraging financial realities of book publishing in twentieth-century Canada.

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Eli MacLaren's *Little Resilience* is the first book-length study of the Ryerson Poetry Chap-Books. Through archival research, literary analysis, historical overview, and a series of interconnected case studies, MacLaren traces the growth and development of the Chap-Books through its thirty-seven tumultuous years, a period of transition in Canadian literature from the post-First-World-War nationalism of the 1920s to the avant-garde experimentalism of the 1960s. MacLaren's thesis is that the Ryerson Poetry Chap-Books were little but resilient: "[T]he Chap-Books were insufficient as income and negligible as commodities but replete with the supreme value that poetry possessed for the scores of people who took part in their production" (2). The Chap-Books may have been slender, but in many ways they formed the backbone of Canadian poetry publishing throughout several early decades of the twentieth century.

MacLaren argues that "the Chap-Books are a major example of the difficult conditions that average Canadian writers faced in the middle of the twentieth century" (2). The opening chapter of *Little Resilience* traces the history of publishing in 1920s Canada, in particular the efforts of Pierce to transform the Ryerson Press from a printer of religious texts to a major player in Canadian publishing, holding its own among behemoths McClelland & Stewart and Macmillan. One of the strategies Pierce used to accomplish this goal was to shift the financial risk of publishing the Chap-Books onto their authors, a process MacLaren describes in the second chapter. Some authors balked at the idea of essentially paying to get themselves into print. F. G. Scott, for example, an established poet by the 1920s, was having none of it. Others embraced the model enthusiastically, fronting payment to guarantee the press against financial loss and often accepting free copies of their Chap-Books in lieu of royalties. Pierce's strategy was successful, and the Ryerson Poetry Chap-Books became "a model for the small press in Canada" (4), emulated by the presses and little magazines of the "modernist revolt" that was following hard on Pierce's heels.

Pierce may have been a romantic at heart, but he was sufficiently insightful to ensure that the Ryerson Poetry Chap-Books also included modernist voices. "[T]he collective literary character of the Ryerson Poetry Chap-Books," MacLaren writes, "is a mixture of romantic and modernist" (8). The five case studies that conclude *Little Resilience*—Nathaniel A. Benson, Anne Marriott, M. Eugenie Perry, Dorothy Livesay, and Al Purdy—illustrate Pierce's engagement in a "complex turn to modernist poetry" (158) as the series progressed, which often involved showcasing poets who straddled "The modernist/romantic binary" (157): the first case study, devoted to Benson, sees him as a "Modern Romantic," while the last case study, devoted to Purdy, sees him as a "Romantic Modern." The case studies also show how "the Ryerson Poetry Chap-Books were politically

responsible," in that they assembled "many different poetic voices, subject positions, and aims" (6). The case study devoted to Perry analyzes her treatment of deafness in a "dignified" way that may have appealed to Pierce because he too lived with hearing loss. The case study devoted to Livesay analyzes her sensitive engagement with the internment of Japanese Canadians during the Second World War in the form of a "foundational" Canadian documentary poem.

The scholarly apparatus of *Little Resilience* includes a selection of visual images reproduced from the archives, a comprehensive bibliography and notes, and an appendix listing all two hundred Ryerson Poetry Chap-Books by year of publication. Most compelling is the ten-page table in the centre of the volume that provides the "Terms of publication for the Ryerson Poetry Chap-Books" (117), including the print run, the cover price, and the amount of money the author had to pay up front to guarantee the press against loss.

Tidal Memories of Loss

Chad Norman; judith S bauer, illus.
Squall: Poems in the Voice of Mary Shelley. Guernica $20.00

Reviewed by Heather Olaveson

Rumour has it that, years after Mary Shelley's death, family members opened the famous writer's travel desk only to discover a collection of macabre mementos: locks of hair from her deceased children, her husband Percy's ashes wrapped in a folded sheet of his poetry, and the calcified remains of his heart after he was cremated on an Italian beach following a lethal boating accident. It is the connective image of a sealed box—the "heart of Shelley" (5)—that forms the spine of Chad Norman's *Squall*, appearing at the beginning of each poem in a two-line tableau of Mary on a beach. This sealed travel desk-cum-memory box also foregrounds the significance of memory, love, and loss in Norman's book, and leads to the figurative emotional unsealing of the speaker, the young writer of *Frankenstein* (1818). judith S bauer's hauntingly stark pen-and-ink illustrations, which often contain nude female figures and sealed boxes, mirror Mary's emotional vulnerability and provide provocative commentary.

Squall begins with poem titles dated 1822, the year of Percy Bysshe Shelley's drowning; it then gradually moves backward ten years to the initial meeting of Percy and Mary. This reverses the usual trajectory of Canadian biographical long poems, such as Margaret Atwood's *The Journals of Susanna Moodie* (1970), Gwendolyn MacEwen's *The T. E. Lawrence Poems* (1982), and George Elliott Clarke's *Execution Poems* (2001), a number of which move beyond the grave into the realm of mythology and legacy, revealing their subjects' influence on the present. The fact that more than a quarter of the poems in Norman's collection bear the date 1822 helps position Percy as sun and centre of Mary's thoughts; although husband and wife are now separated, "a drowning now between" them (5), Mary's emotional closeness is evident in her affirmation: "[Y]ou live bodiless in my body, / gone under forever" (6). The reversed chronology suggests the speaker's desire to reverse this physical separation and retreat from this pain, yet she inevitably stumbles

into further grief in the form of memories of her children's deaths, her husband's amorous affairs, and society's condemnation of the couple's scandalous elopement (Mary was underage, Percy was already married, and they fled to the Continent with Mary's stepsister in tow). Retreat from pain proves futile, however, for the text ends with Mary's admission:

> I gaze at the edge of Italy,
> unable to forget
> we shared all
> we dared to,
> the effort holy,
> enough. (84)

Although the "squall" of her emotional turmoil has died down into something akin to nostalgia by these final lines, like the sealed box that opens every poem, the speaker cannot forget; in fact, this box serves as a memento mori, a reminder of death and loss. If it does contain Percy's heart, it also contains Mary's, since all she holds dear is locked inside.

Norman shines in his ability to unlock and explore the complexity of his subject's emotional landscape—or rather her emotional seascape, since the sea functions as both an agent of memory and a personified murderer. It is "the sea's tease, / a damp tapping gust / eager to play the Past" (3) that, like Frankenstein, catalyzes the restarting of Percy's heart in Mary's imagination, marking the beginning of her remembrance and serving as a motif. For Mary, the waves are "thievish" and the sea "guilty" (5), a "[c]alm [m]urderer" she imagines in a beautifully chilling sequence in which the water's music is compared to both a "dark singer . . . that sang over his final endless squints" (35) and a stringed instrument strummed by the hand of Loss; here, the "notes grip the neck," a phrase ominously suggestive of both Percy's drowning and Mary's subsequent grief. In lines heavy with loss, waves, which seem to momentarily reanimate the dead, are exposed as "the buoyant hoax, / in league with grief's wry lure" when they

> sen[d] as a faint sinking mirage
> the memory saves:
> the undulant hair,
> the open mouth,
> the muted bubbles. (36)

While Mary's emotional storm subsides by the end of the volume, the metaphor of "tidal memory" indicates its inescapable and continuous return (30).

In his foreword to the collection, George Elliott Clarke positions Mary as "proto-suffragette" and "precursor-feminist," and Percy as a narcissist, liberal, and libertine (xi). The speaker is described by Norman as an inheritor of her mother Mary Wollstonecraft's proto-feminist "revolt" (73); Wollstonecraft is best known for *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792). However, I find that Norman is less interested in charting Mary Shelley's radical feminism than in inhabiting her interiority and expressing the intimacy of loss. Norman excavates the "rupture[s] & cracks" (67) of the Shelleys' relationship and, more importantly, explores the depths of his speaker, whose jealousy is directed toward her "sly" (51) stepsister Claire because of her relationship with philandering Percy, and whose "grief

ha[s] . . . grown / to the size of the creature / in [her] today" (71).

The spareness of Norman's poetry is reminiscent of snippets of memory, and the impressionistic imagery constructs a vividly emotive portrait. Like memory itself, the text offers flashes of incredible detail amid moments of ambiguity; for instance, pronouns often substitute for proper nouns, details are sometimes inserted with little context, and additional commas occasionally result in less clarity. While these aspects require a little guesswork or research on the reader's part, they can also render the reading experience more intimate, as if the reader is slipping into Mary's consciousness. Norman's play with punctuation allows the syntax to reflect the fragmentation of Mary's thoughts, while his exclusive use of the ampersand perhaps hints at the text's preoccupation with the division brought about by death: connections have been sundered, a notion that opposes the very purpose of a coordinating conjunction. If the syntax does not read exactly like ghostwriting (as the subtitle suggests), Norman's text compellingly imagines Mary Shelley's emotional life while capturing the romanticism of her writing. Reading *Squall* inevitably invites rereading, and will intrigue and inspire the reader to learn more about its biographical subject—which will only enrich the reading experience.