Editorial

Welcome to Volume 38.2 of *Atlantis: Critical Studies in Gender, Culture, and Social Justice*!

This issue consists of two thematic clusters. The first bilingual cluster, edited and introduced by Libe García Zarranz (Department of Teacher Education, Norwegian University of Science and Technology) and Evelyne Ledoux-Beaugrand (Department of Literary Studies, Ghent University), is entitled **Affecting Feminist Literary and Cultural Production/Affects féministes dans les productions littéraires et culturelles.** The articles featured in the cluster include:

- Marie Carrière, "Foreword/Avant-propos";
- Libe García Zarranz and Evelyne Ledoux-Beaugrand, "Affective Assemblages: Entanglements and Ruptures—An Interview with Lauren Berlant";
- Tanis MacDonald, "Grievous Speech: Nathalie Stephens's *Touch to Affliction* and the City of Death";
- Evelyne Ledoux-Beaugrand, "La douleur des autres : Eisenstein, Mavrikakis, et Agnant";
- Sandra MacPherson, "Soft Architecture: Walking as an Affective Practice in Lisa Robertson's 'Seven Walks'";
- Libe García Zarranz, "Love Enough! Dionne Brand and Rosi Braidotti's Affective Transpositions";
- Maïté Snauwaert, "Dépression et affection dans *Le Juste milieu* d'Annabel Lyon : une poétique du *care*";
- Christine Lorre, "Touch and Affect in Alice Munro's 'Nettles'; or, Redefining Intimacy";
- Marie-Christine Lambert-Perreault, "Des affects plein l'assiette. Migration, nourriture et agentivité chez Kim Thúy";
- Elisabeth Otto, "The Affect of Absence: Rebecca Belmore and the Aesthetico-politics of 'Unnameable Affects'"; and
- Belén Martín-Lucas, "Posthumanist Feminism and Interspecies Affect in Nalo Hopkinson's *Midnight*."

The cluster also includes creative pieces by Louise Dupré, "*L'album multicolore*"; Simon Harel, "Épilogue : Désaffecté"; Erín Moure, "THIS FOLD DREAMS AND UNDREAMS UNTIL A LAST DREAM WHICH IS AN I"; Kim Thúy, "*Amoureux*"; and Lucas Crawford, "One of My Thin Friends and Other Poems."

The second cluster, edited and introduced by Clare Mulcahy (Communications, Northern Alberta Institute of Technology), Hannah McGregor (Publishing, Simon Fraser University), and Marcelle Kosman (English, University of Alberta), features articles and interviews that focus on the theme **"WHOOPS I AM A LADY ON THE INTERNET": Digital Feminist Counter-Publics.** These include:

- Erin Wunker, "Sweating in Public: Some Thoughts About Writing on the Internet While Being a Woman";
- Hannah McGregor, "'I Needed to See the Politic Being Lived': Virgie Tovar on Fat Activism and Digital Platforms";
- Marcelle Kosman, "The Unpaid Labour of Love: Rebecca Blakey, Natalie Childs, KL, and Cynthia Spring on behalf of *GUTS CANADIAN FEMINIST MAGAZINE*";
- Marcy Cook, "The Difference a Gender Makes";
- Isla Ng, "The Digitization of Neurodiversity: Real Cyborgs and Virtual Bodies"; and
- Clare Mulcahy, "'Not Just What We Dismantle But Also What We Hope to Build': Alicia Garzia on Black Lives Matter and Digital Activism."

In addition, the open cluster includes three articles, one book review essay, and a series of book reviews. Lykke de la Cour's article, "Eugenics, Race and Canada's First-Wave Feminists: Dis/Abling the Debates," engages in an intersectional analysis of the reports of one of Ontario's pioneering physicians and leading eugenic crusaders, Dr. Helen MacMurchy. In interrogating the historical evidence, she argues for the "need to place disability and processes of disablement more critically at the center of analyses and delibera-

tions over the meaning, mission, and the ultimate impact of first-wave feminism and early-twentieth-century eugenics" particularly on marginalized groups of women. In "Mompreneurs, Leaning In, and Opting Out: Work/Family Choices Under Neo-Liberalism," Shauna Wilton examines three main trends in the search for work-life balance and situates them in the neo-liberal family policy context in Canada. She maintains that these trends—mompreneurs, leaning in, and opting out—"reflect current ideas about intensive mothering and the 'good mother' and neoliberal norms surrounding the good worker and citizen." Roula Hawa and Angela Underhill's article, "Examining Gender Relations among South Asian Immigrant Women Living with HIV in the Greater Toronto Area: An Anti-Oppressive Lens," explores the experiences of twelve South Asian immigrant women living with HIV in Toronto. Based on their narratives, the authors argue that "power relations, emotional attachment, the gendered division of labour, and social norms" are key structures that shape South Asian immigrant women's lives and contribute to increased risk of HIV. In her book review essay, entitled "Gendered Bodies and Necropolitical States," Jennifer Musial reviews Rebecca Bromwich's *Looking for Ashley: Re-reading What the Smith Case Reveals about the Governance of Girls, Mothers and Families in Canada* (Demeter Press 2015) and Amber Dean's *Remembering Vancouver's Disappeared Women*: *Settler Colonialism and The Difficulty of Inheritance* (University of Toronto Press 2015) and situates her analysis of these texts in theoretical work on necropolitics and memorialization.

The cover is an image from the book, *Self*, which was written and illustrated by Nova Scotian artist and author, Dawn Sinclair.

Enjoy the issue!

Annalee Lepp
Editor

Feminist Affects in Productions Littéraires et Culturelles: An Introduction

Cluster Editors

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Evelyne Ledoux-Beaugrand est chercheuse et enseignante de français à l'Université de Gand, Belgique. Ses recherches portent principalement sur la littérature des femmes et les discours féministes, les représentations de la vulnérabilité et l'inscription de la mémoire en littérature. Elle est l'autrice de l'essai *Imaginaires de la filiation. Héritage et mélancolie dans la littérature contemporaine des femmes* (Éditions XYZ, 2013) et de plusieurs articles sur les écrits de femmes ainsi que sur la postmémoire de la Shoah. Elle a récemment dirigé avec Anne Martine Parent le dossier « Subjectivités mouvantes dans les écrits de femmes depuis 1990 » paru en 2016 dans *@alyses*. En collaboration avec Katerine Gagnon, elle a dirigé en 2014 le numéro de la revue *Textimage* intitulé « Parler avec la Méduse » et a préparé en 2013 avec Kathleen Gyssels le dossier sur les « Représentations récentes de la Shoah » dans *Image & Narrative*. Elle est membre du comité de direction de *CWILA : Canadian Women in the Literary Arts/ FCAL : Femmes canadiennes dans les arts littéraires*.

An enticing imprecision characterizes the term affect when discussed in certain philosophically oriented academic circuits. Les travaux des historiens et historiennes des émotions nous le rappellent : chaque émotion constitue « un objet si mouvant » (Boquet et Nagy 2016, par. 13) qu'il devient difficile, voire impossible de déterminer ce qu'elle *est* vraiment. Tenter d'accoler un contenu précis à un affect ou à une émotion présente en outre le risque « de le[s] figer dans un état, nécessairement arbitraire et anachronique, et dès lors d'en produire un grand récit [...] » (Boquet et Nagy 2016, par. 13) qui serait incapable de saisir le caractère perpétuellement mouvant de l'affect, ses variations, mouvements et transformations dont il tire sa « force ». Affects are indeed slippery; they impregnate the material and the immaterial world in that, as Eve Sedgwick (2003) explains, they are "attached to things, people, ideas, sensations, relations, activities, ambitions, institutions, and […] other affects" (18-19); they belong to the ordinary and the mundane understood as "a shifting assemblage of practices and practical knowledges" (Stewart 2007, 1). As Lauren Berlant aptly claims in the interview included in this special issue, "neoliberal austerity policies are quite compatible with the affective turn." À l'ère du capitalisme avancé qui cherche à jouer des affects à des fins productives, il apparaît d'autant plus urgent de s'attacher à ce que Françoise Collin (1993) nomme « le "pour rien", la pure perte de ce qui se dissémine, de ce qui ne se cumule ni ne se comptabilise d'aucune manière, bref d'un négatif qui ne se traduirait pas en termes de négativités constitutives » (18). Cet intérêt pour le moindre ou l'in-important, le banal, le charnel, l'émotionnel et l'affectif est au cœur d'approches féministes des relations affectives comme le *care*. There is also a renewed interest in the evanescent, as illustrated in Elizabeth Grosz's (2005) politics of imperceptibility, which is capable of "leaving its traces and effects everywhere but never being able to be identified with a person, group or organization" (194). Affects, Antonio Damasio (2003) reminds us, formally function like a virus, infecting other subjects, bodies, objects, and spaces. This contagious capacity can have revolutionary potential: when affects are politicized and decolonized, they can become vehicles for sociopolitical dissent (Al-Kassim 2016) and feminist insurrection (García Zarranz 2016).

Fugaces, échappant aux définitions stables qui voudraient les contenir, c'est précisément cette capacité qu'ont les affects et les émotions de déborder, de circuler, de coller à certains sujets, ou encore de faire tenir ensemble ou d'en éloigner d'autres, qui leur vaut de jouer un rôle important dans les rapports intersubjectifs. In this sense, affects are not owned by subjects. Rather, as Sara Ahmed (2004, 2006) cleverly puts it, they are relational; they circulate between bodies constantly generating new encounters through spatial processes of approximation, disorientation, and reorientation. Melissa Gregg et Gregory J. Seigworth (2010), qui signent l'introduction de l'ouvrage collectif *The Affect Theory Reader*, jugent nécessaire de considérer l'affect pour ce qu'il fait plutôt que pour ce qu'il est ou ce qu'il serait : « [it is] more a matter of 'manner' than of essence » (14). Non seulement, comme le soutient Elspeth Probyn (2010), « different affects make us feel, write, think, and act in different ways » (74), mais la valeur et le contenu accordés aux affects et aux émotions qui traversent et transforment les subjectivités fluctuent suivant, notamment, les périodes historiques, les cultures et le genre des individus. Affects are simultaneously located and deterritorialized, and as such, they flow between the individual and the collective; the personal and the public. Affects are always embedded in economic processes with a number of implications for the gendered and the racialized body. Thus, as we claim in this special issue, it is crucial to incorporate feminist and decolonial approaches into any considerations of affect.

In "Affecting Feminism: Questions of Feeling in Feminist Theory," Carolyn Pedwell and Anne Whitehead (2012) map the complex relationship between affect studies and feminist theory aptly arguing that "[w]hile affect theory provides a valuable resource to interrogate long-held assumptions and think social and political life differently, such openings are not framed productively (or accountably) through an elision of the critical and diverse contributions of feminist, postcolonial and queer analysis" (118). In a similar vein, Sneja Gunew (2009, 2016) underscores the need to think about emotions and feelings beyond European structures and traditions in an attempt to begin to decolonize affect theory. Focusing on the first decade of the twenty-first century, this special issue seeks to contribute to these debates by unraveling the broad manifestations of *affect* in contemporary feminist literary and cultural production in Canada and Québec. Le titre du présent dossier le laisse clairement entendre, les contributions ne portent

pas sur un affect en particulier ; elles examinent plutôt des affects nombreux, pluriels, protéiformes, qui ont cependant pour dénominateur commun d'être envisagés d'un point de vue féministe. The term *feminist* here not only includes artistic projects that explicitly contribute to the development of new feminist epistemologies, but also to current artistic manifestations that might engage with concerns relevant to feminist thinking more obliquely. Si on peut dire de ces œuvres et des affects qu'elles explorent qu'ils sont féministes, cela ne tient certainement pas à leur « nature » : il n'existe pas une telle chose que des émotions ou des affects intrinsèquement féministes, tout comme il n'existe pas de bons ou de mauvais affects en soi. Leur portée réside plutôt dans ce que les affects font ou peuvent possiblement faire advenir. En ce sens, examiner les potentialités politiques d'affects associés à la négativité, comme le deuil, la colère ou la douleur, s'avère tout aussi légitime et productif que de se tourner, dans un perspective critique, vers des affects associés à la positivité, comme la joie, l'amour ou l'empathie (Stephens 2015).

As guest editors, we believe a note on terminology is crucial, especially for a special issue that brings together anglophone and francophone traditions. Dans la présente introduction et dans le dossier, les termes affect et émotions sont amenés à se côtoyer. Il en est ainsi car ils ne sont pas aussi distincts que peuvent le laisser penser certaines théorisations. *A fortiori* dans le monde francophone où l'opposition entre émotions et affects, servant parfois aux chercheurs et chercheuses anglo-saxonnes à définir l'objet de leur investigation, est rendue caduque par l'inexistence ou une certaine résistance aux regroupements disciplinaires qui prennent la forme des "affect studies" ou "emotion studies" dans le monde anglo-saxon. Nous insistons donc sur la porosité des frontières entre affects et émotions, qui doivent cependant être différenciés des sentiments. À cet égard, Gilles Deleuze et Félix Guattari (1980) affirment que « [l]'affect est la décharge rapide de l'émotion, la riposte, alors que le sentiment est une émotion toujours déplacée, retardée, résistante. Les affects sont des projectiles autant que les armes, tandis que les sentiments sont introceptifs comme les outils. » (497-498). The essays and creative works in this issue, together with Lauren Berlant's interview, tend to favour *affect* or *emotions* over *feeling* in that they entail the possibility "to become" whereas feelings often contribute to the stabilizing of "being" (Davy and Steinbock 2012; Crawford 2008). Affect then is connected to becoming, that is, to the on-going transformation of subjectivity, and to action, that is, the capacity for bodies to intervene in how we shape and are shaped by the world around us. Both concepts are, in our view, crucial for a reconsideration of power relations through the development of novel feminist methodologies. L'imbrication de l'affect dans les diverses relations de pouvoir est d'une importance toute particulière pour les « savoirs situés » (Haraway 1988 ; Harding 1993) que veulent produire les approches féministes. Déconstruisant l'idée d'objectivité qui s'est érigée sur le rejet de certaines expériences jugées de moindre importance ou de moindre valeur, la notion de « savoir situé » prend en considération la corporéité du sujet dans la production des savoirs. The need to trace genealogies of (de)subjugated knowledges (Stryker 2006) is also vital in any discussion of the intra-active relationality of affect, power, and the gendered body, as Lucas Crawford's transgender poetics, included in this issue, cogently illustrates.

This special issue collects some of the conversations and discussions started at the international conference "Affecting Women's Writing in Canada & Québec Today/L'affect et l'écriture des femmes au Québec et au Canada aujourd'hui" (Université de Montréal, November 2013). Marie Carrière, Daniel Laforest, Simon Harel, and Libe García Zarranz organized this bilingual event, and it was a joint effort between The Pierre Elliott Trudeau Foundation and the Canadian Literature Centre at the University of Alberta. The conference explored the multiple directions in which contemporary Canadian and Québécois writers and artists are contributing to the transformation of affect into a feminist matter with ethical, aesthetic, and political repercussions. Les contributions rassemblées ici font suite à ces échanges fructueux. Nous avons invité les collaborateurs et collaboratrices à poursuivre les réflexions et à envisager les productions littéraires et culturelles féministes à la lumière des théories de l'affect. Ce faisant, nous désirons apporter quelques réponses, fussent-elles partielles, aux deux questions suivantes: Comment les écrivain.e.s et artistes québécois.e.s et canadien.ne.s mobilisent-elles les émotions et les affects à des fins de transformation des domaines socio-culturels ? In which ways are these literary and cultural interventions contributing to the transforma-

tion of affect into a feminist and thus an ethical and political matter?

Tanis MacDonald unravels the politics and poetics of grief in Natalie Stephens's *Touch to Affliction* (2006) by focusing on the trope of the "dissonant body." This book-length elegy, MacDonald convincingly argues, explores the paradox of elegiac tradition where the speaker becomes "a flâneur of the not-quite-forgotten." Her essay thus traces the intimate relationality between spatial, linguistic, and affective bodies. S'intéressant aussi aux rapports entre l'espace, l'affect et la mémoire, Evelyne Ledoux-Beaugrand propose une lecture des romans *Le Ciel de Bay City* de Catherine Mavrikakis et *Le Livre d'Emma* de Marie-Célie Agnant, et du roman graphique *I Was a Child of Holocaust Survivor* de Bernice Eisenstein. L'analyse des modulations spatiales liées à la douleur d'autrui dans les récits permet de dégager une poétique mémorielle de la douleur amenant les sujets « à reconsidérer leur façon d'habiter un espace donné » et à faire l'expérience d'un délogement d'un espace *a priori* familier.

Following a similar line of enquiry, Sandra MacPherson's essay turns to Lisa Robertson's "Seven Walks" for an examination of the peripatetic. Drawing on Rosi Braidotti's philosophy, MacPherson persuasively contends that walking is in Robertson's work an "affective practice that expresses the city in terms of the fluidity of becoming rather than the fluidity of commodity exchange." Material feminist philosophy also works as a methodological framework to Libe García Zarranz's article, which sets up a dialogue between Dionne Brand's novel *Love Enough* and Braidotti's work in *Transpositions*. Brand's and Braidotti's transposable moves, García Zarranz claims, underscore the centrality of affective relations in the transformation of subjectivity, political alliances, and ethical spaces in a time of rampant neoliberalism and mounting racism.

Maïté Snauwaert convoque les éthiques féministes du *care* dans sa lecture du *Juste milieu* de la Canadienne Annabel Lyon. « Véritable laboratoire de compassion », le roman de Lyon a pour personnage principal Aristote, une figure fondatrice de la pensée occidentale. Snauwaert montre qu'en mettant l'accent sur la vulnérabilité d'une figure historique majeure et en s'attachant à l'ordinaire de son existence plutôt que d'aborder sa vie sous l'angle de ses réalisations, Annabel Lyon procède à « une relecture féministe de l'Histoire » qui prend en considération la dimension politique des relations affectives. Christine Lorre also addresses the permeability of boundaries between the ordinary and the political in her in-depth examination of Alice Munro's work. Through the lens of Berlant's (2000) and Ahmed's (2006) work on intimacy, Lorre considers the role of touch and skin in the short story "Nettles," mapping out a number of affective interconnections between the gendered subjects depicted in the narrative.

La traversée de l'œuvre de Kim Thúy qu'effectue Marie-Christine Lambert-Perreault permet de saisir l'importance du rapport sensoriel, affectif et mémoriel à l'aliment chez cette écrivaine d'origine vietnamienne. La nourriture y est un vecteur de remémoration et de transformations subjectives pour les protagonistes des romans. La préparation des repas reste liée à un rôle traditionnel féminin, voire à une forme d'aliénation, mais les transformations successives que connaît le rapport aux aliments font des expériences sensorielles une source d'agentivité et d'émancipation pour les sujets féminins incarnés des romans de Thúy.

The last two articles included in this special issue seek to excavate genealogies of subjugated knowledge through decolonial and posthumanist methodologies. Elisabeth Otto's article examines Rebecca Belmore's multimedia work and its ongoing denunciation of the systemic violence targeting Indigenous women in Canadian society. In a moment where the dehumanization of Indigenous populations is still an everyday reality in many communities, Belmore's work obliquely begs the question: who counts as human? At this historical juncture of increasing racism and feminist backlash, it is thus important to deconstruct the masculinist and colonial category of *anthrōpos* and consider, as Belén Martín-Lucas's article does, what posthumanist ethics may bring to the table. Employing critical posthumanism, affect theory, postcolonial literary criticism, and feminist theories of the cyborg, Martín-Lucas rethinks kinship and interspecies affect in Nalo Hopkinson's speculative work.

Les textes de création constituant un lieu privilégié d'exploration des émotions et des affects, ce dossier nous aurait semblé bien incomplet sans l'apport d'écrivaines et de poètes. Aussi le premier chapitre du récit *L'Album multicolore* de Louise Dupré, a selection of Erin Moure's "untranslatable" poems in *Insecession*, une nouvelle de Kim Thúy, and a selection of Lucas

Crawford's transgender poetics s'ajoutent-ils aux essais.

Tracing several masculinist genealogies of happiness, Sara Ahmed (2010) explains how the feminist subject is rendered an "affect alien" that systematically kills joy "not only by talking about unhappy topics such as sexism but by exposing how happiness is sustained, by erasing the signs of not getting along. Feminists do kill joy in a certain sense: they disturb the very fantasy that happiness can be found in certain places" (581-582). En tant que directrices de ce dossier et, aussi, en tant que fières féministes rabat-joie—« feminist killjoy »—, nous désirons que les essais et textes de fictions rassemblés ici puissent susciter et activer nos sens (critiques), notre vitalité et notre énergie, choses dont nous avons grandement besoin en ces temps marqués par de nombreux reculs pour tous les sujets minorisés. With the alarming ascent of Donald Trump as President of the United States, the ever-growing tide of right-wing politics across Europe, and the unacceptable ordinariness of sexual harassment in many Canadian literary communities, we believe it is key to keep devising feminist work on affect in order to brush "normativities against the grain [and challenge] the felt contours and linkages of everyday life" (Lenon, Luhmann, and Rambukkana 2015, 4).

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Foreword/Avant-propos

Marie Carrière is Director of the Canadian Literature Centre at the University of Alberta, where she also teaches English and French. Her work on feminist writing in Canada and Québec appears in various journal articles and book chapters. Her latest book is *Médée protéiforme* (University of Ottawa Press, 2012) and she is co-editor, with Patricia Demers, of *Regenerations: Women's Writing in Canada* (University of Alberta Press, 2014).

Affect, Melissa Gregg and Gregory J. Seigworth (2010) tell us, "is persistent proof of a body's never less than ongoing immersion in and among the world's obstinacies and rhythms, its refusals as much as its invitations" (1). If we accept this definition, then women's writing in Canada, and *écriture au féminin* in Québec, have always been *about* affect: in the sense both of *regarding* or being *with reference to* affect, and of indicating a *movement within* or *various directions* of affect. Women's writing in Canada is *about* affect when it problematizes gendered, racialized, or sexualized bodies. It is *about* affect when it performs vulnerability, resistance, and queerness; when it represents the immersion of bodies in material reality and in language; and, ultimately, when it expresses ways in which these bodies inform literary expression.

I can't help but notice that this special issue of *Atlantis* comes at a time of revival in mainstream feminism, with the increased visibility of feminist activism on social media, in popular culture, or on a global scale. It also comes at a very non-feminist and indeed anti-feminist time, when cultural and political backlash against feminist ideas and activism is at an all-time high. Finally, this issue also comes at a time in feminist literary and critical history (our current one) that I call metafeminist (Carrière 2016). Initially used by Lori Saint-Martin in the 1990s, metafeminism denotes paradigmatic turns and shifts in women's writing, whereby feminist ideas have become less explicit than they were a few decades ago in women's texts produced in Canada and Québec. But, feminism is still there, and it is still here. In other words, several women writers in Canada and Québec may appear less unequivocal in their political or theoretical outlooks than their (second-wave?) predecessors. Whether writing from a cis, queer, trans, racialized, or what they recognize as a privileged white position, they are no less ethically engaged with alternative visions of social transformation spawned by feminist thought. Wading through the torrent of constant societal and cultural backlash, feminism is still doing its

work. It does it differently and perhaps more dispersedly than in decades past.

In assessing the state or consequences of feminism in the twenty-first century, several critics have underlined what I would call this metafeminist moment. "Women need not be the explicit object of debate for us to deploy our analytics of power to useful effect" (8), Joan Scott (2002) argues. In turn, Misha Kavka (2001) reminds us that "feminist thinking may now *stretch beyond* 'women' or even gender as categories and as delimiting objects of investigation [but] it does not, however, mean leaving these categories behind" (xxi; my emphasis).

Just as such terms like globalization, transnationalism, diaspora, and now neoliberalism have more or less refurbished terms like postmodernism, multiculturalism, and postcolonialism in our critical *parler* (Cvetkovitch 2012, loc. 316, par. 1), metafeminism as a term attempts to update our historical sense of feminism's shifting epistemologies and practices. And "so it is," as Sara Ahmed (2004) powerfully argues, "when feminism is no longer directed towards a critique of patriarchy, or secured by the categories of 'women' or 'gender,' that it is doing the most 'moving' work. *The loss of such an object is not the failure of feminist activism, but is indicative of its capacity to move, or to become a movement*" (176).

Let's now return to affect. The movement that Ahmed (2004) describes above has informed recent scholarship engaged with affect studies. And here, the "time" of feminism, so to speak, is of essence. "The subject of feminism" has been conceptualized "as embodied, located and relational" (Koivunen 2000, 8) in the work of a number of affect theorists including Ahmed, Lauren Berlant, Rosi Braidotti, Teresa Brennan, and Ann Cvetkovich. While the turn to affect in feminist theory may indicate the "search of a new critical vocabulary" (Koivunen 2000, 8), the focus on affect is also recognizably *in continuation with* the long history of feminism's ongoing engagement with ethics, ontology, and the material conditions of identity and subjectivity. Recent momentum in the scholarship on affect is often talked about in terms of an "affective turn," as coined by cultural theorist Patricia Clough in 2010. Such talk, as Anu Koivunen (2000) argues, is "to ignore generations of feminist scholarship on articulating subjective and social experiences of injustices" (22). Koivunen (2010) urges us to consider "the long history of feminist engagement with psychoanalysis," for example, or theories of the "'passionate subject'" (22) in the work of Julia Kristeva, Jessica Benjamin, Teresa de Lauretis, and Kaja Silverman. Indeed: "The question of affect and the reflexive link between ontology and epistemology were always already there in feminist self-consciousness" (Koivunen 2010, 23).

Returning now to the shift in the political tendencies and aesthetic practices of women's writing in Canada today, I'd like to propose that the study of affect can help us grapple with some of these transformations. Convergences between English- and French-language feminist poetics were perhaps arguably more visible in the 1970s and early 1980s than those that meet the critical eye today. Formal experimentation and sexual politics fuelled the writing of a number of Anglophone and Francophone women (Daphne Marlatt, Lola Lemire Tostevin, Nicole Brossard, to name just a few) which focused on theories of intersubjectivity and corporeality. This was the stuff of affect, to be sure, which European and American feminist thinkers (Hélène Cixous, Luce Irigaray) were in turn delving into. These so-called radical feminist poetics came to give way either to more personal or intimate forms of writing or to interventions in colonial, multicultural, and national rhetoric (Dionne Brand, Nadine Ltaif). However, feminism in Canadian writing today—and the centrality of affect especially in the form of private and public intimacy—is as pertinent as ever.

As this special issue is about to demonstrate under the perceptive editorial vision of Libe García Zarranz and Evelyne Ledoux-Beaugrand, feminism in Canadian writing (by Nalo Hopkinson, Larissa Lai, Catherine Mavrikakis, Kim Thúy, and in the creative work of transgender poet Lucas Crawford featured here) no longer thinks (if it even ever did think) in just local or national terms. The oppression of minorities, women, and nature, as well as the ill effects of neoliberal attachments to scripts of happiness or the 'good life' must fall more than ever under the scrutiny of feminism's longstanding methodologies of analysis and critique. With keen and growing interest in global crisis in women's writing—environmental collapse, social inequality, state and biopolitical surveillance, heteronormative backlash—critics (Ledoux-Beaugrand, García Zarranz, Amelia DeFalco, Dominique Hétu, Sina Queyras) increasingly turn

to material and queer theory, posthumanism, and the ethics of care to engage with these works.

Let me just end with this. As a literary practice, feminism confronts and resists the current global and post-9/11 brutalities and inequalities that besiege us. Feminist theory, Ahmed (2017) reminds us in *Living a Feminist Life*, is after all "world making" (loc. 330, par. 3). More than ever, we need feminism which, like the body, has the "*capacity* to affect and be affected" (Gregg and Seigworth 2010, 2).

Feminism is an ethos for our time.

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Affective Assemblages: Entanglements and Ruptures—An Interview with Lauren Berlant

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Lauren Berlant is George M. Pullman Professor of English at the University of Chicago. She is also co-editor of *Critical Inquiry* and a founding member of the art/activist group Feel Tank Chicago. Currently working on flat affect, Berlant has written widely about the complex entanglements of affective, political, social, aesthetic, and material life, sovereignty and its discontents, intimate publics, the commons, and humourlessness with a focus on the contemporary US. Her most recent publications include the edition of the special issue *Comedy: An Issue* for *Critical Inquiry* (2017), with Sianne Ngai, where they dispel the paradoxical nature of comedy, with its pleasures and its ingrained displeasures. Other influential publications include *Sex, or the Unbearable* (Duke UP, 2014), with Lee Edelman, and *Desire/Love* (Punctum, 2012). What has been called "her national sentimentality quartet" includes *The Anatomy of National Fantasy: Hawthorne, Utopia, and Everyday Life* (Chicago UP, 1991), *The Queen of America Goes to Washington City: Essays on Sex and Citizenship* (Duke UP, 1997), *The Female Complaint* (Duke UP, 2008), and *Cruel Optimism* (Duke UP, 2011). Berlant's numerous edited volumes and collections further attest to the collaborative nature of her work: *On the Case* (*Critical Inquiry*, 2007); *Compassion: The Culture and Politics of an Emotion* (Routledge, 2004); *Our Monica, Ourselves: The Clinton Affair and the National Interest* (New York UP, 2001), and *Intimacy* (*Critical Inquiry*, 1998). Berlant regularly blogs at Supervalent Thought, https://supervalentthought.com.

Ambition is desire in the lifeworld of capitalism.

Lauren Berlant "Humorlessness" (2017: 315)

Lauren Berlant's inventory of the world, as illustrated in her robust body of work, signals a saturation of ugly feelings (Ngai 2005). These negative affects often block desire, hope, and pleasure as potential activators of social change and political transformation. In a moment of utter uncertainty, intensified by the ascent of Donald Trump to the Presidency of the United States and the rise of neofascisms in Europe, the editors of this special issue consider feminist anti-racist enquiry more necessary than ever. The centrality of the affective realm, as Berlant's interview illustrates, is unquestionable to begin to unravel this matrix of tensions, ruptures, and paradoxes. This interview was conducted over email in the summer and fall of 2014.

Libe & Evelyne

While being aware of the compulsive need to refashion terminologies in academia, would you like to reflect on the so-called "recent" turn to affect, particularly in the Humanities (Clough and Halley 2007)? Given the precarious state of the Humanities today, with radical worldwide funding cuts, do you think there is potential in affect theory to provide some counter-discourse to rampant neoliberal ideologies? If so, how? Could a feminist and queer theorization of affect, for instance, contribute to suspending/delaying the "slow death" (Berlant 2007b) of the Humanities as a discipline? What are the particularities (if any) of doing affect studies in the US academic system, particularly in this contemporary age of global crisis?

Lauren Berlant

I might be less optimistic than you. Of course, there is a potential for almost anything to become a transformative resource! But I'm enough of a Gramscian to believe in the hegemonic process as a war, not a solution to the problem of war. So I don't conclude that affect or any theory on its own, even from a feminist or queer perspective, can induce a better new consistency for living. For one thing, movements are sites of contestation, scenes of competitive exemplification whose power can be assessed according to how solidarity can be maintained amid antagonism. A good theory helps shape what we pay attention to and how we live and imagine living; it can be an anchor when things are awry, but it can be a harm when it stops us from taking in singularity, anomaly, and unpredicted forms of life.

So, for example, I have been thinking lately about irregular guerrilla actions: wildcat sickouts, unpredictable disturbances. Mental health days. Unpredicted tones of voice, of idioms of response. Because the strategies of "our" better intentionality against "their" bad intentionality have not worked very well, on their own. The threat of the unpredictable idiom and outcome is an important weapon in our arsenal. But it is easier to think the interruption and the increment than to reboot the totality.

Then there's the problem of affect theory's emergence in neoliberal times. The *Cruel Optimism* (2011) chapter on the Laurent Cantet films *Human Resources* and *Time Out* critiques from a position of solidarity the universalist aspects of precarity politics within the spaces of contemporary crisis, arguing that neoliberal austerity policies are quite compatible with the affective turn. As Deleuze and Massumi argue, societies of control see the overproduction of affect as a good fuel for private capital growth and the exhaustion of the subject, who is reduced to the dramatics of getting by while thinking of affect as an inalienable resource. So sometimes affect theory is the theory of our bodies within contemporary modes of production, a new focus for realism in the guise of a potentially revolutionary surplus or inalienable property.

The second problem with investing too much in affect theory to solve the problem of assessing social life is that using affects and emotions to measure injustice tends to assume that justice and the good life can be sensed, that there's some authenticity or purity in our discernment. That just seems false to me. It's central, though, to any prefigurative politics, and therefore can't be summarily negated either. To me, what affect theory best helps us see are the contradictions and ambivalences in our projects and attachments. It is a training in paying attention; at its best a way of describing the overdetermining forces that make a scene (like the historical present) complicated, overwhelming, and in movement. It is less clarifying about what to do and how find form for what we want.

Finally, the question of the Humanities: as you phrase it, our options are minimal—how to suspend or

delay its death. My political test is always to evaluate how different social projects cast the value of non-productivist subjects (kids, the aged, the disabled, the unemployed) and non-productivist modes of thought (the Humanities). What would a non-capitalist version of social value really be like? How can we build practices to sustain it? We are hammering out new visions at this point. The US had less of a social democracy than Canada and many places in Europe, and so the shock of privatization is geopolitically different; what isn't transnationally too different is our collective attempt to face down the drive to sell off knowledge-creation to the highest bidder. In the US, additionally, there continues to be a drive to censor publicly-funded knowledge that's inconvenient to the moral universe of the hegemons (straight white religio-patriarchy with legislative access has made a virulent comeback in the last five years in the US).

The idea of a liberal education for anyone who wants it, an education that values a genuine experimentality as to the value of a pursued thought was a beautiful one. One didn't have to be deserving or have leisure time to occupy. One had the right to expect and cultivate a cushion of knowledge that did not lead to the building of a skill for capital, economic or social. People of different classes and backgrounds were all considered to deserve access to interpretive and reflective skill-building. I want that to be part of whatever emerges from this crisis; I think this part of the interpretive Humanities and Social Sciences is worth fighting for.

Libe & Evelyne

In this special issue, we tend to favor the term "affect" over "feeling" in that, as Deleuzian critics claim, affect entails the capacity to become whereas feeling consists of the "stabilizing of being" (Davy and Steinbock 2012; Crawford 2008). In which ways is a discussion of terminology productive in articulating new feminist and queer theories of affect?

Lauren Berlant

Language makes everyone anxious. Just recently, I read someone saying once that the feeling/emotion/affect distinction was patriarchal. I read someone else say the next day that the distinction was the work of ideology itself, a romanticism of the nervous system that idealizes our responses without considering how they're shaped by capital and liberal ideology. These desires to foreclose or shame debate make me sad. Clearly, affect theory is central to the history of our concepts of ideology (the relation of explicit to affective attachment) but it is also a way of describing the force of the unsaids in collective life that shape how what can be said is thought and transmitted. These problems of finding form for the empiricism of the unsaid aren't limited to feminist and queer theories. But feminists and queers are especially interested in affect because desire is unruly and induces intensities of attachment outside of calculation, and if this is what makes us powerful and threatening and fun then affect theory should be valued as a resource.

Libe & Evelyne

If affects are never intrinsically good or bad, as you state in *Cruel Optimism* (2011), and if their effects depend on the context and are rather uncontrollable, could we nonetheless think of some affects being more suitable to political movements? For instance, which kind of affects should contemporary (third- or fourth-wave) feminism mobilize not only to touch, move and reach others, but also to move beyond itself and expand its boundaries? As theorists, professors, and artists, how can we rethink affect so as to contribute to the sustenance of feminist and queer genealogies/archives?

Lauren Berlant

There are so many feminisms, and so many assemblages in which feminism operates as a disruptive/transformative resource!

If we organize our exhaustion into a refusal to reproduce normativity (which is not easy, because normativity is a convenience that works *against* exhaustion at the same time as it takes a depleting toll); if we organize outrage into violence or its threat; if we organize our anxiety by pushing against the disorganization and siphoning of energy that constitutes the productivist life; if we reimagine health as different from the ability to work and wealth from the ability to hoard; if we embrace relationality over sovereign individuality as the ground for social theory and the good life; if we begin to see teaching as an opportunity to bring all of our intellectual and historical resources to the table; if we begin to think differently about infrastructures and temporalities of dependence, care, and intimacy; if our project's collective and not sovereign-heroic – things could hap-

pen. The political life demands an impatient patience.

From my very first publication—"The Female Complaint" (1988) in *Social Text*—I have been arguing that the problem of non-identity is at the core of feminism (and now, queer work too), as identity is an engine for the reproduction of iconic figures that are supposed to function as realist aspirations. Male privilege controls women through reducing us to a thing – reproduction, sexual appetite, consumption, maternity; the personal, the bodily—just as racism is a drive to undetermine the subject of color. Feminism and queer work need to fight against the homogeneity drive, what Jasbir Puar (2007) and others call homonormativity. I want feminism and queer work as motors for intimate publics to fight for pride in the capacity to maintain solidarity within a tangled space of antagonism, inconvenience, and non-recognition, to be able to bear and be interested in all kinds of differences. If misogyny and heteronormativity are norms in which women and femininity become stuck in figurations from which some men and class elites benefit and derive pleasure, what would it mean to release woman and femininity into a freedom from normative figuration—or at least an always transforming figuration? Can feminism bear it? It hasn't yet: the ongoing work of French, antiracist, postcolonial, and socialist feminisms testifies that supporting the multiplicity of women is an ongoing project for many feminists as well as patriarchally-defined misogynists (and the people who were raised within regimes of negative attachment to women, which pretty much defines most people).

This is an ongoing problem: I am not sure if it's possible to have a non-egoistic social movement. In any case, I have another specific commitment, which is to an anti-erotophobic politics. This requires affect theory, because it's so often about unconscious and confused visceral attachments. In my view, biopolitical subjects, populations whose persons are defined as bodies whose appetites need controlling by power, are all associated negatively with sexuality and likewise explicit sexuality carries negative value because of its association with populations and persons deemed too close to appetite. Lately, I have been hearing feminists and queer activists saying that pro-sex feminism went too far and that we need to reassert our erotophobia as a principle against patriarchy. It's my view that the hatred and suspicion of sex turns it into a weapon and not a space of disturbance we know how to inhabit. Affect theory to me, as a crusader against biopolitical violence, helps to fuel the hard work of not presuming bodies mainly as threats to happiness.

Libe & Evelyne

In the introduction to *Cruel Optimism* (2011), you mention the difficulty to write about affects and the "need to invent new genre for the kinds of speculative work we call 'theory'" (21). A look at other texts that pertain to the field of "affect studies" shows indeed how difficult is it to find a genre able to translate something as abstract though very much corporeal and as ordinary as affects. Does every different kind of affect ask for a particular genre? How genre and affects relate? How "personal criticism" and more poetic and/or autobiographical forms of writing could further or serve better our understanding of what affect does?

Lauren Berlant

I don't think there is a genre for every affect, no. This is partly because I think of the assessment of affect as the representation of a *scene* of convergence—moods, atmospheres, complexities—and not as a thing that can be anchored to one figuration. This is partly why autobiographical writing has become so important to affective work—not because it is *truer* about visceral epistemologies, but because its visceral epistemologies need to be considered *along with* the other evaluative styles of figuration we're used to, inducing productive interruptions and resonances.

Libe & Evelyne

In *Touching Feeling: Affect, Pedagogy, Performativity*, Eve K. Sedgwick (2003) explains how "Affects can be, and are, attached to things, people, ideas, sensations, relations, activities, ambitions, institutions, and any number of other things, including other affects" (19). What happens then when certain populations are negated the possibility of creating affective communities? What are the limitations of affect? How to theorize the lack of affect?

Lauren Berlant

I hate to close our interview by disagreeing again with the presuppositions in your questions, but... I don't think any populations are "negated the possibility of creating affective communities." But then I am

not sure what kind of value you're attaching to "community" here, either. There are populations deemed inadequate or threatening in their styles of sociality and atmospheres of the ordinary—but that's not because of an *absence* of affective community—rather, a threatening overpresence. Hegemons can't bear their irrelevance to the flourishing of alternative affective communities, and they understand that the extension of the intimate publics that are not addressed to them is a threat to their dominant status.

Anyway, as it happily happens, I am writing on affective flatness now, and have a lot to say about it. Flatness is different than lack. It is not only a subtraction, but a form of performance, a style of showing up. It may be a performance of an enigmatic transmission that forces the interlocutor into anxiety or discomfort; at the same time, a performance of casualness or recessive force that might produce an atmosphere of ease. I wouldn't presume that affective presence is freedom and affective lack is failure; nor the opposite, that affective reserve is authenticity and presence is normativity in the bad sense. Having said that, I have been blown away by how racialized the assessment of affective comportment is: whose "lack" designates power ("the man" is affectless) and whose reticence is deemed a resistant inscrutability or mental health problem. Thinking about the hot and cool intensities of affect, and how they magnetize political desire and threat, might well become central questions of feminist and queer work on the forms of social life, from the aesthetic statement to the glance across the room to the judicial opinion.

I know you want me to say that affect theory can become a revolutionary force, insofar as it can transform what shapes knowledge, and I do think that it can. But we have ourselves to begin questioning our norms of how health and happiness are identified and tracked, not presuming that affective minimalism or disintegration is a symptom of one thing (maybe going under the radar is a symptom of defeat, but maybe it's a path to freedom!). The questions are empirical: they require us to track patterns, lines of flight, and the convergence of freedom from and freedom for, of ambivalence and desire.

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Grievous Speech: Nathalie Stephens' *Touch to Affliction* and the City of Death

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Abstract

Like all resonantly elegiac texts, Nathalie Stephens's 2006 book *Touch to Affliction* does more than just locate or inscribe grief; it also challenges the historicized position of affect by dislocating the identity of the mourner, the City of Death through which the mourner roams, and the shifting identity of the mourner's "lost beloved." Stephens's mourner politicizes the act of walking through the city: first, as a "dissonant body" that refuses gender norms, and second, as a stubborn physical presence of public mourning: that which is wrought by the nation, and that to which the nation can never fully respond. Alluding to philosophy about mid-twentieth-century violence, the narrator asks two resonant questions: "Where is the poet who will return language to the body?" and, more problematically, "Where is the body that is prepared to receive language?"

Résumé

Comme tous les textes résolument élégiaques, le livre *Touch to Affliction* de Nathalie Stephens, publié en 2006, fait plus que simplement localiser ou inscrire le chagrin; il remet également en question la position historicisée de l'affect en disloquant l'identité de la personne en deuil, la Ville de la mort dont elle parcourt les rues, et l'identité fluctuante du « bien-aimé perdu ». La personne en deuil de Stephens politise l'acte de marcher dans la ville : en premier lieu, en tant que « corps dissonant » qui refuse les normes de genre, et en second lieu, en tant que présence physique obstinée du deuil public : celui qui est façonné par la nation et auquel la nation ne peut jamais répondre pleinement. Faisant allusion à la philosophie de la violence du milieu du 20e siècle, la narratrice pose deux questions retentissantes : « Où est le poète qui rendra le langage au corps? » et, question plus problématique : « Où est le corps qui est prêt à recevoir le langage? »

There is no document of civilization which is not at the same time a document of barbarism.

Walter Benjamin, "Theses on the Philosophy of History" (1968)

Not confessional. Evidence, rather, of the unspeakable. That thing toward which we move and we are an affront to the language we use to name it.

Nathalie Stephens, *Touch to Affliction* (2006)

To call Nathalie Stephens's 2006 resonantly resistant book of poetry *Touch to Affliction* a text of mourning may be to state the obvious, but like all elegiac texts, Stephens's book does more than just locate or inscribe grief. It also challenges the historicized position of affect by dislocating the identity of the mourner, the City of Death through which the mourner roams, and the shifting identity of the mourner's "lost beloved." Stephens comes to these challenges with a history of working with a poetics of resisting finitude, naming, and the reiterative ending, and exploring the more difficult movements of the in-between, as Stephens describes in a 2009 interview with Kate Eichhorn (65-67). In *Touch to Affliction*, the dissonant body of the narrator is more than a body that is alienated or thrown into an existential crisis by the walk through the ruined city, although these situations may also be true. Perhaps more importantly, it is a body whose dissonance allows the speaker to comment on a subjectivity that has been broken by the language that is supposed to serve it: the language of belonging, and not incidentally, the language of elegy: "I went into a new city with old words. // …I carried a small body in my teeth. // Claim nothing as your own. Not curvature. Nor comfort. // Nor sleep" (17). In assuming the mourning of others and offering advice for walking through the City of Death, the speaker counsels the refusal of consolation and all other forms of comfort, especially the consolation offered by historiographic materialism that favours tropes of the *pharmakon* or sacrificial bodies to justify theologically sanctioned violence or narratives of political or historical inevitability.

Stephens's interest in Walter Benjamin's (1968) concept of the *nunc stans*, the "abiding now" from his "Theses on the Philosophy of History," is at work throughout *Touch to Affliction*, as is Stephens's deep suspicion of the "utopian present" as an impossibility that is "terrifying" for the kinds of violence it allows, and in some ways, assumes (Eichhorn 65). Benjamin (1968) warns against this kind of an agreement on a utopian present, and in doing so, casts time itself as a tool manipulated by historical and political construct, "the puppet called historical materialism" that "enlists the services of theology" (253). *Touch to Affliction* is a book-length elegy that explores the paradox of elegiac tradition: in a strange and yet strangely familiar blasted cityscape, a speaker becomes a kind of *flâneur de la pensée de la mort*—or perhaps more elusively, a flâneur of the not-quite-forgotten—and the narrative offers elegiac fragments that bear a literary resemblance to mid-century texts like Simone Weil's (1952) *Gravity and Grace*, or Benjamin's *Arcades Project*, with all three texts working in the arena of the intensely-wrought philosophic aphorism. More than one writer has taken on the task of dismantling the masculinist and class-bound tradition of the flâneur, and while Stephens alludes to Benjamin's "Theses on the Philosophy of History" as a major influence in Kate Eichhorn's 2009 interview published in *Prismatic Publics*, Stephens's mourner is meant to politicize the act of walking through the city in at least two ways: first, as a "dissonant body" that refuses gender norms, and second, as a stubborn physical presence of public mourning which is wrought by the nation, and to which the nation can never fully respond. In some ways, it could be said that this was Benjamin's project as well, coming to fruition in the twenty-first century.

As the narrator-mourner moves through the City of Death, Stephens (2006) challenges historiographic materialism that reproduces "the insufficiency of grieving" (73). Alluding to philosophy about mid-twentieth-century violence, the narrator asks two resonant questions: "Where is the poet who will return language to the body?" and, more problematically, "Where is the body that is prepared to receive language?" (16). The city of *Touch to Affliction* is twofold; at once outside the body, a realistic enough historical city washed in a historical blur, this "Not Paris" (33), and a fabled city that springs from inside the speaker's "dissonant" body (28), as the title of one poem suggests: "My thigh grew a city" (17). The classical allusion to Dionysus, conceived in his human mother's womb but stitched into the thigh of Zeus and "grown" to godhood, suggests both

violence and resilience, and even gestures to a socially "dissonant body" that is both male and female. But in *Touch to Affliction*—whether or not the speaker positions themselves as transgender like Tiresias, the seer who was both a man and a woman—the dissonant body of the mourner is a body who, like Tiresias, dwells in the "abiding now," a position that is especially piquant when we consider Stephens's own practice of publishing as Nathalie Stephens and also as Nathanaël. The Tiresian potential of Stephens's text finds corollaries in other recent artistic explorations of Tiresias that underscore the dissonant body's location in a mourning practice, such as transgender artist Heather Cassils's recent performance art piece named for the seer, in which Cassils works with the vision of "the body as a social sculpture" (Heyman 2015) and wears "a neoclassical Greek male torso carved out of ice" and melts it with body heat over a four-to-five hour period (Cassils 2015). In *Touch to Affliction* (2006), the cost of returning language to the body is high; the mourner is perpetually "drowning in a mouth that doesn't close" (72), but at the same time, the narrator refuses the efficacy of memory, choosing instead to note the many ways in which language "sets [the] body against itself" (14).

Reframing the elegy to consider the transgendered and transnational terms of intimacy is no small task, poetically or politically, and necessarily involves a broad and deep investigation into how the language of grief intersects with or reframes concepts of the local and the global, especially the ways in which such categorizations have been mediated by history and violence. Parsing the geographies of inclusion and exclusion, Stephens notes that "the work of time and history" is that of "swallowing" different material histories to favour a single history: "the sort of violences that are subsumed both into history and into the silences of historical narrative" (Stephens, qtd. Eichhorn 2009, 65). Considering the city as the site of mourning in *Touch to Affliction*, Stephens asserts that "cities…become synonymous with the wars they receive" (qtd. Hix 2013). The speaker's dissonant body is dissonant within the city and within the text. At once a citizen and an outsider, the speaker has a mourning practice that refuses the movements of historical inevitability and consolation. The lost beloved takes the form of a "small body" that the narrator attempts to protect, hide, and save throughout the text: what Kaja Silverman (1996) has called in *The Threshold of the Visible World* a "disprized body" (26), a body whose social value as a citizen goes unrecognized by the state, and what Erín Moure (2012) would call "the unmemntioable" in her book of the same name: a body whose history exists within a shibboleth, at once urgent and unutterable.

The dissonant body in *Touch to Affliction* is not a disposable body, but it is a body that troubles the distance between presence and absence and exists in perpetual precariousness on the margins of an unsustainable world. Judith Butler's (2009) questions in *Frames of War* about grievable life being defined—and sometimes denied—by a responsiveness that is mediated by affective conditions for social critique find purchase in *Touch to Affliction*, not the least because Stephens locates the mourner in "Not Paris." What Stephens has written is not specifically a Holocaust text, though the echoes of that historical violence are unmistakable throughout *Touch to Affliction*, from their allusions to philosophers and literary figures who have written extensively about ethics and mid-twentieth-century violence (Simone Weil, Simone de Beauvoir, Yehuda Amichai, Emmanuel Lévinas) to invocation of the lost and their erasure from history. Stephens, like Erín Moure, is Canadian, and both poets have explored necropolitics via the mid-twentieth century European conflict for the philosophical and affective turn that history of violence continues to echo through succeeding generations of the people who were displaced by and sometimes murdered in the conflict. Moure (2012) works with the shibboleth as a tool of historical erasure in *The Unmemntioable*, while Stephens offers her peripatetic mourner—the *flâneur* in the City of Death—as a challenge not only to elegiac consolation but also the assumption that grief is always and only "personal." Reading *Touch to Affliction* through Sara Ahmed's (2004) "affective economy" means reconsidering the city as a structure of feeling and acknowledging that, while emotions may be personal, they are not private nor are they isolated from material histories. Ahmed's observation that emotions "create the very affect of the surfaces or boundaries of bodies and worlds" (117) is integral to considering how *Touch to Affliction* challenges historiographic materialism and proposes a necropolitics (to use Achille Mbembe's [2003] term) that regards language as barbarism, with the only solution being the dislocation of grief from the "personal" while rooting it in the intimate. If Mbembe is correct

to note that the central tenets of necropolitics are the exercise of sovereignty as "control over mortality" and the definition of life as "the deployment and manifestation of power" (12), then reconsidering and articulating grief as something larger than the personal is a necessary resistance to such control.

Examining the politics of speaking with and not-naming the dead while excavating a history that seems to be both buried and omnipresent is a tricky balance to maintain, but *Touch to Affliction* is by no means alone in these aims, even within Canadian literature. A number of recent book-length elegies by Canadian writers engage with elegiac necropolitics that challenge the overlying and sometimes deeply manipulative narrative of received history. The elegy has long been a genre that thrives on the contradictory elements of its own conventions even as it displays an extreme willingness to adapt those conventions to shifts in power and problems of the expression of emotion. My own incursions into the study of elegy in Canada began with a consideration of gender with an emphasis on the possibilities of the paternal elegy to act as a feminist moment, debating the terms of socio-cultural power by deconstructing the concept of inheritance. My 2012 book, *The Daughter's Way*, considers among other things the ways in which the elegy is invariably a political genre, even when—or especially when—it concerns a "personal" site of affect that we may be tempted to think exists beyond the political. The potential for a reparative and politically resonant politics of mourning in Canadian women's elegies has an elemental relationship with genre rebellion: the use of the genre's surprising flexibility to reveal the possibilities of reading beyond convention. Thinking about global necropolitics as it is written in Canadian poetry means, among other things, engaging with critiques of state authority as a way to inquire into grief on a geopolitical scale while interrogating Canada's historical positions, with special emphasis on the politics of citizenship. Stephens's *Touch to Affliction* is an early foray into these questions, and in addition to Erín Moure's *The Unmemntioable* (2012), Stephens's work has been followed by other poetic texts that take up similar elegiac interrogations of history, memory, and citizenship: Dionne Brand's *Ossuaries* (2010; see Quéma 2014; MacDonald 2013); Di Brandt's *Walking to Mojácar* (2010); Renée Sarojini Saklikar's *children of air india* (2013; see MacDonald 2015); and Rachel Zolf's *Janey's Arcadia* (2014) to name only a few. As Stephens has said in an interview with rob mclennan (2007), "The holding patterns (nation, text) reveal our own subscriptions to nationalistic (genealogical) litany; this is not a call for dissidence, but a manifestation perhaps of the insidious overlap of lives and the constructs that seek to contain them in distinction" (n.p.).

To work with elegiac writing, within and outside of poetry, is to note it everywhere in contemporary culture, and becoming acquainted with the demands of grief politics necessitates discovering that elegiac affect can encompass a range of emotion; grief can manifest in a text as sadness, anger, ambivalence, fear, unexplainable joy, wry humour, jealousy, chagrin, numbness, panic, and flat indifference. Elegiac affect in its articulated chaos can also present as—and sometimes can only be offered—as the inchoate moment: both fresh in perspective and frustrating in its paradoxical aims to gesture to an insoluble riddle. But all of these ways of "saying the unsayable" emphasize, W. David Shaw (1994) has noted, the quintessential elegiac paradox: the way grief manifests in the literary ritual of mourning that we call the elegy as a sense of urgent reluctance. As Stephens (2006) puts it, "It is not a matter of words for things. Rather it is a matter of the distance between the word and the thing" (31). In *Touch to Affliction*, the elegy becomes not only a literary ritual of mourning, but also a language, or a non-language: one that unites and divides groups of people not only because they share grief, but also because they refuse or reject its articulation as a mode of erasure.

Initially, what caught my attention in Stephens's *Touch to Affliction* was the presence of Simone Weil in the text; rethinking the elegy as a political genre brought me to reading Weil's (1952) philosophy—especially her decreative moment—as a search for a tangled riddle of self and not-self. While all roads do not lead to Weil, the frequency of her appearance in Canadian literature is pretty arresting, and the ways in which decreation and elegy meet are fascinating. *Touch to Affliction*—with its Weilian interest in affliction as devotion, its philosophy, and its address of twentieth-century violence through Walter Benjamin and Emmanuel Lévinas, among others—is less about Weil as a historical figure than it is a text influenced by Weil's context and inquiries, although Weil does appear in Stephens's City of Death as an enraptured (and raptured) teacher: "Weil's language was

a language of not meaning./ She left room for the thing that was breaking. / She slept with her head against a pile of stone" (Stephens 2006, 37). It is hard not to hear an echo of Weil in the narrator's statement that "Your language gives me order. It says nothing of *la doleur*" (38), a moral and linguistic conundrum that is the affective core of *Touch to Affliction* as the speaker works to find room for what is breaking.

In an interview with rob mclennan, Stephens (2007) notes that the text struggles not only with language as a system of order but also with time as a linear construct:

> I could measure time in deaths, disease; or else in encounter, friendship; gardens, architecture. The number of falls—historical and communal. Geography is one way of measuring distance, the many encroachments, and yes, a form of inscription, a way of approaching textuality, of moving through text. But it is not ever limited to the place where I am. Rather, it is cumulative, and the madnesses emerge with those accretions. (n.p.)

The city, then, with its cumulative encroachments and inscriptions, cannot be reduced to a geographical location, or even to a culture, but acts in Stephens's work as a site doomed—and sometimes nearly erased—by history but still accessible via mourning. With its aphoristic address that is more than a little reminiscent of Simone Weil's writing style, *Touch to Affliction*'s City of Death also appears in British philosopher Gillian Rose's (1996) discussion of necropolitics and power, *Mourning Becomes the Law*. Rose, herself a passionate reader of Weil, criticized postmodernism for its "despairing rationalism without reason" (7) and goes on to point out that mourning's power is absolutely not diffuse or melancholic. For Rose, the mourner's task is not only to transgress the ways in which civic law restricts mourning practices, but also to perform mourning as a "just act" that will actually become the law that reifies mourners as civic subjects (103). Rose is no utopian herself; she is also reaching for a model of mourning that resists despair and refuses the kind of conservative consolation that suggests affect must be controlled and dissolved for the good of the status quo. Rose roots the performance of mourning in a challenge to the city's laws of citizenship and belonging, arguing that mourning a body disprized to the point of death by an unjust regime is the ultimate political act that can reform the city:

> Mourning draws on transcendent but representable justice, which makes the suffering of immediate experience visible and speakable. When completed, mourning returns the soul to the city, renewed and invigorated for participation, ready to take on the difficulties and injustices of the existing city. The mourner returns to negotiate and challenge the changing inner and outer boundaries of the soul and of the city; she returns to their perennial anxiety. (36)

This "perennial anxiety" in *Touch to Affliction* seems located very much within Stephens's mourner, but it is also to be found in the city as well, beset by the dead and by its lack of narrative to account for their macabre omnipresence, as in the poem "Not Paris":

> In Paris, the Seine overflows and corpses wash onto
> its shores. The tourists board the bateaux-mouches. The sky
> fills with buzzards. And the Levites gnash their teeth.
> Le corps is not the same as corpse. And this is not Paris. But
> it's close enough. (Stephens 2006, 38)

Reading Stephens's work through Rose's (1996) view of mourning as a just act that will transform the city might seem antithetical given that Stephens does not claim the agora as a place of public speech as many philosophers do, but rather, through Benjamin, the public square as a site of blind consent and witness to execution:

> The public square is foremost the place of the gallows, perhaps the prototypical spectatorship, with its murderously inscribed desires. Consensus really is the violent abdication of thought. The tacit relinquishment of historical agency to an inviolable executioner—history itself, perhaps. (Stephens, qtd. Hix n.p.)

But Stephens (2013) also claims in the poem "Aller-retour" that grief can be an enclosed space, a garrison that surrounds the mourner: "What medium passes through me? Grief like a garrison and I am everywhere I have ever been." Rose, locating the space of mourning outside the walls of the city, shows no trust in the public square either, in full historical awareness that the agora did not favour the speech or the emotions of women,

foreigners, or those with different (perhaps "dissonant") bodies. If we are looking for a way to read Stephens's dissonant mourner as an accusative citizen, Rose's (1996) caution against "despairing rationalism" buoys up Stephens's mourner as a speaker who does not subscribe to a conservative ethics of consolation, but rather one of insistent implacability beyond the wildness of grief and well-placed in reason:

> What is relevant is not memory but its absence. Is not habit but its betrayal. Is not innovation but // humility. Is not love but anguish. Is not literature but history. Is not language but sediment. Is not amnesty.
> Is grievous.
> Is grievous.
> Is grievous. (Stephens 2006, 54)

And that which is grievous is placed prominently within the text that is this City of Death. In the multipage poem "We are Accountable for What We Aren't Told," Stephens (2006) calls up the various histories of Paris to note the kinds of narratives that dwell in the blurred violence against peoples whose citizenship is in question. They invoke French xenophobia by naming the Hungarian writer Ágota Kristóf and "her truncated country on a mouth in short sentences" as well as the Algerian writer Mohammed "Dib and his displaced ancestry, the culled strangers on unnamed streets" (64). Stephens alludes to George Steiner's 1960 essay "The Hollow Miracle" that condemns the German language as complicit in violence, noting "Steiner's century is closed to further inspection and our books are little else than capsules of complacency" (Stephens 2006, 55). They allude to Simone de Beauvoir's (1962) story, in *The Prime of Life*, of knowing that her young friend Juan Bourla, a former student of Sartre's and a Sephardic Jew, was arrested by Nazis in 1943 and taken to a concentration camp. Implying that even de Beauvoir's sympathetic narrative carries with it a sense of historical inevitability, Stephens's narrator suggests instead that the "abiding now" might be better viewed from Bourla's perspective rather than that of de Beauvoir:

> Juan Bourla is a voice recorded on paper. A room filled with smoke. History is a provocation…To // Lise he is a body in shadow. To Simone de Beauvoir he is what
> remains unseen.
> In Bourla's Paris, it is always 1943. The rail lines anticipate stone. (Stephens 2006, 60)

The provocation of history is the temptation to yield to memory as unmediated truth and to a sacrificial narrative as "set in stone." Eschewing what Rose (1996) calls the "evasive theology, insinuated epistemology and sacralised polity" that "import the features of the City of Death remorselessly" (293), Stephens's grievous speech points directly to Rose's "broken middle" of postmodernism. Under these terms, Stephens's text can definitely be viewed as part of a continuum of elegiac paradox that engages directly with necropolitics in Canadian literature (and significantly elsewhere), and it may also be thought of as a text in which grief scours history for the residue of affliction. The question of what exactly the narrator is afflicted with (or perhaps, what the narrator is afflicting) remains to be answered. Has the narrator been, like Benjamin's "Angel of History," effectively "blown backwards" into the future, so that Benjamin's *nunc stans* can warn us to be perpetually resistant to the toxicity of the utopian present? We could read Stephens's historically resonant but contextually elusive text as an antidote to civic and elegiac resolution. We could begin, then, with these lines as a guide: "We are walking backwards into our lives. Our cities are incensed. They fester on our thighs. And we lick at them in garish immoderate delight" (Stephens 2006, 9). Mourning has a civic function, and at least part of it, *pace* Rose (1996), is to suggest a mourning practice that resists a prescribed civic sacrifice and a proud nationalist frame on history.

Describing the perceived "utopia" of the present moment as "terrifying" (Eichhorn 2009, 65), Stephens offers the dissonant body as haunted, but definitely not doomed by the "despairing rationalism" of which Gillian Rose warns. Rose (1995) returns to a description of the "City of Death" in the opening pages of her last-composed book, *Love's Work*, and advises the risk of relation and failure—like the protection of that "small body" to which Stephens alludes throughout *Touch to Affliction*—as the mourner's true duty rather than a search for the effacement of pain. The epigraph to *Love's Work*, from the writings of nineteenth-century Eastern Orthodox mystic Staretz Silouan, is "Keep your mind in hell, and despair not" (n.p.), and this aphorism reminds us, as Rose notes, that "existence is robbed of its weight, its gravity when it is deprived of its agon" (Rose 1995, 106). Stephens's surreal image of the thigh growing a

city is an excellent example of Rose's caveat to retain our agon. With this metaphor, Stephens (2006) suggests the dissonant body is the physical foundation for the city, rather than the more popular opposite: the city as a receptacle for broken and unwanted bodies, the city as "fosse commune" (60). A world in which the dissonant body makes the city is very different from the world in which the normative body makes the city, and is then embraced as heroic and utopic. If it is painful to grow a city on one's thigh, it is matched by the pain of being "broken between morality and legality, autonomy and heteronomy, cognition and norm, activity and passivity" (Rose 1996, 285), and superseded by the task of speaking the impossible grief of a population devastated by war while refusing the efficacy of language and of memory itself.

Stephens challenges the narrative structure of grief in the context of the present as she locates time itself as the "broken vessel" of language (qtd. Eichhorn 2009, 67). The paradox of *Touch to Affliction* (2006) is that language makes grieving impossible: "the distance between the word and the thing" (31) seems potentially infinite, yet only language can point to the "unholdable" past, or as Stephens writes, only language can offer "a measure for what is lost…with our texts full of faces and our hands like water getting into everything" (51). Other elegists have noted, as Stephens (2006) does, that "Inside memory is a failure of memory" (18), but Stephens refuses not only consolation but also pushes against a historiographic narrative of grief. In return, Stephens offers "Finitude Lamentation," beginning with an undoing of the famous first line of Rilke's *Duino Elegies*:

> Who cries out anymore?
> This arms askew dwindling and furor.
> This inconsequential.
> This river torn weary and walking behind.
> This fantasy touching the curve of gentle.
> This finitude lamentation.
> This gridded this untraced stoppable.
> You bent a body into language. It ran arrested ran.
> (Stephens 2006, 39)

One reviewer of *Touch to Affliction* has noted astutely that, "Even the tiniest inversions of diction or unconventional, abstract syntax earn their place in this city. The city could be Paris, to which [Stephens] makes multiple references, but it could just as easily be 1945-Berlin, or 1917-Moscow, or any other city in time of strife" (Hurtado 2007, n.p.). When Stephens (2006) concludes that though "our languages are infinite and murderous…there is a word for incomplete and it begins inside" (75), we must think of the effort it takes to "bend a body into language," especially a dissonant body whose narrative challenges official histories and sometimes is violently sacrificed to them. Writing necropolitics inevitably engages with an elegy-beyond-elegy, a frame of reference that is excoriated by reductive conceptions of citizenship.

In some ways, power and the possibility of justice seem a long way away from the barren plain of Stephens's City of Death. However, it is just that discrepancy that animates the refusal of the narrator to either yield to despair or to abandon it. The tone of the text seems at first to have plenty in common with "aberrated" mourning in Rose's (1996) terms, the kind of mourning in which an unending despair is conflated with postmodern alienation. But read another way, the unnamed flâneur of Stephens's text is the dissatisfied subject, unwilling to accept the parameters of a language in which the conditions of attention are so closely aligned with the conditions of annihilation. Rose warns that to ignore or efface the brokenness of the middle is to inherit—without surcease—a despair disguised as rationality: "If the broken middle is abandoned instead of thought systematically, then the resulting evasive theology, insinuated epistemology, sacralised polity, will import the features of the City of Death remorselessly" (293).

Interviewed by H. L. Hix in March 2013, Stephens noted that "The city is an architecture; it is also an idea. Its vociferations make something of the structures, which is unscriptable. Maybe it is this which necessitates the intrusion of a foreignness in the body of the city itself" (n.p.). The pun on the speaker as a "foreign body" invading the City of Death to reinscribe elegiac convention as implacable in the face of despairing rationalism is perhaps the best way to consider the place of the affective economy in *Touch to Affliction* (2006), an economy in which "a body that can receive language" and in which "the hands that weigh grief are implacable" (47).

In this light, we can read the lamentation about finitude as being something other than a lamentation

that promotes finitude. Instead, it notes that Rilke's unheard cry undoes itself in perlocution: the question about "if I cried out, who among the angelic orders would hear me?" is not the cry, but if the question is heard, does it negate the need for the cry? Does the question blot out the cry? If, as Stephens (2006) writes, "our century…appeases itself with confession," then the elegist who addresses that world must be by constitution and argument "ungainly and stubborn" (63) in order to offer ways of undoing appeasement and to maintain a sense of affliction as a way of speaking, "getting nowhere with and without our languages. Our bodies breaking form" (23).

As Dionne Brand (2010) notes in *Ossuaries*, historical violence is not only a narrative and an action. It is also the very air we breathe in the twenty-first century, a legacy that is both metaphor and material reality:

> in our induced days and wingless days,
> my every waking was incarcerated,
> each square metre of air so toxic with violence
> the atmospheres were breathless there (10)

Brand's and Stephens's narrators could not be said to be equivalent or even to share political solidarity. However, the narrative voices of these two book-length elegies do share the courage to condemn those who cleanse history of its atrocities and an understanding of social and cultural incarceration in the twenty-first century as fashioned by all the centuries preceding. Both of these books demonstrate that the resistance of necropolitical elegies is not a resistance to grief, nor a resistance to history, but rather a resistance to the violent subversion of grief into a narrative of appropriated sacrifice that shores up a necropolitics of late capitalism that is used, more often than not, to strengthen the status quo of nation and homogenous culture. There are moments in *Touch to Affliction* when Benjamin's (1968) warning against the narrativization of time is paramount to identifying and protecting that "small body" as a receptor of language, or as a marker of what drowned in a hundred unnamed and unnameable cities in the mid-twentieth century violence about and against belonging, and still is drowning in the twenty-first century in the necropolitics of migration and citizenship. If we are suspicious of consolation, and take note of Benjamin's warning that "the past carries with it a temporal index by which it is referred to redemption" (254), then Stephens's (2006) concern about what it takes to "bend a body into language" is fundamental to the affective economy in which *Touch to Affliction* argues for the role of the dissonant body in necropolitics. "Le vide is not nothing," asserts the flaneur-mourner (45) who dwells in the void, and who struggles for the language to speak those "small bodies" into an unconsoled and vibrant mourning.

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La douleur des autres : Eisenstein, Mavrikakis et Agnant

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Abstract

This article analyses narratives set against the backdrop of collective trauma, such as Bernice Eisenstein's *I Was a Child of Holocaust Survivors* (2006), Catherine Mavrikakis' *Le Ciel de Bay City* (2008), and Marie-Célie Agnant's *Le livre d'Emma* (2004). Building upon the definition of pain as the "physical life of a story" (Ahmed 2004), it offers a reflection on the relationships between the pain experienced by others, the body and a traumatic history. Ultimately, it comes down to considering a feminist politics of pain.

Résumé

Le présent article analyse des récits qui ont pour toile de fond des traumatismes collectifs, soit *I Was a Child of Holocaust Survivors* (2006) de Bernice Eisenstein, *Le Ciel de Bay City* (2008) de Catherine Mavrikakis, et *Le Livre d'Emma* (2004) de Marie-Célie Agnant. S'étayant sur la définition de la douleur comme « vie corporelle d'une histoire » (Ahmed 2004), il propose une réflexion sur les rapports entre la douleur vécue par d'autres, le corps et une histoire traumatique. Ultimement, il s'agit de penser une politique féministe de la douleur à partir de la lecture de ces textes.

Le titre du présent article est une allusion directe à l'essai *Regarding the Pain of Others* (2003) de Susan Sontag, dont la traduction française s'intitule *Devant la douleur des autres*. La réflexion qu'y mène Sontag porte sur les images d'atrocités, en particulier celles où sont montrées des victimes civiles de la guerre, et concerne le rôle politique que peuvent jouer de telles représentations de la souffrance d'autrui, en l'occurrence d'inconnus. Dès les premières pages, Sontag (2003) affirme qu'« [a]ucun "nous" ne devrait valoir, dès lors que le sujet traité est le regard qu'on porte sur la douleur des autres » (15). Un constat qu'elle réitère en conclusion de l'essai lorsqu'elle remarque, au sujet d'une photographie de Jeff Wall montrant des soldats morts, dont aucun ne tourne son regard vers le public : « Nous—ce "nous" qui englobe quiconque n'a jamais vécu une telle expérience—ne comprenons pas » (134). L'expérience fait référence ici à la guerre, mais peut s'étendre à d'autres événements violents et traumatiques. Mon propos diffère cependant, et de façon significative, de celui de Sontag en ce que, d'une part, il porte sur des récits appartenant au registre de la fiction et de l'autobiographie et que, d'autre part, il veut penser comment, dans certaines circonstances, un « nous » peut advenir en dépit ou encore *avec* la douleur. Un « nous » certes ténu qui se constitue sur la base d'un réaménagement de l'espace mémoriel dans les trois textes dont il sera question, soit les romans *Le Livre d'Emma* (2004) de Marie-Célie Agnant et *Le Ciel de Bay City* (2008) de Catherine Mavrikakis et le récit (autobio)graphique *I Was a Child of Holocaust Survivors* (2006) de Bernice Eisenstein.[1]

À l'instar de Susan Sontag (2003), qui en fait son principal argument, je soutiens qu'il est impossible de ressentir la douleur d'un autre. Dire de l'affect de douleur qu'il ne peut se partager, qu'il est une chose essentiellement intime et subjective ne revient toutefois pas à nier son caractère éminemment social, voire politique. Comme l'affirme Sara Ahmed (2004) dans *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*, « l'expérience de la douleur est peut-être solitaire, mais elle n'est jamais privée[2] » (29). Sans pouvoir la ressentir comme si elle était la nôtre, nous pouvons vivre avec la souffrance des autres et habiter un espace traversé et façonné par elle. Sa nature affective et insaisissable rendant la douleur difficilement définissable, Ahmed invite à l'envisager non pas pour ce qu'elle est, mais en vertu de sa performativité, c'est-à-dire de ce qu'elle peut faire advenir. En portant mon attention sur des récits qui ont pour toile de fond des traumatismes collectifs, je propose une réflexion sur les rapports entre la douleur, le corps et une histoire traumatique qui s'étaye sur la définition de la douleur proposée par Ahmed dans *The Cultural Politic of Emotion :* « Pain is not simply an effect of a history of harm ; it is the *bodily life of that history* » (34, italique original).

La conceptualisation d'une douleur qu'on peut dire historique, par opposition à un mal qui serait d'origine organique ou sans cause externe, fait d'elle une mémoire qui peine à s'exprimer à travers le langage. Cette douleur appelle ainsi une réponse de la part de ceux et celles qui en sont les spectatrices, voire les légataires. Dans les œuvres analysées, la douleur des parents ou celle d'ancêtres plus éloignés a des effets douloureux sur leurs descendantes. J'analyse cette question de la souffrance des autres à la lumière de son rôle mémoriel et de la façon dont la douleur module l'espace dans les récits. J'accorderai une attention particulière au principe de déliaison familiale qui va de pair avec la douleur ainsi qu'aux différentes dynamiques d'espace qu'elle suscite dans les récits. Mais d'abord, je m'arrêterai sur la relation entre douleur, mémoire et trauma à la lumière d'une métaphore spatiale présente en filigrane des théories du trauma. Ultimement, se posera la question d'une politique féministe de la douleur susceptible de reconnaître les enjeux coloniaux qui traversent le féminisme québécois et canadien et de contribuer à repenser le rapport à un territoire dont l'aménagement actuel s'est fait au coût de la douleur « des autres », en l'occurrence celle des peuples autochtones.

1. L'espace du trauma

Il est commun dans les écrits sur le trauma de rappeler l'étymologie de ce mot, et je ne fais pas exception en procédant à un détour vers la racine grecque du terme τραυ˜μα signifiant « blessure » (http://www.cnrtl.fr/lexicographie/trauma), aujourd'hui majoritairement associé à une blessure d'ordre psychique. À l'origine, le substantif désigne une blessure corporelle, une plaie qui laisse ouverte la surface protectrice qu'est la peau. Sa transposition du champ médical, et même chirurgical, vers la psychologie et la psychiatrie déplace le trauma du corps vers l'esprit, de la surface vers l'intériorité du sujet, tout en gardant intact le sens d'une intrusion violente faisant rupture, non plus dans le derme, mais

dans la barrière de défense de la psyché. Chez Freud, le concept acquiert une profondeur supplémentaire. La cartographie qu'il dresse de l'appareil psychique situe le souvenir qui est à la source du trauma (ou le fantasme, fonctionnant néanmoins à la façon d'un souvenir) dans les profondeurs de l'inconscient, là où il ne deviendrait qu'indirectement accessible au sujet, voire partiellement inaccessible selon les reformulations plus récentes (dont celles de Caruth [1996], Felman et Laub [1991]).

Dans les écrits freudiens comme dans les théorisations contemporaines, le trauma vient à désigner non seulement une blessure, mais l'espace occupé par une mémoire paradoxale. Réminiscence et trauma sont inextricables, comme le rappelle la fameuse phrase de Freud « *c'est de réminiscences surtout que souffre l'hystérique* » (Freud et Breuer 1956, 5), et c'est d'ailleurs sur cette prémisse que se fonderont les nombreuses réappropriations féministes de l'hystérie, faisant de la femme hystérique le symbole d'une mémoire féminine refoulée et de l'attention portée à son discours corporel le début d'une réparation des injustices. C'est cependant une relation bien singulière qu'entretiennent la réminiscence et le trauma puisque le souvenir douloureux tient surtout d'une forme d'amnésie ou, plutôt, d'un vide langagier. Parce que le principe de déliaison y entre en jeu, le souvenir traumatique n'est pas lié aux autres événements afin de composer une trame mémorielle plus ou moins cohérente. Le traumatisme est alors concomitant d'un refoulement mémoriel et la douleur subséquente s'interprète comme le signe de l'enfouissement dans l'inconscient de la représentation de l'événement. En d'autres termes, le trauma s'apparente à une mémoire qui fait trou et ne s'exprime pour cette raison que de façon détournée, par le biais, par exemple, de la douleur et parfois d'affects connexes que sont la colère, la haine ou encore la honte.

Au-delà de sa dimension mémorielle à la fois évidente et complexe, m'intéressent surtout la force de déliaison psychique et sociale du trauma et la manière dont s'opère, à travers lui, une spatialisation du temps. Dans *Trauma : A Genealogy*, Ruth Leys (2000) se penche sur le couple conceptuel liaison/déliaison en insistant sur le caractère social et politique d'un tel processus psychique. Elle fait valoir que le principe de liaison ne se limite pas au contexte individuel où il a été d'abord théorisé ; il est aussi ce qui fait tenir ensemble le groupe et permet de faire advenir un « nous » en neutralisant la tendance individuelle à une dispersion désordonnée (29). Est-ce dire que le trauma est nécessairement source de déliaison sociale? Si l'équation n'est assurément pas aussi simple, il est cependant possible d'affirmer que les événements violents dont résulte un « trauma historique » (LaCapra 1996, 722 ; par opposition à un trauma structurel constitutif de tout sujet) ont pour effet manifeste, voire pour but la dissolution des liens sociaux et la suppression d'un « nous », celui de la communauté visée par les violences. En prenant appui sur la proposition de Leys, on peut penser que devant la douleur causée par un événement traumatique historique, le « nous » peine à tenir. Il se dénoue (dé/nous), se délite, du moins dans les contextes où ce « nous » voudrait faire tenir ensemble ceux qui ont fait l'expérience de l'événement traumatique et ceux qui vivent non pas avec le trauma mais avec la douleur des autres. Les récits d'Agnant, de Mavrikakis et de Eisenstein exemplifient la façon dont la douleur liée au trauma fait obstacle à la constitution d'un « nous », en l'occurrence d'un « nous » familial.

2. Déliaison familiale

Trauma et douleur sont effectivement un facteur de déliaison familiale dans les textes. *I Was a Child of Holocaust Survivors* de Bernice Eisenstein (2006) est un récit (autobio)graphique qui traite, sur le mode rétrospectif, de la difficulté pour l'enfant de survivants qu'elle était de vivre avec la perte de quelque chose qu'elle n'a jamais possédé : « I've lost something I've never had » (25). Cette chose désigne bien sûr « la perte inimaginable » (Eisenstein 2007, 97) qu'est la Shoah, celle qu'ont éprouvée ses parents, les quelques survivants de sa famille, ainsi que les amis de ses parents. Ces derniers, tous rescapés des camps, installés en Amérique du Nord, composent ensemble « Le Groupe » (157)—c'est ainsi qu'elle les nomme : « all were linked to the same past, sharing the same history, an unbroken chain of survivors…They adhered one to the other with the kind of bond that would be hard to duplicate—at times, it felt, even with their own children » (Eisenstein 2006, 158). Ils forment non seulement une chaîne, mais un cercle hermétique. La famille de la narratrice donne à voir une réplique de celui-ci, à plus petite échelle, dans le double couple formé de deux frères et de deux sœurs, le père et la mère ainsi que l'oncle et la tante. L'illustration qu'en fait Eisenstein (**ill. 1**), pastichant au passage

Illustra

La Danse de Matisse, les montre disposés en un cercle clos, en dépit ou en raison même du membre manquant de la tante. En effet, le bras absent de la tante Jenny n'empêche en rien le cercle de se refermer. Déjà symbole d'une forte cohésion par le redoublement des paires dont il est composé—deux sœurs et deux frères— ce cercle familial illustre le pouvoir de connexion qui résulte de la perte. Car c'est la douleur, ou plutôt l'objet de leur douleur, c'est-à-dire la perte qu'est Holocauste, qui lie les composantes de ce cercle et est garante de son herméticité. Dans ce contexte, l'objet de la dépossession de la narratrice s'entend au sens de la blessure de ses parents, ce vide laissé par la Shoah et qu'elle ne peut, en toute logique, posséder : « I had always felt that if I could find my parents' deepest hurt I could locate my own grief, for them. But how could I have ever imagined that everything the Holocaust had voided in their lives could be replaced, as if my need to understand could somehow make up for such sorrow » (178). Son addiction aux images et récits de l'Holocauste, qu'elle s'injecte comme le ferait une junkie, tente de créer une ouverture dans son corps, une meurtrissure par laquelle elle pourrait incorporer cette douleur et ainsi « coller » littéralement au groupe.

Illustration 1 (Eisenstein 2006, 130)

La narratrice du récit d'Eisenstein (2007) se dit « progéniture » (26) de l'Holocauste, celle du roman de Mavrikakis affirme être héritière « de la mort » (2008, 147). À la fois « enfant[…] d'Auschwitz » (168) et fille d'une Amérique qui se veut sans histoire, Amy est « hantée par une histoire qu['elle n'a] pas tout à fait vécue » (53). Celle-ci appartient en propre à sa mère et à sa tante, qui doivent leur survie à la dissimulation de leur identité juive dans une France occupée et collaborationniste. Elles immigrent après la guerre dans une petite ville du Michigan sur laquelle le passé ne semble pas laisser de traces : « Bay City est une ville si astiquée, si nette. L'Amérique se veut si rutilante en surface. Je ne connais pas une telle saleté et cela me rappelle instinctivement quelque chose de l'Europe, des poussières et des débris accumulés par l'histoire » (81). Les sœurs Duchesnay forment ensemble une sororité fondée sur le secret de leurs origines juives et de leur histoire familiale marquée par la déportation et la mort de leurs parents. Ce secret, qui les soude l'une à l'autre, agit entre Amy et sa mère à la façon d'un repoussoir. Leur douleur innommable s'exprime dans la haine de la mère à l'égard de sa fille ainsi que dans la honte, qui se signale notamment par l'obsession de la tante pour la propreté. De ce passé en*taché* par l'humiliante mort de leur parent, il leur faut faire disparaître les traces, mais le refoulé fait néanmoins retour dans le roman sous la forme étrangement inquiétante des fantômes familiaux de Elsa Rozenweig et Georges Rosenberg. Ces derniers apparaissent dans le sous-sol de la maison des sœurs Duchesnay. Amy espère que l'incendie de la maison familiale la libèrera de cette douloureuse hantise. Les flammes doivent en effet « mettre fin à [s]a souffrance et à celle de toute [s]a famille » (193). La libération n'a cependant pas lieu : non seulement Amy échappe-t-elle à la mort et sa douleur, logée à même son corps, survit-elle aussi, mais le « fardeau de l'histoire » (191) dont elle voulait se débarrasser revient en clôture du roman s'immiscer entre elle et sa fille Heaven.

Dans *Le Livre d'Emma*, l'événement traumatique qui est source de douleur et de déliaison familiale appartient à l'histoire esclavagiste d'une île que l'on suppose être Haïti et concerne plus précisément le viol des femmes réduites en esclavage. Le roman d'Agnant (2004) raconte l'histoire d'une lignée de femmes issue du viol collectif et de la mutilation de Kilima, « aïeule bantoue » d'Emma, « arrachée à sa mère Malayika »

(141) alors qu'elle était encore enfant, « puis vendue aux négriers » (146) qui l'ont déportée de sa Guinée natale à Saint-Domingue où elle a été achetée par un Comte. Contrairement aux deux autres textes étudiés, celui-ci n'est pas narré directement par la légataire officielle de cette mémoire. Ce rôle revient plutôt à Flore, qui a été mandatée pour traduire du créole au français les paroles d'Emma au docteur MacLeod. *Le Livre d'Emma* est en réalité celui qu'écrit Flore. Aux côtés de ses impressions, elle y transcrit les mots d'Emma. En cours de récit, la distance entre la patiente et son interprète est annulée et la présence de Flore tend à s'effacer au profit de celle d'Emma et de ses ancêtres, qui parlent à travers elle.

Dernière descendante vivante de Kilima, Emma est enfermée dans un institut psychiatrique montréalais dans l'attente du jugement médical qui la déclarera finalement inapte à subir son procès pour le meurtre de sa fille. Bien qu'elle maîtrise parfaitement le français, elle refuse de parler cette langue, celle des esclavagistes et du maître de plantation. Celle également de sa thèse portant sur la traite des Noirs, « piétinée » par son jury, selon ses termes (Agnant 2004, 15). En plus de vouloir contribuer à littéralement remembrer une histoire que les Blancs ont « tronquée, lobotomisée, excisée, mâchée, triturée puis recrachée en un jet informe » (24), les recherches d'Emma veulent « découvrir la source de l'horreur et de cette haine » (131) qui rend difficile l'établissement d'un lien filial entre les femmes de sa lignée depuis huit générations. La douleur reçue en héritage demeure indissociable du racisme auquel l'abolition de l'esclavage n'a pas mis fin. C'est dire, comme l'énonce Emma, que « ce passé n'a de passé que le nom…Il s'obstine à demeurer toujours là, nous guettant derrière l'écran obscur de l'oubli » (175). Cette persistance lui sert à justifier le filicide : « Cette malédiction venue des cales des négriers est telle que le ventre même qui nous a porté peut nous écraser. La chair de ta propre chair se transforme en bête à crocs et, de l'intérieur, déjà te mange. Pour cela Lola devait mourir » (179).

Si elle est susceptible de faire tenir ensemble des gens ayant vécu une perte similaire, la douleur des parents est ainsi un principe de déliaison familiale dans les récits (ce qui semble confirmer l'hypothèse de Sontag (2003) qu'aucun nous ne tient devant la douleur des autres). Il faut dire que dans le trauma, le temps semble aboli au profit de l'espace, et la temporalité nécessaire à la transmission généalogique s'en trouve mise à mal. Cathy Caruth (1996) parle d'ailleurs du trauma comme d'une atteinte à l'expérience du temps (4). Parce que la trace mnésique qui fait trauma, qui fait trou, n'a pu être élaborée, parce qu'elle est déliée du reste du contenu psychique, préservée en quelque sorte intacte, elle se place du côté d'un présent perpétuel et c'est sous cette forme présente plutôt qu'à la façon d'un souvenir du passé qu'elle fait retour. Ahmed (2004) abonde en ce sens lorsqu'elle parle de la douleur comme lieu de survivance du passé : « The past is living rather than dead; the past lives in the very wounds that remain open in the present » (33). Si ce passé est certes vivant dans la douleur liée à des blessures encore vives, il ne faudrait cependant pas penser qu'il est d'emblée intelligible.

3. Habiter le trauma : tropes spatiaux

Dans les trois récits, temps et espace se replient l'un sur l'autre comme si le trauma avait effectivement bloqué l'écoulement du temps à la façon dont le principe de liaison se bloque lors d'un événement traumatique. Se plaçant entre les narratrices-protagonistes et leurs proches, la douleur module un espace plus ou moins défini. Elle densifie le temps et, par un effet d'aplanissement, passé et présent en viennent à tenir dans un même lieu. Aussi n'est-il pas étonnant que les récits abordent la douleur, et la mémoire qui lui est rat-

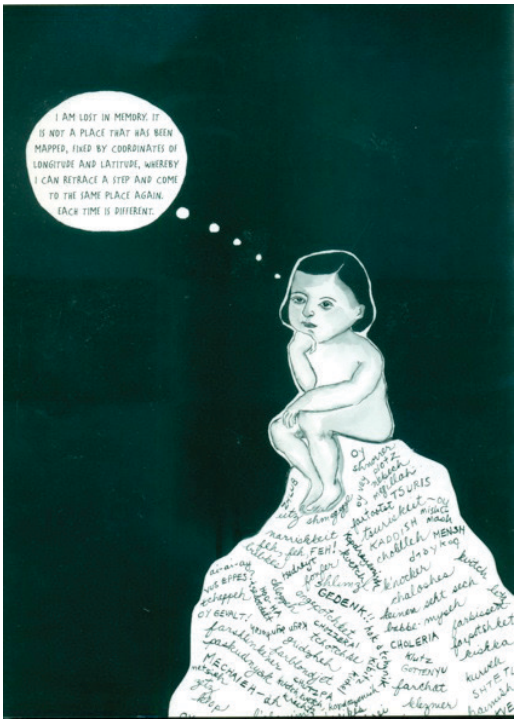

Illustration 2 (Eisenstein 2006, 10)

tachée, à partir de différents tropes spatiaux que sont, chez Eisenstein, l'espace insaisissable de la perte, chez Mavrikakis, le sous-sol qui s'inscrit dans une relation en miroir avec le ciel et, chez Agnant, le lieu à la fois d'enfermement et d'échange qu'est la chambre d'Emma.

L'illustration qui précède le premier chapitre du récit d'Eisenstein (2006) montre la jeune protagoniste assise dans la position du penseur de Rodin sur un monticule formé de mots yiddish **(ill. 2)**. Dans le phylactère, où l'on peut lire l'objet de sa méditation, il est écrit : « I am lost in memory. It is not a place that has been mapped, fixed by coordinates of longitude and latitude, whereby I can retrace a step and come to the same place again. Each time is different » (10). Si l'image tente d'organiser l'espace, notamment en séparant l'anglais du yiddish, le présent du passé, le texte dépeint une narratrice désorientée, incapable de cartographier un espace familial organisé autour d'une perte, d'un trou, de ce paradoxal trou de mémoire du trauma. À la façon d'une pythie en devenir, assise sur des mots appartenant à une langue en voie de disparition, son corps prend appui sur un passé dont elle reste cependant coupée ; le trait d'Eisenstein crée en effet une frontière hermétique entre la protagoniste et le monticule de mots sur lequel elle prend place. Le trou de mémoire ne relève pas tant d'une véritable amnésie que de la difficulté, pour le père en particulier, de visiter le lieu où est concentrée sa douleur : « I knew that the past was something not to be ventured into. I had learned from the handful of times I had asked. My father could only begin to answer with a few willing words and then stop. He would cry. Sitting in silence beside him, I did not want to make him go further » (36). Lieu où il vaut mieux ne pas s'aventurer, et qui lui demeure inaccessible, le passé est pourtant partout présent autour de la narratrice.

Le récit d'Eisenstein se caractérise par la fusion des temps, qu'il donne à voir dans un même espace narratif et parfois dans une même image. « Condamnée » (Eisenstein 2007, 26) à se remémorer ce qu'elle n'a pas vécue, comme en témoigne l'expression « gedenk! » (souviens-toi) maintes fois réitérée, la narratrice erre dans un espace où l'Holocauste constitue son seul repère, socle sur lequel elle prend appui **(ill. 2)**. Mais celui-ci fait trou et la jeune protagoniste cherche à tout connaître de l'expérience concentrationnaire afin de remplir ce vide :

> « While my father was alive, I searched to find his face among those documented photographs of survivors of Auschwitz—actually, photos from any camp would do. I thought that if I could see him staring out through barbed wire, I would then know how to remember him, know what he was made to become, and then possibly know what he might have been. All my life, I have looked for more in order to fill in the parts of my father that had gone missing. » (Eisenstein 2006, 16)

Dans *Le Ciel de Bay City*, la douleur psychique de la mère et de la tante se transpose dans le corps d'Amy par voie de ce qu'Anne-Lise Stern (2004) nomme une « transmission parentérale » (108), c'est-à-dire qui fait l'économie des mots et de la symbolisation et par laquelle la mémoire traumatique passe directement d'un corps à l'autre. Le passé est assimilé à une forme de saleté qui colle au derme et se transmet par le contact des peaux. Les crises d'asthme d'Amy reproduisent, dans une moindre mesure, l'asphyxie qui a (probablement) tué ses grands-parents et exprime ainsi une souffrance qui « n'a pas encore de nom » (Mavrikakis 2008, 9) avant que le roman ne parvienne à nommer celle-ci et à localiser sa source dans le sous-sol de la petite maison de tôle où ont trouvé refuge Elsa et Georges. L'emploi du mot anglais *basement* plutôt que de son équivalent français « sous-sol » pointe la double nature de cet endroit : il est à la fois un lieu enfoui dans les profondeurs du sol et l'appui sur lequel une structure se fonde et s'érige. Le *basement* est plus précisément le lieu du refoulé dans *Le Ciel de Bay City* et il est significatif que son adjonction à la résidence, d'abord simplement posée sur le sol, corresponde au moment où chacune des sœurs Duchesnay attend un enfant. Autrement dit, cette nouvelle famille s'érige sur le refoulement de la famille Rozenweig-Rosenberg.

Elle aussi semblable à une pythie assise au-dessus du gouffre qu'est ici le trauma, Amy apparaît comme le médium de cette mémoire refoulée. Lui revient la tâche de faire remonter à la surface la mémoire traumatique que représentent ses grands-parents morts à Auschwitz. Tâche dont elle s'acquitte avant de toutefois réduire ce passé en cendres. Flottant dans le ciel de Bay City qui n'est, en somme, que le prolongement du *basement*, le passé est dès lors volatile, impossible à localiser, et d'autant plus délié. Certes libérée de ce *topos* de l'inconscient qu'est le sous-sol, la mémoire traumatique n'est pas

symbolisée. AAussi elle sature le temps et l'espace du récit et continue à vivre dans le corps d'Amy. Si le découpage du roman en six parties identifiées par des dates successives peut laisser croire à une organisation temporelle linéaire, la narration brise rapidement cette impression. Alors que les temps passés servent à raconter la vie de la narratrice après l'incendie, le passé traumatique est narré au présent de l'indicatif. Placé symboliquement à l'avant-plan, il occupe également une place de premier ordre dans la topographie du roman : chaque partie débute par le récit des événements qui vont de la découverte des grands-parents à la sortie d'Amy de l'hôpital psychiatrique où elle séjourne durant plusieurs mois après l'incendie.

Dans le quasi huis clos qu'est *Le Livre d'Emma*, la douleur engendre également une condensation temporelle, et ce temps traumatique est retenu à l'intérieur de la chambre de l'hôpital psychiatrique où est enfermée Emma depuis la mort de sa fille. Son mal se voit ainsi balisé par l'étiquette de folie qui le relègue dans le domaine de l'intime et du privé. L'enjeu n'est pas tant, dans le roman d'Agnant, d'arpenter à la façon de la narratrice du récit d'Eisenstein (2007) un espace mémoriel aussi évanescent que des « eaux mouvantes » (97) afin de retrouver ce qui a été perdu, ni, comme le fait Amy dans *Le Ciel de Bay City*, d'expurger le sous-sol de tous les cadavres qu'on y a enfouis. La douleur concerne ici aussi un déplacement spatial, mais il s'agit de faire transiter une histoire esclavagiste à la fois familiale et nationale du domaine des « légendes » (Agnant 2004, 171), et donc de la pure fabulation où on la range, vers le champ de l'historiographie. Car si refoulement il y a dans le roman d'Agnant, celui-ci se joue dans l'espace social et historique. C'est l'autre livre d'Emma qui fait l'objet du refoulement, celui non advenu qu'est sa thèse de doctorat. L'histoire qui vit dans la douleur transmise de mère en fille a déjà fait l'objet d'un processus de liaison psychique de la part d'Emma, aidée en cela par une parente éloignée auprès de qui elle « retrouve […] les fils que Fifie [sa mère] refusait de [lui] tendre pour continuer [s]on chemin » (120). À partir de ces fils recouvrés, Emma fait le récit des femmes de sa lignée, tentant ainsi de réparer le lien brisé par le trauma de l'esclavage.

Parce qu'il dépasse le contexte familial et s'inscrit de plain-pied dans l'histoire coloniale, le récit d'Emma exige son inscription dans le discours social et historique et commande son passage de l'oral à l'écrit. Sa thèse, rejetée deux fois sous prétexte d'un manque de cohérence, cherchait à faire reconnaître le prix de chair, de sang et de lait payé par les hommes et les femmes noires pour l'édification de l'Europe et, par extension, du monde occidental. Le filicide commis après le deuxième refus de sa thèse peut s'interpréter comme l'admission d'un échec dans le processus de liaison visant à relier les souffrances contemporaines des habitants « d'une colonie de morts vivants » (Agnant 2004, 29) au passé esclavagiste de cette île. Sans cette reconnaissance, l'enfant lui semblait condamnée à répéter le destin de ses ancêtres, c'est pourquoi la mère traumatisée a choisi de tuer sa fille. Dans son geste, se mêlent la folie et la compassion.

Le meurtre de Lola est aussi une nouvelle occasion de réclamer justice en déplaçant le lieu d'énonciation de son récit de l'espace de la folie à celui du juridique. Le recadrage n'advient pas, parce qu'Emma se suicide et parce que sa comparution en cour n'aurait pas eu lieu, ayant ayant été jugée inapte à subir son procès par le Docteur MacLeod. La réponse de celui-ci face au mal de sa patiente tient de ce que Sarah Ahmed nomme une fétichisation de la douleur. Plutôt que d'envisager la dimension contingente de celle-ci et de l'aborder comme étant la conséquence d'une histoire qui s'est produite dans le temps et dans l'espace, le corps médical réduit ce qu'il nomme « l'étrange maladie d'Emma » (Agnant 2004, 39) à un fait héréditaire lié précisément à son altérité, à son « étrangeté », c'est-à-dire à son appartenance culturelle, voire à la couleur de sa peau, même s'il ne le fait jamais de façon explicite. C'est ce que suggèrent les propos de Flore anticipant les questions de l'équipe médicale : « Je les entends déjà : "Comment percevez-vous tous ses discours?" me questionneront-ils. "Et cette façon qu'elle a de s'exprimer, cette violence dans ses propos, peut-on attribuer cela à sa culture? Serait-ce de l'atavisme?" » (39).

Le savoir médical sert de rempart au médecin qui s'y réfugie afin de se soustraire à l'impression que pourrait laisser sur lui la douleur d'Emma. Une impression susceptible de faire sortir cette douleur de l'espace de la folie où elle est confinée et de provoquer ce que Ahmed (2004) nomme une « forme de délogement [un-housing] » (36) par laquelle il serait obligé de remonter la généalogie du mal de sa patiente et de revoir les fondements mêmes de son savoir, comme le laissent

entendre les paroles qu'Emma adresse à Flore :

> Le savais-tu que tout est venu dans les bateaux? Quelle question […], qui te l'aurait enseigné ? C'est sûrement pas écrit dans les livres rédigés à l'envers par les petits Blancs. Avec leurs grands mots, ils prétendent aujourd'hui étudier les manifestations de la folie chez les Négresses. Cependant ils refusent de savoir ce qui se passait sur les négriers et dans les plantations. (Agnant 2004, 31)

Dans le cahier d'écriture de Flore, initié sur la base de l'impression que laisse sur elle la folie d'Emma et de la fusion des deux femmes qui s'ensuit, on peut bien sûr voir le signe d'un principe de liaison en train de se faire. Mais le récit de la vie d'Emma écrit de la main de Flore demeure de l'ordre du privé et signale en ce sens un certain échec.

4. L'espace du nous

J'aimerais maintenant revenir vers la question d'un « nous » évoquée plus tôt afin de lier celle-ci à l'idée d'un délogement, c'est-à-dire d'une sortie d'un lieu où l'on est installé, voire d'une expulsion hors de ce lieu. Il me faudrait en réalité parler de la catégorie plus vaste à laquelle appartient ce mouvement et que Ahmed (2004) désigne comme « une façon différente d'habiter l'espace » (39). Selon Ahmed, l'un des effets performatifs de la douleur des autres, lorsqu'elle est correctement reçue, est d'amener ses destinataires à reconsidérer leur façon d'habiter un espace donné. L'analyse d'Ahmed prend pour objet un document portant sur la « génération volée » australienne, ces enfants aborigènes arrachés à leur famille et placés dans des pensionnats. L'habitation de l'espace renvoie dans ce cas précis au territoire national, mais l'analyse d'Ahmed pointe la dimension métaphorique de ce territoire lorsqu'elle avance que le délogement (un-housing) tient surtout à un changement affectif qui permet d'envisager la persistance d'un lien en dépit d'une séparation : « The pain … moves the story on, as a sign of the persistence of a connection, a thread between others, in the face of separation » (39). En des termes plus généraux, on peut penser que si la douleur des parents est un principe de déliaison dans les récits, l'appel qu'elle porte invite ses héritières à réaménager l'espace de façon à faire advenir un « nous ». Sans qu'ils n'engendrent nécessairement un délogement, ces réaménagements impliquent de la part des trois narratrices de reconsidérer leur rapport à l'espace mémoriel. Surtout que leurs premières réponses à la douleur dont elles héritent aboutissent dans chacun des cas à une forme d'échec.

Les récits mettent de l'avant une sorte d'insuccès des entreprises de leurs protagonistes, mais ils donnent à voir dans ces échecs des dynamiques d'espace par lesquelles apparaît un « nous » familial que la déliaison avait endommagé. Cela s'exprime avec force dans le tout dernier passage du *Ciel de Bay City*, alors que la narratrice accepte d'accueillir l'histoire de douleur qu'elle disait ne pas être tout à fait sienne, et qu'elle s'efforçait de mettre à distance depuis plusieurs années. Dans la chambre de sa fille Heaven aménagée dans le sous-sol de sa maison, elle découvre tous les morts de sa famille réunis autour du lit. Plutôt que d'*embraser* la douleur comme elle l'a fait auparavant, elle l'embrasse :

> J'enjambe les corps sans les réveiller. Je me couche à même le sol parmi les chiennes et les humains. J'enlace le petit corps d'Angie et me blottis contre ma mère. Tout est doux. Je ne mettrai pas de temps à m'endormir. La chaleur des miens me berce. Nous cessons ici d'errer, inhumés dans la terre rouge d'un sous-sol du Nouveau-Mexique. (Mavrikakis 2008, 292)

En enlaçant les spectres, elle se lie à eux, accepte d'intégrer leur histoire de douleur à la sienne et d'être en quelque sorte délogée de sa propre maison par leur présence.

Chez Eisenstein se met en place une dynamique un peu différente. Il s'agit de poser des balises au territoire imprécis de la mémoire et d'accepter que certaines zones demeurent inaccessibles. Tout le récit tient d'un processus de balisage à travers lequel la narratrice déplie le temps. Ce réaménagement du temps traumatique advient à travers l'encadrement du récit autobiographique et le passage de l'injonction « souviens-toi » du mode intransitif au transitif. Deux scènes de transmission encadrent en effet le récit. Postérieure dans le temps à celle qui se place en conclusion, la première s'intitule « The Ring » et raconte le moment où la mère lègue à sa fille le jonc de mariage du père, plusieurs années après la mort de celui-ci. L'anneau, qu'elle porte désormais à son doigt, « entoure cet espace vide [c'est-à-dire celui de la perte qu'elle a longtemps voulu transformer en un souvenir plein], il

supplée à l'absence par le souvenir » (Eisenstein, 2007, 16).

La seconde s'intitule « A Naming ». Ce nom est celui que le père, alors mourant, transmet à son petit-fils pas encore né : « After a moment, he lifted his hand and placed it gently on my stomach and said, "You are carrying my name" » (Eisenstein 2006, 186). Là où l'anneau relie père et fille en se mettant à la place du vide ainsi qu'en préservant quelque chose de ce hiatus qui ne pourra jamais être comblé entre eux, la passation du nom selon la tradition juive resitue la narratrice dans le présent d'une lignée et fait d'elle le point de jonction entre passé et futur. Le temps s'en trouve déplié. Au-delà de cette dimension affiliative qui réinstaure un temps généalogique, l'anneau et le nom ont pour effet de rendre l'acte de mémoire transitif ; ils servent de médiateurs à la remémoration. Il s'agit dès lors de se souvenir non pas de la perte, mais de ceux qui ont perdu quelque chose : « I felt the bittersweet pull of *gedenk*, remember, and came to understand in a new way the breadth of its reach. It was as if the word had been silently spoken by a generation soon to be gone – *Remember us* » (174). Reconsidérer l'appel à se remémorer fait équivalence chez Eisenstein à un resserrement de l'acte de mémoire autour des survivants. Des limites sont ainsi posées au territoire mémoriel de façon à dégager l'espace de son exploration des lieux où il lui est impossible de s'aventurer : « I will never be able to know the truth of what my parents had experienced. It is beyond my reach, and perhaps even theirs, to know to full extent of their loss » (178).

Dans le roman de Marie-Célie Agnant (2004), un réaménagement de l'espace s'opère à travers le livre d'Emma, ce « gros cahier » (37) dans lequel Flore traduit et consigne « non pas des mots, mais des vies, des histoires » (17) et détaille à côté de celles-ci les émotions qui l'agitent : « J'écris, pour dire tout ce qui brûle dans mon corps et dans mon sang, et que je ne parviens pas à t'exprimer lors des séances avec le docteur MacLeod » (38). Au regard de la question posée initialement, à savoir la possibilité de faire tenir un « nous » devant la douleur des autres, c'est un autre type de réaménagement spatial qui surgit ici. Celui-ci concerne l'espace corporel. Le corps est en effet un enjeu central dans cette histoire où les femmes, encore plus que les hommes, sont dépossédées de leur corps, dans l'esclavage bien sûr, mais aussi en raison de l'intériorisation du regard raciste du colonisateur, dont traite Frantz Fanon (1952) dans *Peau noire, masques blancs*, et qui fait naître chez elles des « sentiments à l'égard de [leur] corps, de [leur] peau [qui] ont tracé [leur] destin » (122). Emma échoue peut-être à faire comprendre aux Blancs, représentés dans le roman par le médecin, les infirmières et la travailleuse sociale, que la supposée folie des femmes noires est en fait l'expression d'une blessure encore vive qui trouve sa source dans l'histoire coloniale, mais elle réussit à transmettre le message à Flore, message qui laisse sur elle une empreinte durable.

Alors que par la parole Emma vide son corps « de ces images surgies du fond d'une mémoire ancienne, paroles extraites d'archives enfouies dans ses entrailles » (Agnant 2004, 132), Flore reçoit ses mots à même son corps, devenant du même coup dépositaire de l'histoire des femmes de Grand-Lagon et fille symbolique d'Emma. Le contact fusionnel entre les deux femmes amène la jeune interprète à habiter différemment son corps de femme noire et à se réapproprier sa sexualité. Cette nouvelle cartographie du corps passe d'abord par une forme d'expulsion de soi dont témoigne la multiplication des négations :

> Je ne suis plus celle dont le savoir et la sensibilité constituent les clefs permettant de trouver la solution à un problème, mais bien celle qui ne sait pas, qui ne sait plus quelle est sa position dans le monde. […] Les mots proviennent, non pas de mon cerveau pour aboutir à mes lèvres, mais de mon ventre. Je ne suis plus une simple interprète. Petit à petit, j'abandonne mon rôle, je deviens une partie d'Emma, j'épouse le destin d'Emma (19).

Flore est certes délogée de son corps et de ses certitudes, mais cette expulsion lui permet de se détacher d'une forme de racisme intériorisé qui apprend aux femmes noires « que l'amour, comme tout ce qui est bon sur cette terre, n'est pas fait pour nous » (184). Il ne s'agit pas, dans *Le Livre d'Emma*, de faire sienne l'histoire d'Emma mais de se laisser transformer par elle afin de ne pas répéter son destin.

5. Conclusion : une politique de la douleur?

Au terme de cette lecture des récits de Bernice Eisenstein, de Catherine Mavrikakis et de Marie-Célie Agnant, il convient de se demander quelle politique de la douleur émerge de ces textes. De quelle façon cette

politique peut nourrir le féminisme contemporain, en particulier celui du Canada et du Québec où les enjeux relatifs à la douleur, à un héritage traumatique et à l'habitation d'un espace saturé par la douleur se nouent avec force autour de la question autochtone ? S'attacher plus longuement à la réponse à la douleur des autres apportée par *I Was a Child of Holocaust Survivor*, *Le Ciel de Bay City*, et *Le Livre d'Emma* permet de suggérer des pistes générales. Celles-ci sont susceptibles de trouver écho dans d'autres contextes et peuvent peut-être nous aider à penser un féminisme capable d'un mouvement de délogement tel que le propose Ahmed. Pour ce faire, il apparaît nécessaire d'évoquer à nouveau les propos de Sontag mentionnés en introduction et de les mettre en dialogue avec la question du trauma, en particulier avec l'idée de répétition à l'œuvre dans le trauma et présente dans chacun des textes. Devant la douleur des autres qui devient aussi un peu la leur, les narratrices tendent en effet à répéter le trauma sous une forme quelque peu différente, qu'on pense à l'incendie qui se donne comme une sorte d'Holocauste (au sens premier du terme) dans *Le Ciel de Bay City* et à la façon dont Amy « rejoue lamentablement l'holocauste » (Mavrikakis 2008, 252) à même son corps décharné, ou encore à l'obsession de la jeune protagoniste du récit d'Eisenstein pour les représentations de la Shoah dans lesquelles elle cherche à vivre par procuration l'expérience de ses parents. Moins évident dans *Le Livre d'Emma*, le principe de répétition peut néanmoins se lire dans le filicide que commet Emma ainsi que dans l'hésitation de Flore à céder à son désir. Comme le remarque Sontag, devant la douleur des autres, le « nous » ne va pas de soi, surtout lorsque la douleur relève d'un trauma qui fait effraction aussi bien dans l'espace psychique d'un sujet que dans le tissu social.

Devant la douleur d'autrui, un « nous », ici familial, ne peut advenir qu'à la condition d'accepter qu'il y ait persistance de zones d'ombres à l'intérieur de l'espace saturé par les effets du trauma. C'est ce qu'indiquent les trois récits. Bien qu'il soit effectivement impossible de *comprendre* l'expérience de la perte vécue par autrui, c'est-à-dire de saisir la perte suivant l'étymologie de ce verbe, rien ne nous empêche cependant de porter un regard de reconnaissance sur la douleur qu'elle provoque. Que faire, alors, de cette douleur qui n'est pas nôtre, nous demeure en partie inintelligible, mais nous affecte néanmoins? Une douleur qui exige qu'on la regarde même si elle ne semble pas nous regarder directement ou nous donne l'impression de regarder ailleurs—pensons ici à l'image des deux sœurs et deux frères que fait Bernice Eisenstein, quatre figures mouvantes qui se regardent, ne nous regardent pas en tant que lecteurs et lectrices, mais que nous sommes appelées à regarder **(ill. 1)**. Comment lire la douleur des autres et comment faire en sorte qu'elle compte, c'est-à-dire qu'elle échappe à l'inertie d'une fétichisation et devienne performative?

Les interrogations que soulèvent *I Was a Child of Holocaust Survivors*, *Le Ciel de Bay City*, et *Le Livre d'Emma* sont d'une grande importance pour le féminisme contemporain, qui plus est pour le féminisme au Québec et au Canada où, pour plusieurs, à certaines douleurs concomitantes d'une position socio-symbolique de femme s'ajoute la douleur historique de la colonisation. Si, à l'exception du *Ciel de Bay City*, les récits n'abordent pas directement la question des souffrances historiques et encore agissantes des peuples autochtones, la façon dont ils lient la douleur des autres à un principe de délogement pointe vers une politique de la douleur susceptible de nourrir une réflexion sur les réponses éthiques à apporter à la douleur des autres.[3] Envisager la douleur historique et, en l'occurrence, liée à des événements traumatiques tels que l'Holocauste, l'esclavage et les violences de la colonisation, en tant que mémoire d'un préjudice exige en effet de penser, en retour, une réponse appropriée à cette douleur qui ne soit ni répétition ni fétichisation de celle-ci. De l'avis de Ahmed, une telle réponse ne peut qu'aller de pair avec une forme de délogement ou, plus généralement, de mouvement. Vivre avec une douleur qui ne nous appartient pas, être affecté par elle, devrait nous amener à reconsidérer l'espace—physique, psychique, géographique —que nous habitons, à la façon dont les protagonistes des récits analysés réaménagent les différents territoires à la lumière du savoir qu'elles trouvent dans la douleur.

Douleur, trauma, savoir et subjectivité forment en effet une toile complexe devant laquelle il faut apprendre à résister aux envies de simplification. Bien que soit juste la mise en garde de Lauren Berlant (1999) quant au danger d'identifier la douleur à l'expression d'une vérité du sujet, et d'évacuer ainsi les dimensions systémique de cette souffrance,[4] il n'est reste pas moins nécessaire de reconnaître le savoir latent à la douleur historique. Autrement dit, la douleur ne peut peut-

être pas prétendre au statut de vérité immédiatement intelligible, comme le montre l'analyse de Berlant dans « The Subject of True Feeling : Pain, Privacy, and Politics ». Elle est néanmoins l'indication d'un savoir, comme le fait valoir quant à elle Dian Million (2009) dans son analyse des écrits de femmes autochtones du Canada anglais : « the emotional knowledge of our experience is an alternative truth[5] » (64). De l'avis de Million, cette vérité alternative, qui puise à même les affects, a le pouvoir, lorsqu'elle n'est pas censurée ou sommée au silence, de décloisonner les espaces et les temps, de faire advenir une nouvelle cartographie fondée sur la reconnaissance de la douleur : « This ethical contestation resonated within Native communities, informing them emotionally and physically, discursively and politically; where "what" happened and its emotional resonance cannot now be cloistered within a past that stays neatly segregated from the present » (71).

Les récits d'Eisenstein, de Mavrikakis, et d'Agnant tracent de singulières cartes de l'affect de douleur, balisant de la sorte des territoires mémoriels afin de rendre signifiante une souffrance qui n'appartient pas en propre aux protagonistes. En ce sens irréductibles, ces sortes de cartes d'une souffrance historique ne peuvent donc pas se superposer à d'autres territoires/histoires, mais leurs processus de fabrication révélés par les récits peuvent servir de guide dans la réalisation de nouvelles cartographies de la douleur des autres. Or que peut le féminisme devant la douleur des autres engendrée par des événements historiques ? Si cette douleur met effectivement à mal le « nous », comme le suggère Susan Sontag, qu'elle est une force de déliaison et tend à le déliter—puisque c'est bien de cela dont il est question dans les événements historiques violents : de la tentative de détruire les liens sociaux—, elle n'abolit pas pour autant sa possibilité.

L'avènement de ce possible « nous », ténu et fragile, est tributaire d'une reconsidération de l'espace que nous habitons. Les différents féminismes au Québec et au Canada ne peuvent envisager un « nous » incluant les femmes autochtones que si nous admettons et reconnaissons la persistance d'une douleur historique fondatrice de l'espace sociopolitique actuel et revoyons la topographie de nos actions à la lumière de cette douleur, qui exige d'être traduite dans le langage et dans l'espace. Aussi les récits de douleurs ayant leur source en Europe et dans les Caraïbes (mais dont la source première est aussi l'Europe), récits de douleurs héritées, déplacées et rendues intelligibles sur le territoire nord-américain, nous appellent-ils à reconsidérer la persistance de douleurs infligées ici. Il s'agit d'historiciser la douleur et, sur cette base, de redéfinir l'espace du « nous », non pas en incluant les « autres » dans un « nous » déjà existant, mais en se laissant transformer par cette douleur qui ne nous appartient pas et qui nous restera toujours en partie inintelligible, c'est-à-dire en reconfigurant de façon radicale ce nous à la faveur du savoir dont l'affect de douleur est le véhicule.

Notes

[1] Je remercie chaleureusement Bernice Eisenstein de m'avoir autorisée à reproduire ici certaines illustrations de son ouvrage *I Was a Child of Holocaust Survivor*.

[2] À l'exception des citations en français tirées de la traduction de l'ouvrage de Bernice Eisenstein parue chez Albin Michel, toutes les traductions sont les miennes.

[3] Dans *Le Ciel de Bay City*, le génocide des Juifs d'Europe entre en résonance avec celui des peuples Autochtones. L'Amérique, qui se veut sans histoire et sans tache, se révèle construite sur un charnier où s'entassent les corps des Autochtones décimés par la colonisation : « Et les âmes des Juifs morts se mêlent dans mon esprit à celles des Indiens d'Amériques exterminés ici et là, sur cette terre » (Mavrikakis 2008, 53).

[4] Surtout lorsque la reconnaissance de cette douleur et la demande de réparation s'insèrent dans un cadre juridique. À cet égard, Élise Couture-Grondin et Cheryl Suzack (2013) notent, dans leur réflexion sur une possible justice transitionnelle dans le cadre de la Commission de vérité et réconciliation du Canada : « Law functions as a neutralization of the social struggle over signification; its application through fixed institutions and mechanisms gives this appearance of fixity and imperviousness, which becomes a norm through the repetition of structural mechanisms in the difference instances of law in daily life practices » (103-104).

[5] En raison de la signification très négative que revêt depuis peu l'expression « faits alternatifs »—ces « alternative facts » servant à certains membres de l'administration Trump à justifier leurs mensonges—, il m'apparaît nécessaire de préciser que le syntagme « vérité alternative » ne désigne pas ici des faussetés présentées comme étant des vérités par des individus en posture de pouvoir. Au contraire, la notion de vérité alternative, qui va de pair avec les « savoirs situés » (Haraway 1988; Harding 1986) mis de l'avant par l'épistémologie féministe, plaide pour une prise en compte des expériences des groupes minorisés pour arriver à une connaissance plus objective du monde. Cette vérité est en ce sens une alternative à une vision partielle et partiale, qui se pose pourtant comme totale et universelle, et tend vers une plus grande justice.

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Soft Architecture: Walking as an Affective Practice in Lisa Robertson's "Seven Walks"

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Abstract

In Lisa Robertson's "Seven Walks" the speaker and guide do not simply amble through Vancouver's material space. Their walks are an affective practice that expresses the city in terms of the fluidity of becoming rather than the fluidity of commodity exchange and suggests that the productivity of sexually differentiated walking is distinct from traditional masculinist discourses of the peripatetic as contemplative or simply transgressive.

Résumé

Dans le livre *Seven Walks* de Lisa Robertson, la narratrice et la guide ne se contentent pas de déambuler dans l'espace physique de Vancouver. Leurs promenades sont un exercice affectif qui exprime la ville en termes de fluidité du devenir plutôt que de fluidité des échanges commerciaux et suggère que la productivité de la promenade sexuellement différenciée se distingue des discours masculinistes traditionnels du péripatéticien comme contemplatif ou simplement transgressif.

> The space of continuing experience is a pure or absolute space of differential heading: an indeterminate vector space infusing each step taken in Euclidean space with a potential for having been otherwise directed. The whole of vector space is compressed, in potential, in every step.
>
> —Brian Massumi, *Parables for the Virtual*

While there have been female peripatetic poets, performance artists and critics—Dorothy Wordsworth, Michèle Bernstein, Marina Ambramović, and Rebecca Solnit come to mind—their numbers are few, as women have historically been relegated to the private or domestic sphere, making the simple act of strolling in the street a dangerous and indecent activity. The division of private/public space along gender lines has a long history, including a notable discourse on the predominantly male freedom of walking in the context of both country and city (on gendered space see Massey 1994; McDowell 1999; Rose 1993; on walking and the flâneuse or female flâneur see D'Souza and McDonough 2006; Wilson 1992; Wolff 1985). Inarguably, as both an aesthetic and a revolutionary practice, the peripatetic has been traditionally dominated by men: from the nineteenth-century Parisian flâneur, to the early and mid-twentieth-century Surrealist and Situationist International walking experiments, to the more recent Italian Stalker movement and British psychogeography. As a result, as Deirdre Heddon and Cathy Turner (2012) explain, walking is generally conceived within a masculinist narrative as "individualistic, heroic, epic and transgressive" (224). An alternative to this dominant narrative emerges in Lisa Robertson's "Seven Walks" (2003) as the rambles of two ambiguously sexed figures wandering Vancouver shift the emphasis from solitude, transgression, and heroism to interconnectedness and the productivity of relations, thereby reimagining both the urban walker and a city in crisis.

"Seven Walks" is the last text in *Occasional Work and Seven Walks from the Office for Soft Architecture*

(2003), a series of essays commissioned for various art projects and exhibits. As Robertson (2011) remarks, the collection was a personal attempt to understand the global investment-driven change of Vancouver bookended by the provincial sale of the Expo '86 site and the winning of the 2010 Olympic bid (231-232). What Robertson identifies as the city abstracted as real estate under advanced capitalism is undercut in "Seven Walks" by the fluidity of its nomadic walkers. Drawing on Rosi Braidotti's work on affect, gender, and space, I argue that these walkers are engaged in a process of sexually differentiated becoming which not only emerges as a positive force but also has repercussions for imagining other futures for Vancouver, of potential change from the objectification and commodification of space in recurring cycles of gentrification. This process of becoming in "Seven Walks" is importantly both positive and ethical because it

> is no longer indexed upon a phallogocentric set of standards, based on Law and Lack, but is rather unhinged and therefore affective….It aims at achieving the freedom of understanding, through the awareness of our limits, of our bondage. This results in the freedom to affirm one's essence as joy, through encounters and minglings with other bodies, entities, beings and forces. Ethics means faithfulness to this *potentia*, or the desire to become. (Braidotti 2006, 134)

Rosi Braidotti's theorization of a sexually differentiated subject at the intersection of Gilles Deleuze's conception of becoming and Luce Irigaray's non-unified female subject frames this exploration of a new conception of the flâneur: no longer the unified and solitary modern subject defined by lack and melancholy, the different walkers in "Seven Walks" are instead a positive "intensive entity that is activated by eternal returns, constant becomings and flows of transformations in response to external promptings, that is to say sets of encounters with multiple others," namely the city (Braidotti 2002, 100). In leaving the enclosed architectural, private space of the *oikos*—where the female body is enclosed and domesticated (Robertson and McCaffery 2000, 37)—and striding outside into the streets, the embodied and embedded walkers in "Seven Walks" challenge the phallogocentric binary logic that constitutes the female subject in relation to the universalized masculine centre as a disempowered and denigrated Other, what Irigaray calls the "Other of the Same," an Other, like the Self, that is universal and immutable. These walkers suggest instead a subject as "other of the Other," one that enables *different* differences to emerge and multiply in a process of becoming, a Deleuzian idea that Braidotti refigures for a sexually differentiated subject.

In "Seven Walks," the walker is not one but two, speaker and guide, doubled in an intimate relation with each other as they wander Vancouver, which not only reminds the reader that, unlike men, women are not coded the same and therefore do not possess the same freedom to walk alone, but also expresses the non-unitarity of the female sexed subject. Rather than the solitary, unified subject typical of modern flânerie, the doubled walker of "Seven Walks" embodies "the non-coincidence of the subject" (Braidotti 2002, 99), "the self and not-self" as "one arises from and returns to the other" (Robertson 2011, 194; Massumi 2002, 35). As not-one, they are what Braidotti (2002) termed in reference to Irigaray as "the virtual feminine" (6). And as female(s) no longer opposed to the dominant male subject, "she, in fact, may no longer be a she, but the subject of quite another story: a subject-in-process, a mutant, the other of the Other, a post-Woman embodied subject cast in a female morphology who has already undergone an essential metamorphosis" (Braidotti 2002, 12). While Braidotti's work grounds this essay, Robertson's own readings of the theories of Manuel De Landa, Rem Koolhaas, and Elizabeth Grosz on intensive space, difference, and change also critically inform my interpretation of "Seven Walks" as an exploration of the codependence of walkers and city in the process of becoming.

Potestas and *Potentia*: Walks Two to Six

Largely narrated in a first person, plural voice, "Seven Walks" reads like an ironic guidebook that cannot be followed or replicated in real space-time because its walks are not simply ambles through the extensive space of the city, in which space is conceived as only an empty container filled with discrete inanimate objects and architecture. Several walks resist such narrations of static place in communicating experiences of affect or intensity that hinge perception and hallucination in the city's streets and parks: they animate Brian

Massumi's (2002) idea of "a *lived* topological event" (206) by expressing the self and city in dynamic and productive relations. I argue that these two experiences of the city—as static and fluid—trace the process of a becoming, which, as Braidotti (2002) explains in reference to Deleuze, "force[s] a re-alignment of the basic parameters of subjectivity: the power of *potestas* (constraint, negativity, denial) would have to confront the equally powerful power of *potentia* (plenitude, intensity, expression)" (113). Walks two to six explore the struggle between *potestas* and *potentia*, the negative and affirmative aspects of power: one decreases while the other increases one's "capacity to act in the world" (30); *potestas* is coercive, restrictive, and "majority-bound" unlike *potentia*, which is creative, minoritarian, and non-linear; the former concerns the "management of civil society and its institutions" and the latter "the transformative experimentation with new arts of existence and ethical relations" (Braidotti 2011b, 269). *Potestas* is defined in "Seven Walks" by the walkers' experience of the city as objectified and commodified, a space solely of hard architecture and fixed forms, in which they are immobile and alienated from one another and the city ("Third Walk" and "Fifth Walk"), while *potentia* is conveyed in the walkers' experience of the city as a space of intensity and potential, in which they wander the streets, empowered by affective interconnections with each other and Vancouver ("Fourth Walk" and "Sixth Walk").

Yet before I examine these two aspects of power in the process of becoming of the speaker, the guide, and Vancouver, I want to outline how they take their cue from Robertson's understanding of extensive and intensive conceptions of space, specifically cityspace, in the work of Manuel De Landa and Rem Koolhaas. Importantly, for Robertson, the fluidity of ongoing transformation of the walkers is bound up with "soft architecture" or the intensity of the city. In correspondence with fellow writer Steve McCaffery in 2000, before the publication of *Occasional Work and Seven Walks from the Office for Soft Architecture*, Robertson refers to theories of intensive space and its relation to change in De Landa's (1999) "Deleuze, Diagrams and the Open-Ended Becoming of the World." As De Landa explains, intensive space affirms a non-essentialist approach to life that focuses on production and process rather than the produced object. Indivisible, intensity transforms through a process of differentiation always in a relation and context. It is not opposed to but includes extension as a temporary materialization; however, when space is conceived only in Euclidean terms, extension becomes opposed to intensity. Largely through representation, extensive space has eclipsed intensive space, eliding its dynamism and spontaneity. Basically, a Euclidean conception of space as exclusively extensive reduces movement to a change in position rather than the ongoing change of the "difference-driven process" of intensive space (31). While extensivity implicates form and structure, that which is fundamental to binary distinctions and static identities, the intensive suggests event, movement, and the new of the unexpected. In the same email to McCaffery, Robertson links De Landa with architect Rem Koolhaas, whose Office for Metropolitan Architecture was the inspiration for Robertson's own Office for Soft Architecture. She writes: "De Landa talks about thermodynamics, flows and intensities as opposed to extensities and equilibrium. Intensive difference as opposed to form. I think that's where Koolhaas is heading to, in his different vocabulary" (Robertson and McCaffery 2000, 32). Specifically, Robertson refers to Koolhaas' "What Ever Happened to Urbanism?" (1995) in which he considers the potentialities of a new urbanism that is opposed to the "parasitic security" of architecture's permanence. This new urbanism can imagine the future of the city precisely because "it will not be based on the twin fantasies of order and omnipotence; it will be the staging of uncertainty; it will no longer be concerned with the arrangement of more or less permanent objects but with the irrigation of territories with potential" (1995, 29).

Like De Landa and Koolhaas, Robertson rejects the idea of extensive space that precedes movement importantly because it enables the quantification and commodification of cityspace. Instead, she suggests an "architecture of flows" that orients the reader to the topology of intensive space or the "soft architecture" of the city. Robertson (2011) explains in "Soft Architecture: A Manifesto," in *Occasional Work and Seven Walks from the Office for Soft Architecture*, that the city is "persistently soft," a place not of "identity but incident"; it is "a flux of experiences produced through relations and flows, a space of potential" (20, 19). While hard architecture encloses space and arrests forms, soft architecture signifies affective relations, both actual

and virtual. As Robertson writes: "There are traces of unbuildable and unbuilt architectures folded into the texture of the city and our bodies are already moving among them" (Robertson and McCaffery 2000, 38). Instead of the steel and glass arcades where the modern flâneur strolled, she proposes the "soft arcade" where the sexually differentiated walker becomes an architect of the passage of ongoing change (Robertson 2011, 18). Yet such positive transformation through *potentia* inevitably encounters *potestas* in "Seven Walks" as the walkers struggle with the constraining and enabling powers that thwart or empower their transformative interconnection with each other and Vancouver.

In the "Third Walk" and "Fifth Walk," *potestas* is associated with the control and order of capitalist production that constrains them and alienates them from each other and the city while in the "Fourth Walk" and the "Sixth Walk," *potentia* is associated with an affirmative force that "aims at fulfilling the subject's capacity for interaction and freedom" (Braidotti 2011b, 314). The "Second Walk" straddles the two as it introduces this tension. In this walk, as they stroll through a local park, a conflict emerges between the fixed forms of extensive space and the fluidity of intensity. At first, their dawdling is described in terms of a diorama, a reference to a nineteenth-century three-dimensional replica of a scene often encased in glass. They feel trapped inside this diorama, gazing out with an agency that requires little of them, as if in a "listlessness of scripted consumption" that, while "innocuous and pleasant," "did not move" (Robertson 2011, 199). Here affects are pre-formed in their capture, reduced to decoration: hope, for example, is a "spectacle" (196). Later in the rain, the open, scaffold-like architecture of the foliage of the park contrasts the diorama. The walk now becomes a resonant idleness, a "temporal sink" of intensity in which the speaker and guide are "persuade[d] towards disassembly. For such a disassembly is what the park performed upon [them]" (Massumi 2002, 26; Robertson 2011, 199). In this borderline space where nature and the urban overlap, affects become fugitive: "affects took on an independence. It was we who belonged to them. They hovered above the surfaces, disguised as clouds or mists, awaiting the porousness of a passing ego" (Robertson 2011, 200). Affects now "alight" upon the speaker and her guide, their "agitations" easing "beneath [the] skin": an intensity registered in the "autonomic reaction" of the surface of the body, "its interface with things" (Massumi 2002, 25). Here, the speaker and guide temporarily experience a profound interconnection with the world: as they discuss arborists, one appears; when they slice a rich cheese, the clouds and lilies tremble and a small child flees. The speaker admits that they are not static, separate identities but rather events of movement, "mixtures of unclassifiable actions" which conjure a sense of vitality in transformation (Robertson 2011, 197).

The shift between alienation and separation from each other and the city and the interconnection of walkers and city unfolds over the subsequent four walks. In the "Third Walk" and part of the "Fifth Walk," the speaker and guide are not outside but are contained within an enclosed space of consumption (a restaurant and a shop). A negative sense of disconnection from each other and the environment is immediately apparent in the "Third Walk" as they sit together passive and silent. Inside the restaurant, the speaker and guide are efficiently "courted, seated, appeased" in a "monochrome corner," where "placating foods" with "ruthlessly bland textures" magically appear (205-206). The speaker's physical immobility in the restaurant corresponds to fixed identities and static positions, which not only capture but also reduce diverse experiences to a repetitively pleasurable outcome, recalling Nigel Thrift's (2004) argument that affect is increasingly "actively engineered" in urban space for political ends (58). The speaker of Robertson's text, who is feeling manipulated by a commodity fetishism that appeals most often to pleasure, experiences a shock akin to the punctuality of affective escape "localized in a specific event" as a sense of disconnection between herself, the guide, and the world (Massumi 2002, 36). Overwhelmed, the speaker flees outside and stops to observe the inside through the veiled windows, re-creating the diorama-effect from the "Second Walk" and underscoring the vacuity of a manufactured life in which "pleasure is a figured vacuum that does not recognize us as persons" (Robertson 2011, 207). The window becomes a reflective surface onto which is projected the mirage of the bourgeois self, a static subjectivity that mirrors a static world of isolated forms. Similarly, in the "Fifth Walk," the speaker struggles against the seductive illusion of static forms and identities as she succumbs to a desire for certainty, manifest in a need to purchase a

mysterious object in the enclosed space of a shop. Once purchased, the speaker is giddy with happiness, an ego-consolidating emotional experience that diminishes her feeling of joyful connectedness with her guide and the world around her.

Reactive affects such as alienation associated with advanced capitalism and localized in interior spaces that render the speaker and guide immobile and silent are transformed into liberation and joy in the "Fourth Walk" and "Sixth Walk" as the speaker and guide walk through Vancouver's streets, their physical mobility signifying their nomadic subjectivities. In the "Fourth Walk," they wander in a "light-industrial district" at sunset, a liminal time when day and night overlap, what the speaker calls "the unprofitable time of the city, the pools of slowness, the lost parts" (210). Here liminality suggests the passage or transition of multiple and shifting identities of the walker and the city, which is liberating: as they walk, affects circulate, their virtuality like an "anxious pause" that is paradoxically "pressing forward" giving them a sense of freedom (211). This sense of liberation returns in the "Sixth Walk" as the speaker wakes to find herself already walking in the middle of a bridge at an unspecified time in a flow of the multitude of animals and humans from which she cannot differentiate herself or her guide. The bridge, which seems to have no beginning (that she can recall) or an end, is comprised of organic, forgotten, and useless refuse woven together to form a complex structure that will not reveal itself to the speaker because it is a constant state of flux: "we can approach the structures but not the substance, which is really more like a moving current" (219). As she walks, the bridge changes, responding "like dendrites of nerves" as if it were a living organism. Here the dynamic intensity of the experience registers through her skin: "you must absorb this artifact through your skin…you must absorb its insecurity" (220), recalling what Sara Ahmed and Jackie Stacey (2001) term the "fleshy interface" between body and world (1). Swept up in the flux of her surroundings, the speaker describes the autonomy of affect as an undifferentiated flow between self and city: "It was not necessary to differentiate the sensations of particular organs or leaves since this rippling unknit the proprieties and zones of affect—the entire body became an instrument played by weather and chance" (Robertson 2011, 219). In the topology of the experience of the folding of walkers and city, the speaker observes that "Like new cells speak us. We call itself a name. We call it change" (221).

Under the Pavement, Futures Yet Unthought: Walks One and Seven

Rethinking walking in Vancouver in terms of intensity and affectivity in "Seven Walks" enables an approach to change that must reconceive of the future for the walkers and their gentrifying city. The becoming of the speaker, guide, and Vancouver suggests a *new* newness, of difference, echoing Koolhaas' new urbanism in opening up a space for uncertainty and potential. In this section, I examine the "First Walk" and the "Seventh Walk," which frame the text, in terms of change and potential futures, making specific reference to Elizabeth Grosz' (1999) "Thinking of the New: Of Futures Yet Unthought," an essay that Robertson cites in her correspondence with Steve McCaffery alongside the work of De Landa and Koolhaas. As Grosz (1999) explains in the essay, the future can only admit the new when it is indeterminate: futurity cannot be conceived in terms of predictable or stable progress (17). In other words, the future new lies "beyond the control" of any political discourse of progress, both neoliberalism and its opponents—in the virtual (17). The virtual opens the future to the new based on differentiation and productive forces rather than resemblance and negative or restrictive movements of the possible. That is because the relation of virtuality to actuality is positive or productive. To understand the new of the open future, one must think the unthought; instead of the expectation inherent in the possible/real relation, we must think in terms of the unpredictability of an event, where the virtual is a divergence from, not a replication of, the actual. As Grosz explains, "The virtual never resembles the real that it actualizes. It is this sense that actualization is a process of creation that resists both the logic of identity and a logic of resemblance to substitute differentiation, divergence, and innovation. While the concept of the possible doubles that of the real, the virtual is the real of genuine production, innovation, creativity" (51). Simply put, the relation of the virtual to the actual is characterized by differentiation, that which creates the heterogeneous, a differentiation that, in "Seven Walks," importantly begins with the sexually differentiated walkers. In contrast, the possible and the real are conceived as

self-identical: the possible only distinguishes itself from the real in quantity not quality, crossing over into the real, culled from a larger series of options in a retrospective narrativization of continuously emerging events. Consequently, the movement from possibility to reality is retroductive (Massumi 2002, 10). And just as extensive space (position, form) is retrospectively conceived from movement, a unified subject is back-formed from the becoming-subject (9).

Robertson (2011) rejects the idea of the new that, defined in terms of the capitalist narrative of progress, asserts only one possible future for the sexually differentiated walkers and Vancouver. This conflict between the new-as-the-same and the new-as-different plays out in the "First Walk" as the walkers begin their exploration of the city. Immediately, the tension is established between the open-ended future of emergence, which produces the new, and the predetermined future in which the new is pre-formed, recognizable, and contained. Before beginning the walk, the speaker laments "the way the day would proceed with its humiliating diligence" (190): "already it contained everything, even those elaborately balanced sentences that would not reveal themselves until noon" (194). As the day threatens to reveal nothing more than self-identity with its own past, the new is shut out in a process of resemblance and limitation. Yet as the speaker soon after observes, "it is unhelpful to read a day backwards" (190): to narrativize is to retrospectively fabricate a history of people and places as static objects. Such narratives are epitomized by a commemorative plaque mounted where the speaker and guide first meet. While the event of commemoration is unspecified, importantly, the plaque has been smashed. Official history as the linear, master narrative of the universal (male) subject is now destroyed. All that is left are the walkers and the city: alternative feminist histories now recounted in the living document of their embodied and embedded walks through Vancouver. As they set out, they "feel the sensation of unaccountability like a phantom limb" so that soon they "began to resist the logic of [their] identity, in order to feel free" (190). The shared, spectral sensation resonates with the temporary and permeable architecture that surrounds them, such as scaffolds and bombed windows (191). At the end of this walk, the speaker declares, "we wanted knowledge" (194), recalling a key question in Grosz (1999): "Is knowledge opposed to the future" (21)? For Grosz (and Robertson), the answer is no: "If dominant modes of knowledge (causal, statistical) are incapable of envisioning the absolutely new, maybe other modes of knowing, other forms of thinking, need to be proposed" (Grosz 1999, 21). "Seven Walks" suggests other modes of knowing in the walkers' experiences of intensity or affect. Unlike the modern subject, encapsulated in the nineteenth-century male flâneur who, in order to succeed in the emerging metropolis, domesticates and rationalizes the city through his gaze, the "outward-directed and forward-looking" (Braidotti 2002, 99) desires of the walkers in "Seven Walks" challenge the idea of mind or consciousness (the interior) as the location of knowledge.

The last walk, which frames the text like the "First Walk," similarly explores the open futures of intensity. After the competing *potestas* and *potentia* that unfolds in the previous five walks, this final walk offers resolution, if temporary, in "the positivity of the intensive subject—its joyful affirmation as potentia" (Braidotti 2011b, 314). Here, the speaker and guide seem to fold into the city, indistinguishable from it, as if expressing a lived moment of emergence of a new, potential Vancouver that includes them. The walk opens with the speaker and guide using the "utopian perspective" as a lens through which to view the world. Not surprisingly, this lens fails them because utopia, as Grosz (2001) explains, "seeks a future that itself has no future, a future in which time will cease to be a relevant factor, and movement, change, and becoming remain impossible" (139, 143). Then as the speaker and guide begin to "imagine that [they] were several, even many," identities morph into others: "women—what were they? Arrows or luncheons, a defenestration, a burning frame, a great stiff coat with its glossy folds, limbs, inner Spains" (Robertson 2011, 223, 222). Unlike the modern flâneur, these nomadic subjects subvert the binary structure of Self/Other in positing a flow and flux of multiplicities and differences in fluid identities that correspond with the city. As they "lean into the transition to night," the walkers merge with each other and their surroundings as their chests "burst hugely upward to alight in the branches" and they fall back "gasping" (225, 226). They are now indistinguishable from the city in an openness that ends in a sentence without a period, a word left hanging, the next mark on

the page a potential, still unthought. Here, as human and non-human bodies come together and come undone together in a porous meshwork, they affirm the multiplicity and heterogeneity that enables the affective, intensive production of the walkers and city. Yet these embodied and embedded walkers stop short of proposing a definitive future. Instead, they open up space from which an alternative future can emerge.

Conclusion

Reimagining subjectivity in the sexually differentiated walkers in "Seven Walks" also means reimagining the urban environment. Whereas the modern flâneur is a universal, centralized subject whose panoptic scopophilia reinscribes binaries (male/female, public/private, etc.) in tandem with the capitalist objectification and commodification of cityspace as Other, the walkers in Robertson's "Seven Walks" are coextensive with Vancouver, creatively and positively participating in the production of a different city in the positive and ethical terms of becoming. In "Seven Walks," this interconnection of the walkers and the city in a transformative multiplicity of differences critically begins with the first steps of the sexually differentiated walkers because "sexual difference is… an embodied and embedded point of departure that signals simultaneously the ontological priority of difference and its self-organizing and self-transforming force" (Braidotti 2011b, 147). Yet these walkers are not only "figurations of alternative feminist subjectivity" (Braidotti 2002, 12) by repossessing women walking in public space from the nineteenth-century female walker coded as prostitute or shopper (Other of the Same) and locating her in the twenty-first century sexually differentiated nomadic subject (other of the Other). Importantly, these nomadic subjects, in undoing the power differentials of binary structure, are also integral to the figuration of a cityspace of differences, one that enables futures yet unthought in the "intensive interconnectedness" (Braidotti 2011a, 27), which enhances and empowers, between walkers and city, an interconnection absent in the rambles of the nineteenth-century modern flâneur whose gaze separates and objectifies. As Robertson confesses to McCaffery: "My outlook is not liberatory except by the most minor means" (Robertson and McCaffery 2000, 38). What could be more minor, in a Deleuzian sense, for Robertson's sexually differentiated subjects, than the everyday act of putting one foot in front of the other on the streets of Vancouver.

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Love Enough!
Dionne Brand and Rosi Braidotti's Affective Transpositions

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Abstract

This article puts Dionne Brand's novel, *Love Enough* (2014), in conversation with the vitalist philosophy of Rosi Braidotti, as illustrated in the study *Transpositions: On Nomadic Ethics* (2006). I look at how both poet and theorist insist on the centrality of affective relations in the transformation of subjectivity, political alliances, and ethical spaces under processes of uneven globalization, rampant neoliberalism, and feminist backlash. Dionne Brand's cross-border material poetics proposes alternative figurations of the subject through exercises of creative repetition, zigzagging between temporal and spatial frameworks, signaling the constant transformation of material, political, and social bodies. Brand's transposable moves follow a similar pattern to Braidotti's nomadic cartographies in that both resist a naïve return to sentimentality or nostalgic love to advocate instead a turn to sustainable affects and passions; a call for love as a mode of action that can reorient the system by embracing our *potentia* as feminist subjects.

Résumé

Cet article engage le dialogue entre le roman de Dionne Brand, *Love Enough* (2014), et la philosophie vitaliste de Rosi Braidotti, telle qu'illustrée dans l'étude *Transpositions: On Nomadic Ethics* (2006). J'examine comment la poétesse tout comme la théoricienne insistent sur la centralité des relations affectives dans la transformation de la subjectivité, des alliances politiques et des espaces éthiques dans le cadre de processus de mondialisation déséquilibrée, de néolibéralisme rampant et de réactions féministes. La poésie matérielle transfrontalière de Dionne Brand propose des figurations alternatives du sujet par le biais d'exercices de répétition créative, qui zigzaguent entre les cadres temporels et spatiaux, pour signaler la constante transformation des corps physiques, politiques et sociaux. Les mouvements transposables de Brand suivent un modèle similaire à celui des cartographies nomades de Braidotti en ce sens qu'elles résistent toutes deux à un retour naïf à la sentimentalité ou à l'amour nostalgique pour préconiser plutôt un tournant vers des affects et des passions durables; un appel à l'amour comme moyen d'action qui peut réorienter le système en embrassant notre potentiel en tant que sujets féministes.

> Sometimes you have to catch a feeling right away…
>
> Dionne Brand, *Love Enough* (26)

To talk about love in the context of the humanities, might seem, to some, an exercise of cruel optimism (Berlant 2011). The so-called academic-industrial complex is saturated with fear and anxiety; austerity policies have led to brutal funding cuts, dramatically increasing the levels of competition, and exacerbated feelings of doubt and uncertainty among sessionals, adjuncts, and other exhausted labourers who seek permanent jobs or some form of economic stability. This neoliberal model of the corporate university disseminates and capitalizes on these negative affects with important ethical consequences. The inextricable nature of affective relations, economic processes, and cultural practice is thereby unquestionable. And yet, I firmly believe this is precisely why it is key for the critic, the teacher, and the public intellectual today to find ways to activate their passions in the search for change and transformation. Let me clarify what I am talking about when I talk about love. I am certainly not advocating for a naïve return to sentimentality or nostalgic love, but a turn to sustainable affects and passions; a call for love as a mode of action that can reorient the system by embracing our *potentia* as feminist subjects. Here I follow the tradition of vitalist philosophy that reads passion as an assemblage of forces and flows imbued with paradoxes, tensions, and contradictions (Deleuze 1988; Braidotti 2006a, 2006b). It is crucial then to reactivate our passions to rethink what we love and and why we love it; in other words, what moves us.

In my case, my orientation towards feminist writing and critical theory has shaped my teaching and research practices for the last few years. In turn, I have also been curious about what moves poets, writers, and theorists in their creative interventions. The Irish Canadian writer Emma Donoghue is often asked about the reasons why she moved to Canada almost twenty years ago. Her answer is "love," in particular, "love of a Canadian."[1] When Makeda Silvera (1995) asked the poet Dionne Brand why she left Trinidad for Toronto in 1970, she replied "To run away, to escape" (165). Brand then explained how she was running scared as a young woman; escaping the history around her; and also running from femininity. The responses from these transCanadian writers, though remarkably different at first glance, are both saturated by affective configurations that simultaneously locate and dislocate the subject. Following Smaro Kamboureli and Roy Miki (2007), I redeploy the formulation transCanadian to refer to a number of contemporary feminist and queer writers in Canada whose twenty-first-century work proposes new ways to think about location and subjectivity alongside and beyond national and transnational discourses.[2] As I argue elsewhere, the designation transCanadian functions as a border concept, which is "construed relationally through an inseparable mixture of coalitions, ruptures, entanglements, tensions, and alliances" (García Zarranz 2017, 9). In this article, the role of affect in this matrix of forces is of particular interest.

Translating the subject geographically, as these writers' words illustrate, already entails a form of affective transposition, which is inevitably intertwined with economic, political, and cultural processes. Note that I want to think about the concepts of *moving* and *being moved* in a geo-affective sense in an attempt to discern a number of ethical implications for the subject, in particular, the feminist subject. The passion to move, to create, to imagine, to desire new fictions, new subjectivities, new bodies has been a constant in the work of feminist philosopher Rosi Braidotti. Since the publication of her first book, *Patterns of Dissonance: An Essay on Women in Contemporary French Philosophy* (1991), Braidotti has forcefully formulated alternative conceptualizations of difference beyond the dialectical opposition between individual liberalism and the risk of postmodern relativism. Through her pioneering work on nomadic ethics, Braidotti has revolutionized our understanding of subjectivity by proposing a theory of affirmative politics and ethics that revolves around the following question: "can gender, ethnic, cultural or European differences be understood outside the straightjacket of hierarchy and binary opposition?"[3] Terms such as sustainable ethics, non-unitary subjectivity, vitalism, and transpositions become only a few of the common denominators in Braidotti's on-going quest for a sustainable feminist ethics that will challenge, as she repeatedly claims, "conservative nostalgia and neo-liberal euphoria" simultaneously (2013, 11).

This article puts Dionne Brand's latest novel, *Love Enough* (2014), in conversation with the Braidotti's feminist philosophy, as illustrated in the study *Transpositions: On Nomadic Ethics* (2006b). Drawing on queer and anti-racist theories of affect (Ngai 2005; Ahmed 2004), I examine how both poet and theorist insist on the centrality of affective relations in the transformation of subjectivity, political alliances, and ethical spaces under processes of uneven globalization, rampant neoliberalism, and feminist backlash. I focus particularly on how Brand and Braidotti think through the concept of *transpositions*, a term in music that "indicates variations and shifts of scale in a discontinuous but harmonious pattern. It is thus created as an in-between space of zigzagging and of crossing: non-linear, but not chaotic; nomadic, yet accountable and committed; creative but also cognitively valid; discursive and also materially embedded—it is coherent without falling into instrumental rationality" (Braidotti 2006b, 5). Brand's cross-border material poetics proposes alternative figurations of the subject through exercises of creative repetition, zigzagging between temporal and spatial frameworks, signaling constant transformations of material, political, and social bodies. Brand's transposable moves, I argue, follow a similar pattern to Braidotti's nomadic cartographies in that both propose different poetic and critico-ethical approximations to the subject living under the dynamics of contemporary neo-conservative technocapitalism.

For the last three decades, Dionne Brand's fierce fiction and politics have been saturated by a sense of loss and desolation, particularly in her critique of racist, nationalistic, and sexist structural violences within the Canadian context. As literary scholar Cheryl Lousley (2008) contends,

> throughout her poetry, fiction, and criticism, Brand has shown, like Spivak, an attention to the violent exclusions enacted through normalizing universals, such as standard English, Canadian national identity and heterosexuality, and an acute interrogation of the danger yet necessity of collective identities for political mobilization. (38)

Brand's recent work, though still posing a critique of these systemic violences, is now more invested in addressing the affective ruptures of the transCanadian subject living in this contemporary age of global crisis. More in line with Braidotti than with Gayatri Spivak, novels, such as *What We All Long For* (2005), or the more recent, *Love Enough* (2014), mobilize a set of affective relations where the vitality and toxicity of life is always at the centre. I here follow feminist Deleuzian philosophy, which refers to Life as an assemblage of intensities, full of the vitalism of both *bios* and *zoe* as forces shaping the social fabric of contemporary times. In contrast to *bios*, which stands for the organic, political, and discursive portions of life reserved for anthropos, *zoe* refers instead to the affirmative power of human and nonhuman life; "a vector of transformation, a conveyor or a carrier that enacts in-depth transformations" (Braidotti 2006b, 84); "life as absolute vitality" (Braidotti, 2006a, 138).

In the interview with Makeda Silvera, Brand comments on how writing is for her a vital process: "Each piece of work is a piece of my life. It is my life's work. The writing is not a career thing. It is a vocation… With every piece of writing *I can see I moved*" (Silvera 1995, 380, my emphasis). I want to focus on Brand's reference to moving. Etymologically, "to move" means "to set in motion" but also "to exist, to live" and "to excite, to affect" (*OED*). Brand's twenty-first-century work problematizes the poetics and politics of affect, setting in motion multiple transpositions where subjectivity is depicted as malleable, porous, and continuously moving and being moved relationally. This section of my article thus addresses the affective dimensions of the term to *move* by looking at the cartographic transpositions in Brand's novel.

In similar ways to *What We All Long For* (2005), *Love Enough* (2014) depicts the city of Toronto not only as a transnational space of interconnectivity but also as a site of death. The lethal tensions in the city, as one of the characters in the novel puts it, permeate the lives of a series of subjects across racial, sexual, and generational borders. The narrative introduces nineteen-year-old Lia, who struggles to make sense of the fractures in her family's genealogy, while trying to figure out her life and the world around her as she traverses the city. In order to do so, she develops her own theory of transposition, as she calls it:

> Lia is biking now along Bloor Street, going east, no hands, her coat is open like a sail…At each block she becomes someone else, some other part of who she might be. One

> block she's carrying flowers, one block she has newspapers. At the university she thinks of cadavers and at the museum an emptiness swaddles her. Then the naked mannequins in the posh shops embrace her at Bay. At Yonge the perennial road and construction crews offer her graves that will open annually. (Brand 2014, 21-22)

Echoing Mrs. Dalloway's roamings in postwar London in Virginia Woolf's feminist classic, Lia rushes through Toronto in a constant state of flux and transformation.[4] The city is here portrayed as a trans-corporeal space where, as Stacy Alaimo contends (2008), "human corporeality, in all its material fleshiness, is inseparable from 'nature' or 'environment'" (238). Lia's pace conveys a sense of urgency in tune with the schizophrenic character of our contemporary times, where constant transformation and change may also lead to crisis and death. In that sense, her fractured subjectivity very much resembles that of Carla, one of the main characters in Brand's previous novel, *What We All Long For*. Both young women show how tracing their family histories, especially their mothers' own affective ruptures, has shaped their subjectivity and self-other relations. Lia's mother, the reader learns, was never loved by her own mother, so this lack has shaped her relationships. "*Perché non hai tenuto di più a Mercede?…Why did't you love Mercede better?*" (Brand 2014, 100), Lia blatantly yells to her nonna, who chose to endure patriarchal pressures over sustaining an alliance with her daughter, thus preventing any form of solidarity to emerge in this matrilineal genealogy. Moreover, Lia's emotional fractures are intensified by economic pressures, which have been forcing her to move constantly from place to place between the ages of sixteen and eighteen, unavoidably preventing her from developing any sustained sense of community: Lia had "spent the last year of high school in a group home, and found a job in a laundromat, then in a No Frills, then in a Wendy's, then as a telemarketer, then in a mall kiosk selling phone covers, then in a dollar store and finally in a TV packaging plant in Etobicoke" (53-54). Lia's affective cartographies, nonetheless, are reoriented away from her family and towards Jasmeet, a young performing artist who lives next door. Her sudden disappearance leads Lia into a spiral of regret and loss but also transformation and love.

When looking at transpositions in music, there are two important axes to be considered: direction (if the notes move up or down) and distance (how far to move them). I would like to bear this in mind in relation to one of the characters in the novel's own theory of geo-affective transposition. A member of the professional class in Somalia, Dau'ud had to flee the country in the mid-1990s as a result of the civil war. From economist to taxi driver in Toronto, his transCanadian experience has shown him the pleasures and dangers of border-crossing. Dau'ud explains that, to move from Toronto to Somaliland, you need to pass through five airports, "each one a passage to how life is supposed to be lived" (Brand 2014, 82). Moving from Canada to Europe, which involves a move in direction and distance, activates a bodily transposition. After being seen through the lens of the border guard, you change, the narrative voice explains. At the third airport, in Abu Dhabi or Dubai, you begin to forget and you begin to feel free because "you are in the middle of time" (83). Life in those other places keeps going without you and so "you need no longer exist in that life" (84). The fourth airport at Addis Ababa reactivates your sensory system: "your eyes are open, your ears are open; you smell the world. You can change your clothes, free your legs, you can melt into a new life" (84). Finally, the last stop at Hargeisa is where "You begin" (84). What interests me about this passage is that Brand seems to suggest a mode of counter-diasporic subjectivity that escapes the dangerous rhetorical dichotomy of nostalgia or euphoria. In other words, this is not a return to an essentialist origin of unchanged patterns, but a reentry into a new space; a transposable move, which merges the affective and the geographical dimensions of lived experience; a melting pot in reverse in that entering African space is described in terms of opportunity, change, and renewal, thus challenging traditional renderings of the migrants' experience of transition.

This cartographic transposition, nonetheless, seems to be out of reach for those transCanadian subjects whose labour is tied to the global city of Toronto. In a sense, then, this learning process is blocked by this Canadian space, which seems to engulf its inhabitants, erasing their memories and desires, and assimilating them with a number of ethical repercussions. An example of this affective rupture is embodied in Dau'ud's son, Bedri, who moves adrift throughout the narative, rushing through the streets of Toronto in a car

towards a place that never materializes. Suspended in space and time, Bedri's disorientation clearly reflects the negative sets of passions that lead those eccentric[5] characters who cannot find sustainable ways to live in contemporary society. Quoting Emma Goldman's anarchist fictions, one of the characters in *Love Enough* explains how "as long as people were *living a life they loathe to live* then crime was inevitable" (Brand 2014, 110). The intertwinned relation between affect and ethics is unquestionable in this passage. What are the implications of living a life you loathe? What kind of affective transpositions would be necessary to live a life you love instead?

Brand's (2014) novel provides a clear example of affirmative transpositions through Lia, who manages to reorient her body away from the emotional fractures that shaped her life and into a quest for beauty. At the end of the narrative, we see her in a search to devour life in its multiplicity of colours; a transition into other forms of affect that she could stick to beyond language structures: "When she looks back at her daily jottings, she realises it's not recordable in words. She wants a more porous surface, where beauty can come into her, metamorphose, suffuse her skin" (147). It is here where the affective transposition into positive passions takes place. *Zoe* is blooming here for Lia, who strives to affect and be affected by the sensuality of the world, transposing her body in multiple ways. The vitalism in this scene, which again echoes Woolf's, becomes one of those moments of "floating awareness" that Braidotti (2006b) describes when "'Life' rushes on towards the sensorial/perceptive apparatus with exceptional vigour" (145). Lia understands the *potentia* of Life now as a force that can transform her embodied subjectivity, and so, as the narrative voice explains, she craves for the ordinary beauty of life to "become more chemical, to metabolise, to reconstitute, yes, reconstitute her heart" (Brand 2014, 146). Interestingly, moving to Ward's Island, and thus distancing herself from the city of Toronto, is one of the keys to Lia's affective transposition. Again, then, we see how changes in distance and direction can also enable variations in the trajectories of bodies understood as material and affective assemblages always in the process of becoming.

Further drawing on the field of genetics, Braidotti (2006b) contends that the term transpositions indicates "an intertextual, cross-boundary or transversal transfer, in the sense of a leap from one code, field or axis into another, not merely in the quantitative mode of plural multiplications, but rather in the qualitative sense of complex multiplicities" (5). These cross-boundary moves, I would add, are always embedded in economic processes with a number of implications for the gendered and the racialized body. In her discussion of affective economies, feminist killjoy Sara Ahmed (2004) claims that "feelings do not reside in subjects or objects, but are produced as effects of circulation" (8). She explains how hate, for instance, "does not reside in a given subject or object. Hate is economic; it circulates between signifiers in relationships of difference and displacement" (119). Following a similar line of enquiry, I propose to consider Brand's affective transpositions as paradoxical assemblages where economic processes circulate, shaping material bodies with important ethical repercussions.

As a result of religious wars and poverty, Da'uud's lived experience has been saturated by violence and dispossession, both in Somalia and Canada. His affective transpositions have provided him with an accute level of perception for ugly feelings—minor affects such as irritation, paranoia, or anxiety that Sianne Ngai (2005) describes as potential sites of "*critical* productivity" (3). As a taxi driver, he not only witnesses the lives of others, but he perceives people's negative passions[6] such as sadness and fear: "Da'uud glimpses the man's face. He doesn't like it, it tears a sliver in his chest. He thinks, that man can kill someone… Da'uud leaves, saying to himself maybe he's wrong, the things he knows are not useful" (Brand 2014, 74). It is significant how this kind of affective knowledge is considered as a failed system and thus rapidly discarded by the character. Da'uud's affective transpositions, which are intertwinned with racial and economic processes, invite the conceptualization of an alternative ethics where utility could be transformed into affect. I then propose to see this form of excessive feeling in relation to what Ngai (2005) calls *animatedness*. Functioning as a marker of racial or ethnic otherness, Ngai's analysis of animatedness refers to how the representation of African-American subjects in popular culture is often suffused by a set of exaggerated emotions: "as we press harder on the affective meanings of animatedness, we shall see how the seemingly neutral state of 'being moved' becomes twisted into the image of the overemotional

racialized subject" (90). I here argue that Brand's representation of Da'uud, a Muslim Afro-Canadian working class male, as an embodied affective subject creates instead what we could call a form of counter-animatedness or transposable animatedness. The long and extended impact of 9/11 has brought to the western world an old threat: Islam as a synonym for terror. Animatedness in this context, understood as a form of excessive feeling, could then be associated with religious extremism. In order to challenge these pernicious stereotypes, the novel instead portrays Da'uud as a subject who transposes his religious, economic, and cultural background into a form of affective knowledge. In doing so, he manages to bear witness to the complex circuits of passion that permeate contemporary society, leaving the reader in an unconfortable position. This is nothing new in Brand.

In similar fashion to Larissa Lai's provocative poetry collection *Automaton Biographies* (2009), Dionne Brand's long poems *Inventory* (2006) and *Ossuaries* (2010), as I argue elsewhere (2017), introduce several female figures that problematize the role of bearing witness to the contemporary world. Again, what we find here are the singular multiplicities of the racialized and the feminist subject caught in a matrix of affective, economic, and political processes. Yasmine, one of the main characters in *Ossuaries*, for instance, is depicted as an activist who lives underground, and who has experienced a variety of socio-political revolutions across temporal and spatial frameworks. Historical violences materialize in the body of this racialized woman who is then forced to live a life of confinement, away from community. Targeted as a potential terrorist, this activist remains hidden until the right time to act emerges. Yasmine poses a threat to nationalist discourses not necessarily in terms of her sexuality, but in terms of her race and political associations. In the portrayal of Yasmine as a potential terrorist, Brand indirectly exposes the dangers of U.S. exceptionalism sustained by the narrative of a simultaneous criminalization of the non-Western man, as one who needs to be prosecuted, and the victimization of the non-Western woman, as the one who needs to be rescued. I would add that Brand goes even further by complicating the role of the poet herself in this process. As literary scholar Diana Brydon (2007) aptly suggests, "Brand's practice of affective citizenship begins from the emotional register in which injustice lodges itself in the very body of the poet as a special kind of witness" (991). Both the reader and the poet are then transposed into a complicated position where the boundaries between perpetrators and victims are radically blurred. By doing so, Brand further poses the question about what is our complicity in the very sustenance of these structures of power, thus moving the critic into a non-normative or eccentric territory.

In related ways to Yasmine, the character of Sibyl in *Love Enough* is also relegated outside the normative boundaries of the city as an eccentric subject with a different affective relationship to the world. Aware of the multiple toxicities of the environment sorrounding her, this post-industrial prophetic priestess wanders the streets of Toronto covered in Clorox: "perhaps Sibyl wanted to slow down the energy, the adrenaline she devoted to cleaning and disinfecting herself and the world from whatever disease she thought they had. Sibyl saw the invisible diseases that were quite possibly there" (Brand 2014, 94). In a way, this character's relation to matter resembles that of Cam in Dionne Brand's novel *What We All Long For*. A former doctor in Vietnam, Cam is unable to perform her profession in Canada, so instead, she opens a restaurant with her husband in Chinatown. Cam systematically covers all the surfaces of her house with plastic out of fear of being caught without proof of her identity and citizenship, as I claim elsewhere (2014). This compulsive need to laminate her furniture not only prevents Cam from touching and thus feeling familiar objects, but could also signal "an affective rupture that emerges as a result of being subjected to certain forms of institutionalized racism" (García Zarranz 2014, 94). In contrast to Cam, though, Sibyl's trans-corporeal relationship to matter allows her transposition into different subject positions, real or imaginary. Claiming to have access to the reality of dreams, Sibyl appears and vanishes in the city: "Who knows who she may have disappeared into. Perhaps she had become a dental assistant, to find mercury. Perhaps she found the door to the key and walked into another life" (Brand 2014, 95). According to normative standards of behaviour, this woman's capability to metamorphose is associated with madness, disorder, and chaos. In contrast, the narrative voice suggests that Sibyl's disordered transpositions may point to a specific kind of knowledge in chaos understood as "a different country" (97); the antithesis to a suffocating

morality and the status quo. Brand's critical stance here echoes Braidotti's (2006b) call for a sustainable ethics as a strategy to "disintoxicate ourselves from the fumes of the prosthetic promises of perfectibility that neo-liberal technologies are selling us" (58). Yasmine, Sibyl, and Cam's bodies all bear traces of a number of toxic violences in the name of failed revolutions, madness, and systemic racism. These women's affective transpositions, nonetheless, can also be read as alternative cartographies where the emergence of a feminist ethics can be more clearly delineated.

For the last twenty-five years, Braidotti (2006b) has been articulating a feminist ethics of sustainability, accountability, and relationality concerned with "human affectivity and passions as the motor of subjectivity" (13). In related ways to Brand's material poetics, Braidotti's vitalist philosophy poses a critique of liberal individualism, while generating novel affective frameworks for self-other relations. June, one of the central characters in *Love Enough*, seems to advocate a material feminist ethics with her passion for life as *zoe* and her accute sense of the worlds around her, including more-than-human life. June, who is now in her 40s, works at the Women's History Archive in Toronto. Having engaged in politics and activism for her whole life, she also volunteers for a youth drop-in center in one of the city's at-risk neighbourhoods. Her relationship with her partner Sydney is haunted by an archive of lovers that June has accumulated in her life: "June worked El Salvador and Mozambique, South Africa and Zimbabwe, then Nicaragua, putting up one revolutionary after another and getting rid of them by all sorts of means. She was, in this way, in terms of love, in terms of sex, indiscriminate" (Brand 2014, 61). Sentimental love is here understood as a form of nostalgia that she rejects.

Instead, June practices a more impersonal but democrative love that the narrative voice describes as ethical love: "Her love was simply bigger than the personal…Isador [one of her lovers] represented that she loved. She loved the idea of people rising up against injustice and political terror, and insofar as Isador did this, she loved him entirely" (Brand 2014, 65). Significantly, this ethical love incorporates violence and the looming presence of death; her female and male lovers all share a passion for Life understood as a combination of positive and negative intensities. Beatriz, for instance, is described as cool, clandestine, and almost lethal (116). As a result of her revolutionary past in Nicaragua, she explains the meaning of death as something irrelevant: "I have held many people's lives in my hand…I have held someone dying. Death is nothing and living is everything" (116). Beatriz's vitalist philosophy is thus very much in line with Braidotti's in that Life, understood as both *bios* (political and discursive) and *zoe* (animal and non-human), becomes the subject instead of the object of social and discursive practices.

Reading through her list of lovers helps June build new insights about herself, always in relation to other subjects. As Braidotti (2006b) reminds us, the term transpositions does not simply imply interconnection: "It is not just a matter of weaving together different strands, variations on a theme (textual or musical), but rather of playing the positivity of difference as a specific theme of its own" (5). I claim that June's archive of revolutionary lovers activates a number of affective transpositions, which finally allow her to maintain a sustainable relationship with her current partner, Sydney, beyond negative passion. Moreover, June's vitalism considers ethics not as a question of morality, but as a transformative assemblage of forces, echoing Braidotti's affirmative ethical position. When June thinks of her younger body, for instance, she envisions a matrix where affect circulates, shaping other materialities, spaces, and discourses:

> All June's summers were explosive back then. Vital. She woke up each morning, her brain luminescent. So much to do, so much to think, she put on phosphorous clothing to go out. […] Those wonderful sleepless nights with stunning arguments and dazzling theories and finally falling into bed breathless with fucking, exhausted and drunk on visions about a coming world. Then she felt at the vertex of mind and body. (Brand 2014, 56)

I have no doubt many of us can identify with June's vitalism if we think about the exhilarating effects of feminist theory and artistic practice in our bodies and in our relationships with friends, lovers, and colleages, sometimes enabling forms of relationality and, other times, breaking any potential alliances between us. This is the pleasure and the danger of sticking to Braidotti's philosophy and Brand's poetics: they can electrify you

with their passion, but they can also unsettle you, thus becoming paradoxical assemblages of intensities and forces.

In her discussion of Braidotti's nomadic philosophy, queer theorist Judith Butler (2014) eloquently discusses resistance as a form of transposition that inevitably brings with it some form of destructiveness. The paradox then occurs when, in the process of resisting destructive forces such as sexism, heteronormativity, or racism, we then activate antagonistic relations with other modalities of resistance. Butler illustrates her point by engaging with the multiple feminisms in the Left: "the feminist left has certainly never been unified, and even the phrase 'feminist left' would doubtless start some people fighting. Such antagonisms, perhaps agonisms, have to be understood as part of the field of intensity and relationality, for relationality does not necessarily mean love, union, or agreement" (26). Brand's novel *Love Enough* certainly suggests that passion without resistance is not enough to understand affective processes of subject transformation in a time of increasing feminist backlash. It is here, once again, when the role of transpositions becomes central in the need to find connections between the texts examined in this article and larger social and historical contexts. In this quest, I want to reiterate that these cartographies of resistance, these affirmative passions, are paradoxical assemblages where tension and contradiction accumulate as part of their intensities.

We see clear examples of these tensions every day in Canadian literary culture, for example. I would like to conclude by briefly examining the work carried out by *CWILA* (Canadian Women in the Literary Arts), a feminist organization that fights for gender equity in the literary realm. The selection of Lucas Crawford, who self-identifies as a transgender poet, as CWILA's 2015 Critic in Residence generated some harsh criticism from certain sectors in the feminist and trans community, particularly among so-called transexclusionary radical feminists (TERFS). A detailed examination of the controversy is beyond the scope of this article, but I wanted to mention this case as a current example of how antagonism within resistance is everyday practice.[7] The key question is, in my view, whether these tensions are conducive to dialogue and change, or whether they signal instead the rupture or loss of coalition between feminist, queer, and transgender groups in the literary world. I do think it is time to rethink our positionality as feminist critics in the new millennium and creatively devise novel transversal methodologies; affirmative alliances; transposable moves between different feminisms in our fight to end sexism. And it is here again where I find Braidotti's (2006b) transpositions helpful in that they propose "creative links and zigzagging interconnections between discursive communities which are too often kept apart from each other" (7). As Dionne Brand's passionate fictions also illustrate, today's messy world is in serious need of multiple feminist transpositions to help us rethink the ethical, the cultural, and the political realms not only as sites of on-going struggle and resistance but also transformation and love.

In this article, I have proposed to think about literature philosophically, while simultaneously considering the poetics of theory as a way to assemble novel methodologies for feminist intervention. I firmly believe that experimenting with this kind of critico-affective transpositions can help us trace a genealogy of feminist entanglements full of unexpected alliances, productive contradictions, and generative paradoxes across the ethical and the literary fields. Braidotti (2013) contends that her feminist ethics "does not aim at mastery, but at the transformation of negative into positive passions" (134). I often wonder about how many of these positive passions are yet to be formulated in our everyday lives as twenty-first century writers, critics, and activists. Loving what we do might not be enough. And yet, it is worth a try.

Endnotes

[1] See Emma Donoghue's personal website: http://www.emmadonoghue.com/faq.html.

[2] TransCanadian feminist writers such as Emma Donoghue, Dionne Brand, Hiromi Goto, and Larissa Lai are assembling a cross-border archive that expands, and arguably queers, traditional conceptualizations of what is commonly understood by Canadian literature today. See Kamboureli and Miki (2007) and García Zarranz (2014) for further articulations of the formulation *TransCanadian*.

[3] See Rosi Braidotti's personal website: http://www.rosibraidotti.com/index.php/about/bio.

[4] Virginia Woolf is for Rosi Braidotti (2006b) one of those writers who explores the vitality of the living world (103). I claim that this vitality, with its intensity and capacity for life and death, is shared by Dionne Brand's material poetics.

[5] I here follow feminist philosopher Teresa de Lauretis (1990) who deploys the term *eccentric subject* to refer to an "excessive critical position…attained through practices of political and personal displacement across boundaries between sociosexual identities and communities, between bodies and discourses" (145).

[6] In relation to Benedict de Spinoza's theory of the affects, Gilles Deleuze (1988) contends that sad passions, such as hate or fear, represent "the moment when we are most separated from our power of acting, when we are most alienated, delivered over to the phantom of superstition, to the mystification of the tyrant" (128).

[7] For a discussion about the potential alliances between feminist and transgender poetics and politics, see Lucas Crawford's responses in his interview with CWILA: http://cwila.com/interview-with-lucas-crawford-cwilas-2015-critic-in-residence/.

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« Dépression et affection dans *Le juste milieu* d'Annabel Lyon : une poétique du *care* »

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Abstract

In her elegant and raw novel, *The Golden Mean*, English-Canadian author Annabel Lyon revisits a founding cultural figure of Western thought through the fluctuating affects of mental illness. Approaching Aristotle in the light of depression and bipolarity, and opting for the strong choice of first person and present tense, she humanizes and actualizes the philosopher as a living, suffering being. The historical novel becomes the ground for a demonstration of empathy, in which the portrayal of the teaching relationship has overtones of contemporary care ethics.

Résumé

Dans son roman élégant et cru, *Le Juste milieu*, l'auteure canadienne-anglaise Annabel Lyon revisite une figure culturelle fondatrice de la pensée occidentale à travers les affects changeants de la maladie mentale. En abordant Aristote sous l'angle de la dépression et de la bipolarité, en optant pour le choix fort de la première personne et du présent, elle humanise et actualise le philosophe comme un être vivant et souffrant. Le roman historique devient le terrain d'une démonstration d'empathie, dont le portrait de la relation d'enseignement a les accents de l'éthique contemporaine du care.

Dans son roman élégant et cru *The Golden Mean* (2009), traduit en français par *Le Juste milieu*, l'auteure canadienne-anglaise Annabel Lyon revisite l'une des figures fondatrices de la pensée occidentale, celle d'Aristote, sous l'angle insolite de ses états émotionnels variables. Nominé pour les prix majeurs à récompenser la fiction canadienne : le *Writers' Trust Fiction Prize* et le *Giller Prize*, le livre a reçu le Prix du Gouverneur-Général 2009. Lyon y réussit le pari extraordinairement ambitieux de faire le portrait affectif de ce géant philosophique, en déplaçant le roman historique vers le roman d'une vie ou d'un épisode de vie, fragile et capital : celui de sa rencontre avec le futur Alexandre le Grand.

Pour bâtir sa tension dramatique autour de ces deux figures immenses, le roman les situe à un moment à la fois liminaire et décisif, lorsqu'Aristote devient le précepteur d'Alexandre. Il s'agit d'un moment de seuil : Alexandre est sur le point de sortir de l'adolescence pour devenir un guerrier ; Aristote, qui n'aspire rien tant qu'à retourner à Athènes pour y diriger l'Académie, se voit arrêté en chemin par la réquisition du roi Philippe de Macédoine de parachever l'éducation de son fils. Cette imposition le place dans une position politique inconfortable : considéré comme un Macédonien par les Athéniens en raison de son allégeance à Philippe ; puis comme un Athénien par les Macédoniens, donc un traître, lorsque Philippe entre en guerre contre Athènes.

Le roman saisit les personnages dans le bouleversement mutuel de leur rencontre. Non dans leurs accomplissements célèbres, mais dans leur devenir, avant que leur destin fameux soit pris. Le déséquilibre de pouvoir entre le maître déjà vieux, à un moment politiquement périlleux de sa carrière, et le prince ambitieux et précoce sur le point de devenir adulte, qui pourrait encore être formé et infléchi dans une direction ou une autre, les fait apparaître en relation et en contraste ; chacun le négatif ou le positif de l'autre, à l'orée de ce qu'ils deviendront—ou plutôt, de ce que l'Histoire retiendra d'eux.

J'aimerais proposer qu'en revisitant ces figures considérées comme des piliers de la civilisation occidentale, et néanmoins humaines, et en mettant l'accent sur leurs vulnérabilités plutôt que sur leurs exploits, c'est à une relecture féministe de l'Histoire que nous convie Annabel Lyon. Ce, au sens où les éthiques du *care* contemporaines, dans la lignée du travail inaugural de la psychologue américaine Carol Gilligan ([1986] 2008), conçoivent et promeuvent une *voix différente* (titre du livre dans sa traduction française) qui met l'emphase sur la relation et la dépendance mutuelle comme critères définitoires de l'humain. Les éthiques du *care* offrent par là un modèle autre d'organisation du social et de la justice. « Le sujet du *care*, écrit la philosophe française Sandra Laugier, est un sujet sensible en tant qu'il est affecté, pris dans un contexte de relations, dans une forme de vie—qu'il est attentif, attentionné, que certaines choses, situations, moments ou personnes comptent pour lui » (Gilligan 2009, 81). Contre le modèle extérieur de la chronique, qui rend compte des exploits des champs de bataille, d'une culture de la violence célébrée par la remémoration des faits d'armes, cette éthique « féministe mais pas féminine », comme y insiste Gilligan (2009), rappelle à notre attention la moralité des relations et ce qu'elles ont de déterminant collectivement. Dans *Le Juste milieu* (2011), la relation d'enseignement apparaît à ce titre exemplaire, la romancière concevant la tâche du maître selon une éthique de l'attention à l'autre, une responsabilité morale qui englobe le souci de sa santé physique et mentale aussi bien que la transmission cruciale de la faculté de juger, à qui est appelé à œuvrer en politique. Avec Aristote et Alexandre, un tel portrait retourne aux fondements mêmes de l'éthique en tant que délibération du bien et du mal. Mais en les sortant du musée, il nous rappelle que cette délibération a été vécue, perçue et sentie, éprouvée autant que raisonnée, ce que la fiction historique permet de réinvestir de toute une actualité humaine. Un tel portrait de l'enseignement comme éthique du soin, selon la terminologie favorisée par le philosophe français Frédéric Worms (2010, 2012), invite aussi à penser que le devenir qui émerge de ce processus continu d'échanges entre le maître et l'élève, engagé durant sept ans, fournit une modalité déterminante de la découverte de soi. Ainsi en filigrane, fidèle à la formation classique de son auteure et à l'influence sur son œuvre de la philosophie morale de Martha Nussbaum (2001), c'est à une défense des humanités que le roman aboutit.

1. Historicité féministe du roman : une éthique de la vulnérabilité

Dans *Imagining Ancient Women*, conférence dans laquelle elle réfléchit sur le roman historique, Annabel Lyon (2012) se reconnaît en tant que féministe, mais s'avoue plus à l'aise, en tant que romancière, avec le fait d'occuper la position d'Aristote qu'avec l'idée d'occuper celle de sa femme ou de sa fille – défi qui a fait l'objet depuis de son roman *The Sweet Girl* (2012), traduit en français par *Une jeune fille sage* (2014), où elle investit la voix de Pythias, fille d'Aristote et de sa femme du même nom. S'il lui est plus facile d'habiter l'esprit, la mentalité, la voix de ce dernier, c'est pour la simple raison que « *To an ancient Greek, I* am *a man* » (Lyon, 2012, 20). La similarité des conditions de vie du philosophe dans la Macédoine du 4e siècle avant Jésus-Christ et de celles de la romancière dans le Canada contemporain – penser, lire, écrire, voter – facilite son identification, qu'elle estime non problématique (18-19). Tandis que s'imaginer illettrée, incapable de voter ou d'exercer des décisions en dehors de la sphère domestique, devoir être accompagnée d'un homme pour sortir, lui paraissent beaucoup plus difficiles à concevoir et requièrent un véritable exercice d'imagination.

Cependant, afin d'expliquer pleinement la mesure singulière, personnelle, de la conception et de la conscience qu'elle a de son statut de femme, Annabel Lyon (2012) réfère à son apprentissage des relations au sein d'un milieu familial marqué par la vulnérabilité :

> I also grew up with an elder brother who had Down syndrome. I mention this because I've come to believe that it accounts for a lot of my own behaviour in childhood, and the formation of many of my political opinions, particular [sic] with regard to gender roles and feminism. My brother needed help; he needed protection; he couldn't read very well; he needed someone to go with him when he left the house. Arguably, gender roles in my childhood were reversed: my sister and I were the strong ones, the ones encouraged to go out into the world, get educated, get jobs, learn to look after ourselves and the people around us;… To an ancient Greek, my sister and I were the boys and my brother was the girl. (21)

Plus encore qu'à une inversion des genres, qui semble n'en être qu'une conséquence, il y a surtout à remarquer l'ancrage d'une vision morale des relations dans la conscience nette et inévitable d'une inégalité des forces, menant à une distribution des compétences autour d'une vulnérabilité centrale—et non à l'exclusion ou l'évitement de celle-ci.

La subtilité d'une position de force néanmoins attentive à la vulnérabilité d'autrui, et ayant appris à composer avec, et la conscience politique qui en découle, alimentent les choix narratifs du roman. La facilité d'identification de la romancière avec le philosophe antique s'exerce ainsi le plus directement dans le ton et la voix avec lesquels elle investit son personnage. En effet, le choix audacieux de la première personne et du présent, en nous faisant pénétrer directement dans le monde intérieur d'Aristote, contribue de façon décisive et singulière à l'actualisation de sa figure humaine. Le roman d'Annabel Lyon se lit comme une étonnante immersion dans la voix d'une conscience complexe, à la lucidité douloureuse, à la personnalité déchirée entre ses émotions et sa raison, et qui souffre peut-être, plus que tout, de ce déchirement même. C'est ce déchirement que, en proposant l'alternative d'une éthique des relations en lieu et place de la morale abstraite de la justice, les théories contemporaines du *care* tentent de résoudre. En mettant au jour ces traits qui vulnérabilisent sans le diminuer celui qui toute sa vie aura cherché une théorie du « juste milieu », la romancière suggère une vision radicalement autre de ce père de la philosophie, qui le rapproche de nous, en fait notre contemporain, au sens fort où elle en fait notre égal : un être que ses faiblesses, tout autant que ses forces, rendent humain.
Dans cette construction moderne voire anachronique du personnage, plus proche de la micro-histoire et de son attachement aux pratiques et aux expériences individuelles que d'une conception macroscopique voire monumentale de l'Histoire, Lyon dresse le portrait d'un être complexe et ambivalent. Elle semble en cela suivre l'un des préceptes de Martha Nussbaum (2001), qui consiste à, non pas confier à la littérature, mais avoir confiance en elle en ce qui concerne la formation de notre être moral :

> This is what Proust meant when he claimed that certain truths about the human emotions can best be conveyed, in verbal and textual form, only by a narrative work of art: only such a work will accurately and fully show the interrelated temporal structure of emotional 'thoughts,' prominently including the heart's intermittences between recognition and denial of neediness. (Nussbaum 2001, 236)

« *[T]he heart's intermittences between recognition and denial of neediness* » : voilà exactement ce qui meut la narration à la première personne du *Juste milieu*. Or, l'éthique de la vulnérabilité est l'un des traits fondateurs de l'éthique du *care*, et le premier retenu par plusieurs des premières thèses en littérature ayant fait du *care* leur méthodologie de lecture (Marzi 2015 ; Hétu 2016).

Cette éthique de l'attention, cette importance donnée aux relations humaines, aux émotions telles que l'esprit tente après-coup de les rationaliser, aux sentiments et aux blessures que l'intelligence ou la lucidité peuvent infliger ou créer de toutes pièces dans la fiction de l'univers intérieur, sont les éléments qui rattachent le plus le roman aux préoccupations du *care*. Chez les philosophes qui ont contribué à introduire en France les travaux de Carol Gilligan, la « voix différente » – traduction de l'inaugural *In A Different Voice* de la psychologue américaine – est en effet le thème initial et majeur. Il est apporté par l'exemple de la voix d'Amy comme offrant une troisième voie à l'alternative binaire posée par la théorie morale de la justice. Il s'ensuit que : « C'est en redonnant sa voix, différente, au sensible individuel, à l'intime, que l'on peut assurer l'entretien (conversation/conservation) d'un monde humain » (Laugier 2009a, 80). En conséquence :

> La question—celle de l'expression de l'expérience : quand et comment *faire confiance à son expérience*, trouver la validité propre du particulier – dépasse alors la question du genre, car c'est celle de notre vie ordinaire, à tous, hommes et femmes. L'histoire du féminisme commence précisément par une expérience d'inexpression, dont les théories du *care* rendent comptent concrètement, dans leur ambition de mettre en valeur une dimension ignorée, non exprimée de l'expérience. (Laugier, 2009b, 185)

C'est donc bien une éthique *féministe et non pas féminine* qui se dégage du *Juste milieu*, au sens où les théoriciennes du *care* insistent sur cette distinction entre ce qui est de l'ordre d'une revendication politique d'égalité et ce qui serait—fiction du naturel—de l'ordre des attributs essentiels des femmes (voir Paperman et Laugier, 2011, 17). Ce n'est ni parce qu'il est un homme ni malgré cela

qu'Aristote est vulnérable, mais parce qu'il a besoin des autres pour vivre et pour survivre, comme d'autres ont besoin de lui, de même que tout son savoir ne peut le sauver entièrement de lui-même. Le nouvel ordre social qu'il espère voir implémenter par son élève, s'il réussit son enseignement, est celui d'un monde où la connaissance des autres et de soi, à travers un souci de la santé dans ses formes multiples, des échanges humains dans leurs complexités, une attention aiguë à ceux qui nous entourent ou dont nous avons la charge, organiserait le tissu de la vie civique. Ce, de préférence à l'alternative de la barbarie effrénée des conquêtes impériales qui aura le dernier mot de l'Histoire, mais qui n'est encore qu'un possible au moment où Lyon situe son action. Sa rénovation de notre façon occidentale traditionnelle d'aborder l'Histoire en passe ainsi par un flirt fugitif avec la dystopie, bien qu'il soit laissé au lecteur d'imaginer de quel héritage civilisationnel nous serions aujourd'hui les dépositaires si, chez Alexandre, le philosophe l'avait emporté sur le guerrier, si la « grandeur » qui lui est demeurée attachée avait été celle d'une éthique de la vulnérabilité ou de la compassion plutôt que celle de la conquête sanguinaire.

L'ultime modernité du roman, sa poignante actualité, réside dans ce combat suspendu dont nous connaissons, pour le passé historique, l'issue, mais qui demeure, pour le présent et le futur, irrésolu. La grande force du roman historique, alors, est bien de nous faire lire l'Histoire au présent, afin d'éveiller ou de réveiller notre attention à l'urgence des enjeux éthiques contemporains.

Or en s'attachant aux émotions et relations individuelles, aux suites de moments vécus plutôt qu'au temps monumental, à la viscéralité des échanges et du sentiment de soi, Annabel Lyon se trouve à rénover radicalement l'écriture de l'Histoire, faisant du roman un laboratoire de compassion : apte à susciter notre empathie envers d'autres éloignés de nous, que ce soit par le temps, la géographie, la culture, le sexe, à la mesure et au rythme même où les personnages s'apprivoisent entre eux. C'est qu'elle fait le pari anachronique de nous présenter le philosophe et son élève non seulement à travers leur rapport de forces et les tensions inhérentes à leurs situations et statuts respectifs, mais dans leur lutte intérieure contre les forces de la maladie mentale : dépression et bipolarité pour le premier ; syndrome de stress post-traumatique ou « cœur du soldat » (2011, 268, 271), tel qu'il aurait été connu dans l'Antiquité, pour le second. Cet apparent anachronisme du diagnostic—non pas posé dans le roman mais explicité en conférence (Lyon 2012)—aboutit à une vision historicisée de la santé mentale, qui révèle la pertinence diachronique d'affections situées sur un spectre d'occurrences plutôt qu'aux deux pôles de la normalité et de l'anormalité. Ce faisant, le roman modernise et rend accessibles ces figures d'un passé lointain et scolaire.

2. Une théorie affective du roman historique : raconter la vie, non l'Histoire

Selon Annabel Lyon (2012), la vocation du roman historique, « *is to inform us about the present via the past* » (14). Elle le définit ainsi « *very loosely, as fiction set before the writer's own living memory* » (9). L'usage qu'elle fait d'un langage cru et actuel défie ainsi délibérément la peur de l'anachronisme qui hante l'écrivain de fiction historique, et permet d'embrasser le présent dans le passé, de nous y immerger pour une réelle compréhension *éthique* :

> Anachronism is a constant worry for the writer of historical fiction. Or is it? In fact, ironically, I'll argue that for true ethical understanding—in order to feel true Aristotelian compassion with long-dead characters, and to gain real ethical insights thereby—writers must let go of the bugaboo of anachronism and embrace the present in the past. (7)

Ces anachronismes de langue, en soufflant la poussière accumulée par des siècles de représentations muséales, suscitent une lecture alerte. Parce que sa langue détonne par rapport à nos attentes, la romancière nous rend attentifs à un univers que l'on croyait compassé. Or comment parvenir à cette perspicacité éthique sans passer par un régime affectif de représentation ? Annabel Lyon reconnaît sa dette à l'égard de *Upheavals of Thought: The Intelligence of Emotions* de Martha Nussbaum (2001), qui fait du roman un terrain privilégié d'initiation à l'empathie : « *In other words,* écrit Lyon, *narrative works (and I would claim particularly literary works), are not merely helpful, but essential to our understanding of the range of human emotions in general, and compassion in particular*. » (Lyon 2012, 6) Relayant l'argument général de la philosophe tout en le menant plus loin par l'appropriation privilégiée et spécifique que lui autorise la

fiction historique, la romancière ajoute :

> What I'm going to argue is that literary fiction is uniquely poised to perform an important ethical function in our lives—namely, to teach us compassion, a deep and lasting understanding of the other—and that historical fiction, with its particular tradition of focusing on moral problems and injustices, offers a particularly interesting tool for performing that function. (6-7)

La romancière emprunte ainsi à la philosophe l'idée de la capacité de la fiction tragique à reconnaître « "*the similar humanity of different groups of vulnerable humans*" » (8) et à promouvoir une « "*extension of concern by linking the imagination powerfully to the adventures of the distant life in question*" *(352)* » (8-9). On retrouve l'éthique de la vulnérabilité au principe même du choix et de la nécessité de la fiction historique.

Réformant radicalement les normes de celle-ci, Lyon fait le pari de partir non des grands événements historiques, des batailles et des guerres, ou encore des écrits, mais de situations particulières, interpersonnelles, révélatrices d'affects, qui vont lui permettre de mettre au jour le minerai de chaque vie individuelle —quitte en effet à commettre certains anachronismes, parce qu'elle a besoin de s'immerger suffisamment dans son personnage pour éprouver de la compassion *à son égard*. Elle cite en exergue à son roman cet extrait du *Alexandre* de Plutarque, dans la traduction anglaise de John Dryden :

> It must be borne in mind that my design is not to write histories, but lives. And the most glorious exploits do not always furnish us with the clearest discoveries of virtue or vice in men; sometimes a matter of less moment, an expression or a jest, informs us better of their characters and inclinations, than the most famous sieges, the greatest armaments, or the bloodiest battles whatsoever. (2012, n.p.)

Ce souhait d'écrire des vies plutôt que des histoires passe donc par le choix narratif du registre de la *personne du discours*, comme l'appelait Émile Benveniste (1966), *a contrario* de la troisième personne et des temps du passé qui font en principe l'énonciation historique. Dès l'*incipit* saisissant d'immédiateté, qui n'est pas loin d'évoquer une *Origine du monde* à la Gustave Courbet, on entend ainsi résonner le parti pris de l'intime, de la vie commune, de la promiscuité physique et sensuelle, d'un partage émotif et animal du monde, ouvrant à la connaissance intellectuelle :

> La pluie s'abat en cordes noires, cinglant mes bêtes, mes hommes et ma femme, Pythias, qui la nuit dernière était allongée sur notre couche, jambes écartées, tandis que je prenais des notes sur la bouche de son sexe, et qui pleure à présent des larmes silencieuses, au dixième jour de notre périple. (Lyon, 2011, 13)

Si on entre *in medias res* dans la vie d'Aristote, ce n'est pas seulement parce que le texte nous projette immédiatement dans une scène en mouvement, mais c'est en ce qu'on entre directement au cœur de sa vie mentale autant que charnelle, réflexive autant qu'animée de désirs et de pulsions : sa vie empirique dans son alternance de jours et de nuits, ses relations imbriquées avec le vivant qui l'entoure. Dans son *Introduction* à *Imagining Ancient Women*, Curtis Gillespie remarque à propos du roman : « *The book is a masterful blend of the philosophical and the visceral, in which human beings are thinkers and animals, tender and savage* » (Lyon, 2012, x). Cette échelle romanesque épouse les présupposés de la philosophie du *care*, nous présentant Aristote et Alexandre « en ce qu'ils sont des êtres charnels, qui ont besoin de manger, de se laver, de dormir et d'habiter quelque part, qui font éventuellement des enfants qui doivent eux aussi manger, se laver, dormir et habiter quelque part », pour reprendre Patricia Paperman (2013) décrivant les sujets auxquels s'intéresse le *care* (6). Ce faisant, la romancière résiste à la « hiérarchisation des préoccupations morales » qui a cours dans la pensée dominante de la justice et de l'Histoire, fondée sur la rationalité de principes et non sur l'expérience des individus (9), et qui isolerait ou tairait cette dimension en tant qu'insignifiante au regard des raisons pour lesquelles ces deux hommes ont laissé leur nom dans l'Histoire. Au contraire, parce que nous entrons dans leur expérience à travers les fibres fines de leurs systèmes nerveux, la gloire de ces figures illustres ne les sépare pas de nous, comme tendent à le faire les représentations encyclopédiques visant l'acquisition positive d'un patrimoine. « *Through Annabel Lyon's artistry*, écrit encore Gillespie, *Aristotle is seen not as a remote intellectual but as a man with needs, passions, jealousies, a man who wants to feel emotion but is overruled by reason* », et, ajoute-t-il, « *a man for whom we care a great deal* » (Lyon, 2012, xi). Ces deux dimen-

sions apparaissent étroitement liées : parce que la romancière nous dépeint un individu aux prises avec ses anxiétés, sa dépression, ses faiblesses morales ou ses manquements physiques, nous pouvons nous attacher à lui d'une façon peu commune dans notre rapport aux figures historiques ; nous accédons à lui *à travers* notre vulnérabilité, *grâce à elle*, via une reconnaissance mutuelle d'humanité préconisée par Joan Tronto ([1993] 2009) dans *Un monde vulnérable. Pour une politique du care*. Pour la philosophe politique américaine, c'est la vulnérabilité, en tant que mesure commune aux espèces et au vivant, qui devrait être placée au cœur du social et des décisions collectives ([1993] 2009), et constituer le fondement de nos démocraties (Tronto, 2009, 50-51).

Un autre angle par lequel la romancière aborde cet univers intime est celui de la domesticité. Le roman réussit en effet une incursion dans l'univers du privé, de l'intime, de la vie quotidienne du foyer, même si son auteure déclare que : « The Golden Mean *is a male novel representing a male world: the public world of politics and warfare and intellectual ambition and the battle for influence* » (Lyon, 2012, 33). La vie domestique d'Aristote est amplement évoquée, on le trouve sans cesse *situé* dans son environnement matériel, physique, affectif. Lyon le met en scène dans sa maisonnée, en relation avec son espace de vie (chambre, bureau, cuisine, patio) et à travers son attention à l'alimentation, aux soins du corps, au sexe, à la santé physique et mentale. Cette échelle du particulier, de nouveau, est féministe plus que féminine : elle embrasse la sensibilité d'Aristote, formé dès l'enfance par son père à la médecine et à la biologie, fasciné par l'anatomie, curieux plus généralement du vivant. Or pour Joan Tronto ([1993] 2009), le *care* se définit comme

> une activité générique qui comprend tout ce que nous faisons pour maintenir, perpétuer et réparer notre "monde", de sorte que nous puissions y vivre aussi bien que possible. Ce monde comprend nos corps, nous-mêmes et notre environnement, tous éléments que nous cherchons à relier en un réseau complexe, en soutien à la vie. (143)

Annabel Lyon place Aristote au cœur d'une configuration complexe de relations qui toutes semblent rayonner à partir de lui, à commencer par celle qu'il entretient avec sa femme, Pythias, puis avec leur fille première-née, jusqu'à celle, dévoilant une certaine brutalité, qu'il entretient à ses esclaves, en passant par celle nouée avec son neveu qui vit également avec lui ; ainsi que celles, bisexuelles, par lesquelles s'est formée sa sexualité, et celle qu'il entretient au souvenir de ses parents. À l'instar du *care*, le roman privilégie le concret des vies réelles, « la connaissance du monde social dont nous disposons "de l'intérieur", c'est-à-dire à partir des conditions concrètes, particulières et locales de nos existences incarnées » (Paperman 2013, 5). Il embrasse une éthique relationnelle, construisant les personnages à travers les tensions qui les opposent, les désirs qui les aimantent, les affinités ou inimitiés immédiates qu'ils nouent entre eux.

C'est aussi cette éthique de l'attention au particulier qui fait du roman historique d'Annabel Lyon un roman profondément contemporain. La romancière descend de la grandeur de personnages immenses vers leurs points de vulnérabilité, et plus encore, vers leurs *moments* de vulnérabilité ; non tant leurs failles que ce qui les rend, à tout moment, humains. C'est ainsi qu'elle écrit non pas des vies—*Le Juste milieu* s'attache plutôt à un épisode de ces vies, celui de leur rencontre—mais du « vivre », au sens que le philosophe François Jullien (2011) notamment donne à ce verbe substantivé : un processus incertain et sans cesse inachevé. Celui-ci oscille de moments de clairvoyance en moments de doute, de souverainetés en désarrois, de grâces en défaites affectives, quand sont blessés les sentiments ou l'amour-propre, quand le désir de l'un rencontre la résistance de l'autre. Il catalogue aussi bien ces instants où l'ambition est tournée en ironie par des situations immaîtrisables, et ces autres où la foi en un attachement privilégié se voit relativisée par d'autres attachements, obligeant à l'autocritique, celle-ci dansant sur une mince ligne entre lucidité et autodénigrement.

Le « juste milieu », *the golden mean*, apparaît comme l'étalon de la vie bonne, recherchée par Aristote pour lui-même, préconisée par lui dans son enseignement auprès d'Alexandre, mais apparaissant pour l'un comme pour l'autre – que leurs passions ou leurs affections situent à des extrêmes –, comme un horizon toujours fuyant, un mirage réservé à d'autres hommes nés avec des attributs différents. Ultimement, le combat qui se livre secrètement, souterrainement dans le roman est celui qui joue les déterminismes de la naissance contre la liberté d'agir, les prédispositions naturelles contre l'effrayant dilemme que constitue à tout moment le libre

arbitre, guidé par le pouvoir de la pensée et la capacité au discernement moral.

3. La relation d'enseignement comme modèle de *care*

Pour atteindre cette échelle du particulier, pour dessiner le portrait affectif d'un géant culturel ramené à sa dimension d'être humain physique et sensible, en proie à la dépression et la bipolarité, Annabel Lyon isole un épisode de sa vie où il est le plus vulnérable : en exil, dans une position politiquement forcée, sommé par le roi Philippe de devenir le précepteur de son fils dont dépend l'avenir de l'Empire. C'est un moment de liberté limitée pour le philosophe, où il se voit contraint de se soumettre à l'arbitraire du roi, et dans lequel vont se faire jour des doutes liés à la relation d'enseignement, celle-ci chargée d'ambiguïtés. Car si Aristote est le maître d'Alexandre, celui qui lui apprend à penser, Alexandre est aussi son maître de par sa position politique et familiale : l'héritier de celui qui l'emploie, ce dernier pouvant à tout moment décider d'envoyer son fils à la guerre. C'est un moment ténu, fragile, menacé, pendant lequel Aristote doit se dépêcher d'enseigner à un être que son ambition, sa puissance réelle autant que celle promise par son lignage, vont à tout moment emporter au-delà de l'être pensant et mesuré, juste, voire sage, qu'il pourrait devenir. Dans le cheminement d'Alexandre, écrit Curtis Gillespie, « *we are made painfully aware of the fulcrum between […] the path of the soldier and the path of the thinker* » (Lyon, 2012, xi). C'est un moment, on ne peut l'ignorer—et c'est ce qui fait la résonance et l'actualité fortes de ce livre—où le savoir des humanités se voit confronté à la force du pouvoir politique et guerrier, où il doit lutter contre lui, à armes toujours déjà inégales et dans un combat perdu d'avance.

Aristote s'efforce d'enseigner la liberté—de penser, de juger, d'agir, de sentir—à un être dont l'avenir est déjà fortement déterminé. Mais il se prend aussi d'affection pour son élève, dont il perçoit l'intelligence et pressent tout le potentiel, et cette affection aussi le fragilise, même s'il n'en montre rien, ce à quoi le dispositif narratif du livre nous permet d'avoir accès : « Ce garçon est devenu mon projet, à présent, mon premier projet humain. Un problème, une épreuve, un pari ; une métaphore sur laquelle je joue ma propre vie » (Lyon 2011, 146-147). Ces pensées d'Aristote à l'égard de son élève s'étendent bientôt à son désir général envers l'enseignement : « J'ai l'intuition soudain qu'il me trouve arrogant, ou possessif. Je le confesse, j'aimerais toucher toutes leurs passions, les défroisser, les ordonner et les rafraîchir, tel un esclave lavant le linge, et les marquer de mon empreinte » (279). Dans cette relation comparable à nulle autre, ni familiale ni amicale non plus que sentimentale, et pourtant puissante potentiellement, il s'agit de *toucher*, d'affecter durablement l'être en formation, de contribuer à son éclosion. La physicalité de la description éloigne du portrait asséché de l'individu cérébral et rationnel auquel tendent à être réduites les figures du passé, celles des philosophes et des penseurs tout particulièrement. Surtout, elle implique un engagement de l'être qui englobe tout en le dépassant le seul rapport de raison à raison. Déplaçant le foyer de l'attention, Lyon nous montre ainsi Aristote et Alexandre à leur plus vulnérable ; mais aussi, en les mettant en scène dans la dynamique de leur relation, tels que chacun est en mesure de deviner et de rendre sensible le plus vulnérable chez l'autre, au travers de situations sociales ou en tête à tête où sont mis à nu orgueil, jalousie, peur, déception, honneur, honte. Ainsi de cet épisode où, à la suite d'un accès qu'on dirait aujourd'hui de syndrome post-traumatique qui lui a fait blesser son camarade, Aristote dit d'Alexandre : « Je l'ai vu dans sa nudité, maintenant, jusqu'à ses zones les plus blanches et tendres ; tendres, ou pourries. Nous avons tous deux besoin de temps pour oublier » (273). Aussi dans cette relation les deux parties sont-elles, en outre, mutuellement affectées, la tâche morale du maître étant alors fondée « non sur des principes mais une question : comment faire, dans telle situation, pour préserver et entretenir les relations humaines qui y sont en jeu ? » (Laugier, 2009b, 159).

Le roman donne aussi leur place à des personnages insignifiants pour la hiérarchie de l'époque, secondaires sur le plan historique aussi bien que pour l'intrigue principale, mais qui permettent d'approfondir la véritable compréhension éthique (« *true ethical understanding* » [Lyon, 2012, 7]) recherché par le roman historique tel que le conçoit Lyon, et de découvrir les modulations variées du comportement d'Aristote vis-à-vis de ses interlocuteurs, notamment lorsque ceux-ci sont des inférieurs. La romancière choisit ainsi de faire figurer dans le roman le frère aîné d'Alexandre, Arrhidée, successeur logique du trône s'il n'était handicapé mental, opposé d'Alexandre donc mais aussi, plus gravement, déstabilisant la lignée. Alexandre se trouve par lui dans la position ambiguë de recevoir un pou-

voir en quelque sorte immérité, en même temps que, de façon symétriquement innée à l'incapacité de son frère, il en possède toutes les qualités. Est ainsi soulignée la contingence biologique de la naissance, le positionnement dans le monde qu'elle confère automatiquement, indépendamment du mérite voire des règles sociales en vigueur à une époque donnée.

Le philosophe ne renonce pas pourtant à éduquer Arrhidée, qu'il sort de l'isolement où il était laissé et qu'il humanise en parvenant à lui faire battre le rythme de la musique, chanter et tracer des lettres, aimer les chevaux, monter à cheval et se tenir droit, et qu'il en vient finalement à rendre humain aux yeux d'un Alexandre qui l'avait toujours méprisé, réconciliant les deux frères au cours d'une promenade sur la plage à laquelle le futur empereur a consenti grâce à sa persuasion. Avec ce personnage mineur à tous les sens du terme et d'abord politiquement puisqu'il est relégué à vivre à l'écart du monde, il s'agit de donner à penser moins des contraires polaires que des envers sombres de l'humanité, qui réclament notre empathie à défaut même de notre sympathie quand il y a peu en eux à aimer, parce que nous partageons avec eux certaines vulnérabilités, voire la condition même de vulnérabilité, qu'ils rendent tout à coup impossible à esquiver tout à fait.

L'autre personnage subalterne est l'aide-infirmier d'Arrhidée, qui éprouve du ressentiment vis-à-vis d'Aristote pour ce nouveau rôle tout à coup gratifiant ou reconnu qu'il vient jouer auprès du fils perdu, quand lui l'exerce dans l'ombre depuis des années. Avec une acuité remarquable, Lyon dresse à travers lui le portrait d'une relation de soin sans sollicitude : un *care* pratique sans *care* moral ; tout en montrant aussi l'épuisement moral amené par les fonctions d'aide-soignant, indispensables et pourtant non valorisées socialement, ainsi que le dénonce l'éthique du *care* dans ses travaux sur « le sale boulot » (voir l'excellente synthèse de Delphine Moreau [2009]). Or cette défaite interne, c'est à partir de sa propre vulnérabilité qu'Aristote est à même de la comprendre, et, passant par-dessus l'inimitié initiale que lui inspire l'aide-soignant, c'est grâce à elle qu'il est en mesure de lui venir en aide. Lors d'une de ses visites à Arrhidée, son entretien avec le garde-malade fait pleurer ce dernier, qui souffre d'une forme de dépression directement liée à sa relation soignante, et la romancière fait dire à Aristote, de cette voix intérieure qui conduit tout le livre : « Je connais bien ces crises de larmes subites, l'étrange dissociation entre ce que fait le visage et ce qui occupe l'esprit. Moi-même, il m'arrive de sangloter tout en travaillant, en mangeant, ou en prenant mon bain, et de me réveiller en pleine nuit avec sur le visage les traces d'escargot de ce genre de crises » (Lyon 2011, 70). Ainsi, aucun personnage n'est blanc ou noir, bon ou méchant. C'est dans l'approfondissement de la relation que leurs nuances apparaissent, dans la vulnérabilité partagée que des solidarités se tissent. Ce n'est pas seulement malgré sa dépression qu'Aristote est en mesure de soigner les autres, physiquement ou intellectuellement—et cette convergence des deux se fait au mieux dans le cas d'Arrhidée—, c'est aussi *depuis* elle, cette maladie dont il souffre et qui aiguise sa lucidité, et à travers laquelle, s'il ne peut toujours se comprendre, il se connaît lui-même.

Ces relations fines, analysées avec perspicacité dans le discours intérieur d'Aristote, ont lieu essentiellement dans la sphère privée, à l'abri des regards, excentrées de la sphère politique agissante. C'est que, ne servant aucun pouvoir, elles ne sont pas valorisées dans l'univers où évoluent les personnages, bien qu'elles tissent, de proche en proche, l'humanité de leurs rapports. Il en va de même de l'enseignement. Celui-ci est à la fois requis, voire réquisitionné par le roi qui veut le meilleur pour son fils et considère prestigieux l'enseignement d'Aristote, dont il connaît l'intelligence depuis leur enfance à tous deux ; et à la fois implicitement secondaire voire superfétatoire, passant en second chaque fois que le demande l'urgence de l'action stratégique ou guerrière. De cette façon, le chef politique assume lui-même un jeu de pouvoir contre cette forme si différente de la conquête—celle de l'esprit—que constitue la philosophie, et, par là, contre l'individu Aristote, en tant que nouvelle figure tutélaire qui pourrait lui ravir son fils, et qu'il convient donc de subordonner.

Un cercle élargi des dynamiques relationnelles à l'œuvre dans le roman place donc Aristote dans la domesticité d'Alexandre, comme l'un de ses serviteurs, puisque c'est sur commande du roi qu'il lui fournit son enseignement ; puisque c'est lui qui rend visite au jeune Alexandre où que celui-ci se trouve, et doit l'accompagner dans sa retraite lorsque celui-ci est blessé ; lui qui doit réduire la distance, amadouer le jeune homme, le rendre attentif à ses leçons ; lui qui est congédié sans même un avertissement lorsque tout à coup Alexan-

dre part au combat. Il est dans un rôle de soin, et fait véritablement figure avant l'heure—mais cette heure où Annabel Lyon écrit est la nôtre—de théoricien du *care* : tentant de faire valoir auprès d'une figure politique qui va décider de l'avenir d'un empire cette éthique de l'attention et du particulier par laquelle il aurait le souci de la vie de l'autre, et d'abord de la sienne : de sa santé physique et mentale, à partir de laquelle seule toute *gouvernance* est possible.

4. Modernité des affects : la maladie mentale

L'auteure décrit l'enfance d'Aristote, « misérable, solitaire, apeuré » (Lyon 2011, 82) auprès d'un père médecin qui l'emmène avec lui dans ses tournées, lui apprend tout du corps humain et de ses mécanismes dans les chambres de femmes sur le point d'accoucher, mais qui demeure distant, inquiet, souffrant lui aussi de « mélancolie » (138), d'une difficulté à témoigner de ses sentiments, et qui meurt subitement de la peste. De ces années de formation, elle fait ressortir un Aristote médecin et scientifique, profondément chercheur, sans cesse curieux des manifestations du corps animal ou humain (qu'il place au même rang en termes mécaniques), aussi intelligent et perspicace qu'éminemment fragile dans ses humeurs et ses émotions à fleur de peau.

Des scènes d'aveu dépressif ponctuent ainsi régulièrement le texte, constitué tout entier de cette introspection d'Aristote, de ce dialogue avec lui-même malgré sa « propre noirceur [qui le] menace » (71), ces « émotions confuses, couleur de boue » (203) qui retentissent jusque dans son corps : « Je me masse la paume avec le pouce, tout en passant le bout de l'index sur le dessus de ma main, entre les os, en me leurrant moi-même sur le sujet de la douleur (n'y aurait-il pas moyen d'enfoncer un clou là-dedans doucement ?) » (202). Toute sa clairvoyance n'empêche pas Aristote de souffrir—or elle est immense, y compris et d'abord à son propre égard, comme s'il avait été de tout temps son premier objet d'étude, selon un dédoublement pour ainsi dire inévitable qui est l'un des caractères de la dépression, et qui lui confère en même temps sa très grande lucidité, voire sa très grande créativité. Insomniaque, reclus la plupart du temps dans sa « petite bulle dans le noir » (203), sujet aux migraines et aux larmes jusque dans le jour et les circonstances publiques les moins appropriées, jouet d'« humeurs sombres » qui peuvent à tout moment surgir (181), tel est le Aristote d'Annabel Lyon. Aimant être seul mais recherchant sans cesse la compagnie de sa femme, il est dépeint avec elle dans des scènes de sexe cru aussi bien que dans les instants où ils s'effleurent dans la cuisine, partageant un silence ou une conversation, des fruits secs ou un souci domestique, une inquiétude ou la compréhension tacite d'un moment de dépression qui vient, pleins de sollicitude l'un pour l'autre, bien que le philosophe conserve sur sa femme en tant que femme, mineure et supposée sensible, une position sexiste et condescendante de son temps. En un mot, il a pour elle moins d'indulgence pour ses possibles instants de détresse psychologique qu'il n'en témoigne pour les jeunes soldats ou pour son neveu. Autant l'auteure rappelle que le philosophe se concevait comme—et se voulait—un être rationnel, autant elle le montre, et sans en faire une incompatibilité ni un paradoxe, sensible, attentionné, perceptif, d'un grand talent d'observation dans le silence méditatif qui le voit souvent plus à son aise en retrait du monde. Capable aussi, lors de ses accès les plus sombres de « mélancolie », d'un mépris total de soi, et ces épisodes mêmes n'échappent pas à son discernement :

> *Je suis un déchet*. Cette certitude est mon climat—mes nuages traces intimes. Tantôt bas, noirs et sombres ; tantôt hauts et fuyants, troupeau immaculé, sans pesanteur, d'une belle journée d'été. Je confie cela à Pythias, parfois, comme une dépêche urgente en provenance des ténèbres : « Je suis un déchet. » Elle ne répond rien. (71)

Sur ces humeurs météorologiques, imprévisibles et changeantes comme le serait un climat extérieur, qui le dépossèdent de lui-même dans le même temps qu'elles l'empêchent absolument de s'oublier, le philosophe n'a aucun pouvoir, ce d'autant moins qu'il n'existe encore pour ces affections atmosphériques aucune nosographie :

> Il n'y a pas de nom pour cette maladie, aucun diagnostic, nul traitement mentionné dans les traités de médecine de mon père. On pourrait se tenir devant moi sans même deviner mes symptômes. Métaphore : je souffre de couleurs : le gris, l'écarlate, le doré, un noir aussi profond que la gueule d'une bête. Il m'arrive de ne pas savoir comment continuer ainsi, comment m'accoutumer à une maladie que je suis incapable d'expliquer et de guérir. (28)

Affects ici plutôt que symptômes, au sens spinoziste de variations produites dans le corps (celui-ci incluant l'esprit) et diminuant ou augmentant sa puissance d'agir, mais non nécessairement visibles : plus discrets, plus intérieurs, plus subtils, occasionnant des variations subjectives de l'environnement. Et plus loin : « je pleure facilement, ris facilement, m'emporte facilement. Je me laisse submerger » (57). Pourtant, craignant de se faire moquer pour cette « maladie de femme » (252), lorsque sa femme Pythias cherche à partager avec lui des pertes d'énergie similaires, il la repousse malgré lui, sans doute parce que, mineure politique faisant partie de sa domesticité au même titre que ses esclaves, elle n'appartient pas au même groupe humain qu'Aristote, « "*the similar humanity of different groups of vulnerable humans*" », au fondement selon Nussbaum de la fiction tragique comme de la compassion (citée par Lyon, 2012, 8), n'impliquant pas dans la Grèce antique leur égalité. C'est aussi que cette maladie si personnelle est chez lui une occasion d'orgueil :

> Pourtant, je ne peux pas accepter que le mal qui m'affecte ne soit pas, d'une certaine manière, unique, un désordre sans nom connu. Il y a longtemps, mon père a diagnostiqué chez moi un excès de bile noir, ce qui est assez vrai à certains moments, mais ne suffit pas à expliquer les autres, ceux où je n'ai tout simplement plus besoin de sommeil, où les livres semblent s'écrire tout seuls, et où le moindre recoin du monde se pare de couleur et de douceur, et resplendit, comme par infusion divine. (Lyon 2011, 252)

Dépression donc, cette « douleur qui, pour n'être pas physique, n'en demeure pas moins un fardeau » (253), cette souffrance qui « aspire la couleur du ciel et la chaleur du monde » (251), mais aussi bipolarité faisant alterner des épisodes maniaques. La maladie d'Aristote est singulièrement personnelle et s'énonce chez Lyon en termes poétiques, comme si elle tressait la singularité même de sa pensée. S'il ne la désire pas autrement, jaloux en quelque sorte de l'élection paradoxale où elle le place, sa description montre aussi à quel point elle est une affection de la relation à soi-même, tendue constamment entre la plus haute considération et la plus sévère déconsidération.

L'examen continu et intransigeant de lui-même auquel se livre Aristote, qui est le moteur du roman, croisé aux observations fines qu'il fait de ses contemporains, offre un portrait de lui en tant que sujet *affecté*. Or, plus encore que le terme d'*affect*, c'est celui d'affection qui paraît alors s'imposer, en tant qu'il concerne aussi bien le physique que le mental, et a ce double sens du maladif et du relationnel en tant qu'« [é]tat modificatif du corps » ou « de l'âme » dans le sens ancien ; « [m]odification qui affecte la sensibilité, sentiment, passion, etc. » dans le sens moderne ; et encore, en un sens médical péjoratif : « Modification qui affecte le corps en altérant la santé, maladie (considérée dans ses symptômes douloureux) » ; et, dans le sens sentimental où nous l'entendons aujourd'hui : « Manifestation du sentiment d'attachement d'un être pour un autre être…Sentiment désintéressé, moins vif que l'*amour*, et plus tendre que l'*amitié*. (*Dict. des gens du monde,* 1818) » (*Trésor de la langue française informatisé*). C'est toute cette palette fine que le roman s'emploie à méticuleusement dessiner. Pour son élève Aristote ressent une telle affection, une tendresse désintéressée qui le rend attentif à décrypter à tout instant de quelles affections celui-ci souffre, comment ils s'affectent l'un l'autre dans leur relation d'enseignement, mais aussi comment cette relation est affectée par d'autres influences extérieures. C'est ce spectre de nuances qui fait la mobilité extraordinaire de ce roman tout intérieur.

En donnant à entendre par la voix d'Aristote le conflit interne généré et alimenté par la maladie mentale, Annabel Lyon fait ainsi entendre *une voix différente*, au sens de Carol Gilligan : la voix d'un intellectuel et d'un sage aux prises avec des affects et des affections qui le déstabilisent et sur lesquels ne peut régner entièrement sa raison. L'une des grandes réussites du roman est ainsi de nous faire baigner, par le flux du monologue intérieur, au sein de cet univers affectif dans lequel sont immergées et parfois engluées nos pensées, et qui jouent un rôle dans nos jugements voire les altèrent. Comme l'écrit Sandra Laugier (2009a) dans son article sur « L'éthique comme politique de l'ordinaire » : « Concevoir la morale sur le seul modèle de la justice conduit à négliger des aspects parmi les plus importants et difficiles de la vie morale—nos proximités, nos motivations, nos relations—au profit de concepts éloignés de nos questionnements ordinaires – l'obligation, la rationalité, le choix » (82). À l'inverse :

> Les analyses en termes de *care* s'inscrivent dans [un] mouvement de critique de la théorisation morale, qui

> revendique un primat de la description des pratiques morales dans la réflexion éthique. Les éthiques du *care* partent [...] de problèmes moraux concrets, et voient comment nous nous en sortons, non pas pour abstraire à partir de ces solutions particulières (ce serait encore la pulsion de généralité) mais pour percevoir la valeur même au sein du particulier. Elles appellent une sorte d'ethnographie morale qui laisserait leur place aux expressions propres des agents, en lieu et place d'une normativité préexistante qui analyserait ou engagerait des comportements. (82)

La littérature, alors, constitue un terrain éminemment favorable à de telles explorations de « *comment nous nous en sortons* » dans des situations particulières, et c'est cette échelle du particulier qui précisément nous y rend sensibles. Lorsqu'*a fortiori* cette singularité imprègne la poétique même du texte, ajoutant une voix inoubliable au patrimoine de ces personnages de fiction qui suscitent notre empathie voire notre pitié, elle réussit un pari esthétique qui rappelle aussi bien son importance centrale dans notre éducation morale.

En conclusion

Le Juste milieu présente une figure culturelle fondatrice de la pensée occidentale à travers les affects changeants de la maladie mentale. En abordant Aristote sous l'angle de la dépression et de la bipolarité, en optant pour le choix fort de la première personne et du présent, Annabel Lyon humanise et actualise le philosophe comme un être vivant et souffrant, portraituré dans son quotidien et son intimité autant que dans ses relations sociales. Le roman historique devient le terrain d'une démonstration d'empathie qui avoue ailleurs sa dette à l'égard de la philosophie morale de Martha Nussbaum. En saisissant Aristote à un moment fragile de sa vie, lorsqu'il devient, sous pression amicale et politique, le précepteur du futur Alexandre le Grand, la romancière offre le portrait d'une relation d'enseignement qui a les accents de l'éthique contemporaine du *care*. Elle suggère le devenir en temps réel de deux êtres formés et informés par leur apprivoisement mutuel, et conjugue l'Antiquité au présent dans une revalorisation singulièrement novatrice des humanités.

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Touch and Affect in Alice Munro's "Nettles"; or, Redefining Intimacy

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Abstract

The skin, and the sense of touch it is linked with, is often an essential way to approach the world in Munro's stories, and brings the focus onto affects. This study focuses on touch and the skin in "Nettles" (*Hateship, Friendship, Courtship, Loveship, Marriage*, 2001), a particularly luminous instance of story in which skin and affect together play a key role in creating a sense of intimacy.

Résumé

La peau, et le sens du toucher auquel elle est liée, est souvent un moyen essentiel d'aborder le monde dans les histoires de Munro, et met l'accent sur les affects. Cette étude porte sur le toucher et la peau dans « Nettles » (*Hateship, Friendship, Courtship, Loveship, Marriage*, 2001), exemple particulièrement lumineux d'une histoire dans laquelle la peau et l'affect jouent un rôle clé dans la création d'un sentiment d'intimité.

> I think of being an old maid, in another generation. There were plenty of old maids in my family. I come of straitened people, madly secretive, tenacious, economical. Like them, I could make a little go a long way. A piece of Chinese silk folded in a drawer, worn by the touch of fingers in the dark. Or the one letter, hidden under maidenly garments, never needing to be opened or read because every word is known by heart, and a touch communicates the whole. Perhaps nothing so tangible, nothing but the memory of an ambiguous word, an intimate, casual tone of voice, a hard, helpless look. That could do.
>
> -Alice Munro, "Bardon Bus," *The Moons of Jupiter*

The fiction of Alice Munro is largely devoted to examining women protagonists' emotions, and how they make decisions and life choices. What prompts a character to respond to a situation in a certain way rather than another? Analysis of emotions is often retrospective and in the first person, which brings in another, or several layers of complexity, as a narrator's perspective changes over time, sometimes several times, and individual memory is not entirely reliable. Munro's fiction is also characterized by silence and reticence, while palpable or remembered evidence of emotions is often scanty and elusive. Facts are hard to verify, emotions evolve, analysis is unstable, and interpretation, always tentative (see, for instance, Howells 1998; Cox 2004; Bigot 2014). In this context of uncertainty, the sense of touch paradoxically plays a central role, as the skin, the pivotal element to that sense, links together sensation, emotions, memory, as well as the sense of self, of one's relation to the world and to others. The skin, and the sense of touch it is linked with, is often an essential way to approach the world in Munro's stories, and brings the focus onto affects.

In *Ethics*, Baruch Spinoza (2002) defines affect as follows: "By emotion [*affectus*] I understand the affections of the body by which the body's power of activity is increased or diminished, assisted or

checked, together with the ideas of these affections" (278). Through skin and affects, a character will situate herself, analyze her relation to others in sensuous and emotional terms, opening the way to ethical reflection on the body's and the self's inclinations. The sense of touch thus becomes essential to a definition of the sense of self and of one's relation to others, of the relationship of body and mind (Hardt 2007, x). Dilia Narduzzi (2013) has explored this notion, which is central to Munro's work, by showing in her study of "Child's Play" how touch leads to reactions of disgust in Marlene and Charlene in relation to Verna, a disabled girl their age. She argues that aversion to disability partly results from repeated gestures that reinforce social norms and conventions (Ahmed 2006a, 253-55), and removes the possibility of intimacy with disabled people.

This article focuses on touch and the skin in "Nettles" (*Hateship, Friendship, Courtship, Loveship, Marriage*, 2001), a story in which touch is performed in codified ways so that it brings a man and a woman closer together—up to the point when touch reveals something more secret and vulnerable about them. The story ends in a form of aporia, the relationship stops and desire (and affect) is later on transferred onto a different subject, another man. Skin is determining in the experience and (re)definition of intimacy, which may be described here, along with Lauren Berlant (1998), as "an aspiration for a narrative about something shared, a story about both oneself and others that will turn out in a particular way" (1). But, as Berlant also points out, "no one knows how to do intimacy," and yet "the demand for the traditional promise of intimate happiness to be fulfilled in everyone's everyday life" is huge (2). How is this paradox addressed by the female first-person narrator in "Nettles"? To a certain extent, her predicament is representative of women who went through the sexual revolution of the 1960s and 70s, wanting more genuine physical and sexual sensations in their intimate relationships with men, while having been brought up with traditional patterns of gender roles and men-women relations.

In the epigraph to this essay, which is the opening of "Bardon Bus" (*The Moons of Jupiter*, 1982), the narrator of the story imagines herself as an old maid in the old days, free of the risks that a love life presents, but not deprived of the sensations that love triggers, as they can be imagined by simple touch with a significant object, or even from memory of a scene, a word, or someone's expression. There is no direct interaction with another embodied human being here, and the economy of emotions is a closed circuit that is self-sufficient, provided it can rely on a few external objects or memories that act as the signs of past possibilities, lives not followed; by contrast, with these emotions, affects, with the emphasis on the link between body and mind, would have prompted some sort of action. In "Bardon Bus," the contemporary narrator herself is at a low point after the end of a love affair, and is reflecting on her misery while hoping to get over it and bounce back. The effect of her projection into the past in the opening of the story is to enhance the range of personal choices, and the range of risks that women of her generation are facing by contrast with their much more restrained settler ancestors. It is also a sign of her feeling of vulnerability when experimenting these choices. "Nettles" is mainly set in the same period as "Bardon Bus"; the temporal focus is 1979, when the unnamed protagonist meets Mike McCallum, a man she knew and played with as a child. There is a flashback to that period of their lives, and the story is told years after the central event of their encounter as adults. But the focus is on their meeting again in middle age at a common friend's place in the Ontario countryside, when the woman narrator is freshly separated from her husband, living on her own in Toronto; a single person simultaneously wanting to be independent and longing for intimacy. The story hinges on the moment when what seemed like a possible physical passion turns into compassion, the memory of love, and longing again.

The skin is the most basic means of communication with others, as psychoanalyst Didier Anzieu (1985, 62) reminds us. It is also one of the sites of affect; to quote Sara Ahmed and Judith Stacey (2001), "[s]kin opens our bodies to other bodies: through touch, the separation of self and other is undermined in the very intimacy or proximity of the encounter" (5-6). What kind of power (Spinoza 2002) may women derive from it, if any? Or is the fact that skin, like self, is more exposed and available, a source of vulnerability? What kind of impact does this evolution have on women's ethical behaviour? How does it redefine a woman's place in the world as subject, in an ethical economy where individual (including sexual) differences are constantly negotiated (Shildrick 2001, 171)? These are some of the

questions I will study in "Nettles," by examining how skin may be considered alternately in its primary function as what enables the sense of touch and therefore affect and intimacy; in its links with psychic life, through a dynamic of surface and depth; and in its role as a key figure of speech that extends to the larger world and conditions its perception, yielding a poetics of its own.

The skin is closely linked to the notion of intimacy: as Anzieu (1985) argues, the skin is first that of the mother that bears the baby; second, it is the border between inside and outside, that protects the being; it is also a means of communication with others; and last, it is a surface where the marks of significant relations will be left (62). In "Nettles," there are strong ties between the role of the skin in the definition of intimacy in childhood, and then later in adult life, as if the woman protagonist were trying to revive her idyllic relation with Mike in childhood by establishing an intimate relation with him in adulthood. The narrative accordingly shifts in time, emphasizing the adult woman's longing for intimacy by linking it to a childhood experience. After unexpectedly seeing Mike McCallum in the kitchen of her friend Sunny's country house, the narrator first remembers that period of her childhood when they played together on and around her parents' farm, developing a tender friendship, until Mike disappeared one day without warning, after his father, a well driller, had finished his work in the area and moved on elsewhere. She then describes her current situation at the time she saw Mike again: recently separated from her husband, she moved to Toronto. It was a time when she was facing the new pleasures and hardships of being single again, and of wanting to be in a relationship; after seeing Mike in Sunny's kitchen, she is sexually attracted to him, and has a night of restless sleep. But the following morning, having realized how unreasonable her desire is, she shares a quieter kind of intimacy with him. In these three sequences of the narration, corresponding with different states of mind, skin plays a crucial role.

As an eight-year-old child, the narrator still largely experiences the world physically rather than in a logical, rational way. The same applies to Mike, who is nine, although his perspective is to do with action—jumping, climbing and leaping—while the girl's is more contemplative and attentive to what holds power for her around the farm. The children's play is strongly characterized by gender roles, especially when they play war with other children; then the girl ends up being Mike's help, nursing when needed: "When Mike was wounded he never opened his eyes, he lay limp and still while I pressed the slimy large leaves to his forehead and throat and—pulling out his shirt—to his pale, tender stomach, with its sweet and vulnerable belly button" (Munro 2001, 163). The description of Mike's skin evokes the body of a child, and the focus on the navel is a reminder of the not-so-distant link of his skin to that of the mother who bore him, when he was safely protected by her skin in the womb. Yet, although Mike appears as a child, there is also an underlying sense of pre-sexuality to the scene, as the hired man who teases the girl about her boyfriend and having to get married to him suggests. Her mother denies it, arguing that they are "[l]ike brother and sister" (164), but the adult narrator retrospectively examines her feelings, her perception of a given situation as linked to physical sensation, in more complex terms, contrasting the feelings of shame and disgust she has previously experienced during the "showings and rubbings and guilty intimacies" (164) she shared with a boy cousin and other girls, and which she is ready to deny even to herself, with her feelings for Mike:

> Such escapades could never have been considered, with anybody for whom I felt any fondness or respect—only with people who disgusted me, as those randy abhorrent itches disgusted me with myself. In my feelings for Mike the localized demon was transformed into a diffuse excitement and tenderness spread everywhere under the skin, a pleasure of the eyes and ears and a tingling contentment, in the presence of the other person. (164-165)

These are indeed two very different kinds of affects, alternately experienced as guilty itches, on the one hand, and a pleasant tingling under the skin, on the other; some sort of lust and some sort of love, all depicted in pre-adolescent, non-verbalized mode: "I don't think I knew the word 'sex'" (164). Even as an eight-year-old girl, the narrator has a strong sense of what is fulfilling for her and what is not, of what is a source of shame and what of well-being. She is keenly aware of certain ugly feelings (Ngai 2005) that she wants to avoid, and of good feelings that are desirable.

When the narrator meets Mike in adulthood, his presence is an instant trigger of sexual desire, envisioned as touching that becomes gradually more intimate. She is craving to make skin contact with him to let him know how she feels, as they and Sunny's family are watching the stars at night:

> Mike was standing a little ahead of me and to one side. He was actually closer to Sunny than he was to me. Nobody was behind us, and I wanted to brush against him—just lightly and accidentally against his arm or shoulder. Then if he didn't stir away—out of courtesy, taking my touch for a genuine accident?—I wanted to lay a finger against his bare neck. (Munro 2001, 176)

These imagined gestures towards Mike remain unperformed, as the narrator quickly realizes that there are too many obstacles for them to have an affair, starting with the family's presence in the house, and also the fact that he is married, and probably a scrupulous man. She has to reluctantly abandon the idea, her desire is thwarted, and she starts the following day with the prospect of enjoying Mike's presence as they go together to a golf course, while "Lust that had given me shooting pains in the night was all chastened and trimmed back now into a tidy pilot flame, attentive, wifely" (180). A range of various kinds of intimacy are reviewed here, starting with the narrator's lust and powerful sexual desire after seeing Mike. This liberating type of love that would challenge the institution of the family is thwarted by the presence of her host's family in the house. The morning after, the narrator's feelings shift to a pacified desire of the marital type, which has to do with care. She and Mike are performing a readily identifiable cast, based on conventional gender roles, but she knows that this is an illusion. At this stage especially, the story becomes part of the intricate "economies of affection" that Amelia DeFalco (2012) has studied, in which women who act as caregivers and compassionate beings both give and take, becoming part of "patterns of self-interested exchange" (381; see also DeFalco 2016). The woman's feelings on that day are dictated by her wish for a certain kind of happiness, of a good life, that she knows can only be fantasy (Berlant 2011, 2). So she feels caught in an impasse, to use a term that Berlant (2011) uses to designate "a stretch of time in which one moves around with a sense that the world is at once intensely present and enigmatic" (4). The intensity of that moment is crystallized in the rainstorm that takes place.

When she and Mike are both walking around the golf course and are caught in a rainstorm, the narrator's skin is the first sensor of what is happening around her: "[R]ain and wind hit us, all together, and my hair was lifted and fanned out above my head. I felt as if my skin might do that next" (Munro 2001, 182). The rain is heavy, the elements are in turmoil, and the moment is dramatic; Mike and the woman take refuge among bushes. When the rain starts abating, there is relief: "Then we kissed and pressed together briefly. This was more of a ritual, a recognition of survival rather than of our bodies' inclinations" (182). The narrator's sense of survival after the rainstorm is reinforced when Mike confesses to her, shortly after they kiss, that his youngest son died a few months earlier in an accident, when Mike backed up with his car and fatally hit the child. The scene thus shifts from dramatic to tragic, and the mention of the child's death has an anticlimactic effect on the woman's expectations. The introduction of Mike's grief into the relationship causes the woman's feelings to once again shift to another kind of love, that of compassion.

When she and Mike are back at the house from their adventurous outing, they reveal their rashes: "While we were driving back, Mike and I had both noticed, and spoken about, a prickling, an itch or burning, on our bare forearms, the backs of our hands, and around our ankles…I remembered the nettles" (185). As the narrator herself comments, they get a lot of attention for "an adventure that left its evidence on our bodies" (186). Their bodies bear the evidence of one adventure, but the real event of that adventure, the revelation of Mike's son's death, remains secret to the others in the house. The skin tells the anecdotal story of their being caught in the storm, but there is more to the meadow and its nettles than meets the eye; the real story is the tragic one of Mike's son's death. The foregrounding of the skin motif in the narrative thus establishes a dialectic of surface and depth, whereby the skin acts as the surface layer of the characters' deepest emotions and psyche, which may remain hidden and secret, or lend themselves to interpretations and comments by others that are erroneous or partial.

If skin at first can be considered as the external part of the body, it is also evidently part of the human

psyche, the two being linked. The surface of the skin and the depth of the inner being are connected, in a way that calls to mind the image of the shell and the kernel, first evoked by Freud and then taken up by other psychoanalysts. Nicolas Abraham (1968) thus considers that the shell, which is linked to the skin and the senses that enable consciousness, is capable of objectifying the relations between the self and external objects. Such objects, and the intentional experiences related to them, are part of the phenomenological field. By contrast, the kernel is the unconscious; it is related to the field of psychoanalysis (209, 221; see also Anzieu 1994, 64). The skin thus becomes a way into examining the links between the body and the psyche, the classic mind-body conundrum of Western philosophy, also known as the "mind-body problem" to the feminists of the 1970s and 80s for whom it has everything to do with motherhood (see Gallop 1988). Yet the focus here is not on the female body in its reproductive and mothering function, but on its sexual, sensual and affective dimension, in the context of a heterosexual relationship. In Ahmed and Stacey's (2001) edited collection *Thinking through the Skin*, the borders between bodies are seen both as "the site from which thinking takes place" and "the object of thought" (3), while the skin is perceived as an unstable border, "a border that feels," yet one that "does not reflect the truth of the inner self" (6).

This dialectic between body and mind, object and concept, feelings and the core of the self, is explored in "Nettles" through a whole network of images to do with Mike's father's trade, which is that of well driller. In Mike's presence, the practical task of drilling a hole in the ground to find water acquires a poetic dimension in the girl's imagination:

> One day the well driller arrived with impressive equipment, and the hole was extended down, down, deep into the earth until it found the water in the rock…There was a tin mug hanging on the pump, and when I drank from it on a burning day, I thought of black rocks where the water ran sparkling like diamonds. (Munro 2001, 157)

The mysterious depths where the precious fresh water comes from is a place of darkness and glinting mystery. It is also the source of life for the people on the farm. But the water coming to the surface, gushing out, marks the abrupt end of the girl's intimacy with Mike, when his father leaves. It is as if that water had to remain underground and secret for things to continue as they were.

The image of the underground water, which leads to powerful poetic images for the child (who as an adult becomes a writer), instantly reappears after Mike tells the narrator the story of his son's death, through the expression "to hit rock bottom" which comes to her mind, implicitly echoing the image of the underground water of her childhood:

> I knew now that he was a person who had hit rock bottom. A person who knew—as I did not know, did not come near knowing—exactly what rock bottom was like. He and his wife knew that together and it bound them, as something like that would either break you apart or bind you, for life. Not that they would live at rock bottom. But they would share a knowledge of it—that cool, empty, locked and central space. (184)

The black rock with sparkling diamonds of the girl's childhood has become rock bottom for Mike, after the occurrence of the child's death—a dark place for grieving, a space for mourning the child. The narrator had prepared herself to say something to Mike about her feelings for him, just before he confided to her about his son's death. Although thoughts are racing through her mind, she finds it hard to find what to say, and finally simply says: "It isn't fair" (184), meaning both that fate is cruel, and that it is unfair that this tragedy should stand between them. Her comment is neutral in the sense that Roland Barthes (2002) attributes to that word: by saying these words, she avoids the conflict of being torn between her desire for Mike and her respect for his grief, of having to choose between two conflicting options. And yet her neutral comment is also full of her emotions, a protest against the coexistence of love and death, of Eros and Thanatos, which is found here. Her neutrality does not mean that she gives up desiring Mike, but she lets her desire float away from her will to act accordingly (Barthes 2002, 31, 40-41). One can see that her feelings for Mike evolve towards some sort of compassion, with its mix of pleasure and pain, since sharing another person's pain "carries with it a certain occluded erotics" (Garber 2004, 20). This is the feeling that will stay with her, of "love that [is] not usable" (Munro 2001, 186). It is remembered, in the same way

as emotions were preserved by old maids in the old days, but not embodied any further than the one kiss in the rain that precedes Mike's confidence, and it leads to no more action or initiative on the woman's part.

Mike tells the woman of his loss in few words and does not elaborate because he knows she understands. He relies on their old intimacy to impart the facts to her, on their ability "to communicate with the sparest of signs and gestures" (Berlant 1998, 1), but it is a kind of thwarted intimacy that will not develop into the narrative of an affair or a love story, as he does not expose his feelings. Although intimacy here involves some sort of implicit sharing of emotions, it is also a way of avoiding both verbal communication and any further commitment. Both Mike and the woman speak little during this scene, and yet their reticence has different meanings: his is one of acceptance, while hers is one of protest.

Mike is a reticent man in general (see Bigot 2009), who often says "well" instead of fully formulating his thoughts, for instance when wondering where the driver of the only other car on the parking lot was during the rainstorm:

> "Mystery," he said. And again, "Well."
> That was a word that I used to hear fairly often, said in that same tone of voice, when I was a child. A bridge between one thing and another, or a conclusion, or a way of saying something that couldn't be any more fully said, or thought. "A well is a hole in the ground." That was the joking answer. (Munro 2001, 185)

Mike's phrase is used allusively by the narrator in her conclusion to the story and to their weekend meeting. Here the word "well" sounds like an echo to Mike's, in an attempt to express what he means to her: "Well. It would be the same old thing, if we ever met again. Or if we didn't. Love that was not usable, that knew its place…Not risking a thing yet staying alive as a sweet trickle, an underground resource. With the weight of this new stillness on it, this seal" (186-187). The image of an underground, secret love recalls that of the wells Mike's father used to drill, and which nurtured the girl's imagination. Love to Spinoza (2002) is "merely pleasure accompanied by the idea of an external cause" (286), but it is striking that here the cause that accompanies love remains internal and secret, and turns out therefore to be of little help because it cannot be experienced physically, it is "not usable" (Munro 2001, 186), although it will carry on nurturing the narrator as an adult. The "sweet trickle" of love is that of compassion, of suffering understood and shared, though not experienced together. It erases the ready-made gender roles they instinctively adopted as children, and which they readily follow as adults, almost ironically. The intimacy they shared as children contributes to creating a space where they can share emotions as adults. It is also the case that because she has children who live away from her and whom she misses, the narrator can easily glimpse the dark rock bottom that Mike reached when his child died.

The rainstorm has brought them close together physically again, in a seemingly non-sexual way, as a matter of him protecting her through physical strength, which is useless from a practical viewpoint (they both struggle against the wind and get soaked), but continues to cast them in predefined gender roles and effectively brings them physically closer. Through their pressing together and kissing like survivors, it is possible for them to communicate in the most elemental sense, that is to say to attain a kind of harmonious resonance, a vibration that is outside words (Anzieu 1985, 73). But the fact of the child's death cancels that. Skin contact opens up a whole new psychic space for Mike, the dark well that would otherwise have remained closed and unseen. The kind of intimacy they then share defines him as a human being who has undergone the suffering of loss, and her as one who is capable of empathy. It also finds extensions in the outdoor surroundings, through images related to human skin as part of an organic whole that underpin the poetics of skin which pervades the story.

The dialectic of surface and depth that starts from the skin in the individual's contact with the outside world is echoed in the network of images related to the deep well, the core of the being, the kernel, the secret self, and the water—or love—it taps into, and the imagined diamonds that sparkle when love is there. Skin thus enables introverted reflection on self and the inner being. But skin is also the individual's zone of contact with the bigger outside world; skin is also "surface, encounter and site, in which more than one body is always implicated" (Ahmed and Stacey 2001, 14). This starts early on, when, together with the other

senses, of sight and smell in particular, touch is how the child first discovers the world around her. The child is aware that the world too, like the self, is full of mystery, and she endeavours to take it in:

> Our farm was small—nine acres. It was small enough for me to have explored every part of it, and every part had a particular look and character, which I could not have put into words. … [My way of seeing these things] was by its very nature incommunicable, so that it had to stay secret. (Munro 2001, 158-159)

The girl's inability to share her "way of seeing" the things around the farm, that is to say the way they affect her, means that words are not an adequate way of communicating with others. The ordinary things around her—the whitish stone, the trees, the gravel pits on the river flats—have poetic meaning to her, which she cannot phrase. To paraphrase Abraham (1968), these "things," from a semantic viewpoint, acquire the status of psychic representatives, poetic symbols that convey mysterious messages addressed to no one in particular, the contents of which remains impossible to formulate (212). The awareness of mysterious messages to be deciphered becomes a conscious concern for the adult narrator; as a young mother, when she was friends with Sunny in Vancouver, the two of them liked to read Jung "and tried to keep track of [their] dreams" (Munro 2001, 169). Their husbands were not interested in the least in their literary or philosophical queries, but talking about books is what the two women most like doing together, even when they meet again years later. "[T]alking about books instead of life" (173) is a way for them, figuratively, to step out of their lives, and out of their bodies, to be in the realm of ideas during the duration of their conversation, and to "bec[o]me friends again" (173), to reconnect emotionally. This aspect of their friendship is unique, as if only another woman could understand the need to create that space where they can discuss ideas; it seems harder to achieve with men. When the narrator left her marriage, it was "in the hope of making a life that could be lived without hypocrisy" (168), and her lifelong quest as an individual and as a writer is for truth and genuine love.

After Mike has spent time on the farm, the familiar surroundings are linked to him, or rather, after his departure, to his absence which is keenly felt by the narrator, who discovers:

> How all my own territory would be altered, as if a landslide had gone through it and skimmed off all meaning except loss of Mike. I could never again look at the white stone in the gangway without thinking of him, and so I got a feeling of aversion towards it. I had that feeling also about the *limb* of the maple tree, and when my father cut it off because it was too near the house, I had it about the *scar* that was left. (166, my emphasis)

Through loss, after Mike's departure, the surrounding things, the poetic symbols, her familiar space as a whole, take on a different meaning, and her feelings are inverted, from appreciation to aversion, because they are markers or reminders of Mike's absence. As Ahmed (2006a) puts it about "the intimacy of bodies and their dwelling places," "spaces are not exterior to bodies; instead, spaces are like a second skin that unfolds in the folds of the body" (8, 9). The "maple next to the house, with the branch that you could crawl out on, so as to drop yourself onto the verandah roof" (Munro 2001, 159), is tied with her play with Mike and with his way of viewing the world. The "limb," or big branch, and then the "scar" of the maple, through the choice of words related to the human body, indicate a form of organic symbiosis between the girl and her environment, whereby the landscape feels as if it were part of her self, of her body and skin.

The type of description of the environment where the narrator played as a child with Mike is echoed in the sequence when they are on the golf course. The surroundings there are described with comparable attention to details, as the narrator seems to have found again the same freedom and happy energy as when she was with Mike as a child. Comparable bearings are identified in the landscape—the river, the meadow, the various plants and trees—and these enable her to feel the connection that exists between herself and Mike, and which she feels serves to provide "a reassuring sense of human padding around his solitude" (180). Her eye and her memory of that moment are sharp, and plants are named specifically:

> Between [the river] and us there was a meadow of weeds, all of it seemed in bloom. Goldenrod, jewel-weed with its red and yellow bells, and what I thought were flowering

> nettles with pinkish-purple clusters, and wild asters. Grapevine, too, grabbing and wrapping whatever it could find, and tangling underfoot. (181)

When the rainstorm starts, the couple becomes prey to the elements, which they struggle against physically:

> Stooping, butting his head through the weeds and against the wind, Mike got around in front of me, all the time holding on to my arm. Then he faced me, with his body between me and the storm. That made as much difference as a toothpick might have done…He pulled me down…—so that we were crouched close to the ground. So close together that we could not look at each other—we could only look down, at the miniature rivers already breaking up the earth around our feet, and the crushed plants and our soaked shoes. And even this had to be seen through the waterfall that was running down our faces. (182)

In this struggle, they are reminded of their mortality, as they seem to make one with the earth. They are incorporated into it, their feet like mountains separating rivers, their faces like the rock of a waterfall. The storm could have been fatal and brought them to their end, "earth to earth": "Big tree branches had been hurled all over the golf course. I did not think until later that any one of them could have killed us. We walked in the open, detouring around the fallen limbs" (183). The anthropomorphic description of the maple tree from the narrator's childhood is echoed in the description of the trees after the storm, but this time she feels like a survivor, not one who is grieving loss. She may feel stronger for having reconnected with Mike during the storm through a kiss, although this will quickly be subject to re-interpretation, to reorientation (Ahmed 2006a, 19) when he tells her about his child's death. This is when an established way of touching between men and women leads into an unexpected direction.

The post-storm landscape is conducive to the confidential intimacy during which Mike tells the woman about his dead son, as the storm has reminded them of their vulnerability. The storm also reveals a form of naivety in the narrator, in believing that happiness is within reach simply by reaching out and making contact with a man she knew intimately as a child. This sense of naivety is heralded when she describes her current relationship with her lover in Toronto and readily acknowledges: "all I really wanted was to entice him to have sex with me, because I thought the high enthusiasm of sex fused people's best selves. I was stupid about these matters, in a way that was very risky, particularly for a woman of my age" (Munro 2001, 171). When she sits by Mike's side in the car, she enjoys the proximity: "I liked riding beside him, in the wife's seat. I felt a pleasure in the idea of us as a couple—a pleasure that I knew was light-headed as an adolescent girl's" (178). The bucolic scene of the couple on the golf course prior to the rainstorm ends in a different kind of intimacy after Mike has disclosed his secret. The woman feels that fate has been unfair; not only to Mike and his family, but to the two of them, as possible lovers. Her saying "It isn't fair" (184) thus has a double meaning which she reflects on, seeing these words as "A protest so brutal that it seems almost innocent, coming out of such a raw core of self" (184). This "raw core" is her kernel, the unconscious part of her psyche that means she is drawn to Mike, yet she knows they cannot be together.

The woman's mistake about finding love through sexual intimacy is echoed in her erroneous identification of plants. The final paragraph of the story reads as a post-scriptum correction to a previous factual statement, but it really casts a different light on the whole story:

> Those plants with the big pinkish-purple flowers are not nettles. I have discovered that they are called joe-pye weed. The stinging nettles that we must have got into are more insignificant plants, with a paler purple flower, and stalks wickedly outfitted with fine, fierce, skin-piercing and inflaming spines. Those would be present too, unnoticed, in all the flourishing of the waste meadow. (187)

The waste meadow has its mix of enchantments and misfortunes. The nettles (the real ones) go unnoticed but are viciously noxious, while the joe-pye weed, which looks more beautiful, is not harmful. The narrator doubts the accuracy of words in relation to the plants they refer to, for instance when she was trying to remember "water plants whose names I can't recall or never knew (wild parsnip, water hemlock?)" (160). Or the "tall trees with feathery tops and slender trunks, whose name I was not sure of—acacia?" (179). The nettles are wrongly labelled, and the healing plant that could perhaps soothe nettle rash is equally hard to identify: "there was a plant whose leaves made the best poultice you could have,

for nettle rash … The name of the plant was something like calf's foot. Coldfoot?" (186). The confusion or uncertainty about plants' names reflects the difficulty for the narrator of deciphering the signs around her, and of deciding on a way to follow. As Ajay Heble (1994) has observed, Munro's "discourse questions the relationship between language and meaning in a new way: it forces us to recognize the extent to which meaning itself depends on and is determined by traces of absent and potential levels of signification" (7). Yet, by the end of the story, the narrator realizes that Mike's loss puts an end to the possibility of a love affair between them. She pictures their love as "an underground resource," and never asks for nor gets any news of him. The "promise of happiness" (Ahmed 2010) that she sees in him at the thought of rekindling an old intimacy when they meet again has vanished; however, we presume from the beginning of the story that she eventually found a fulfilling kind of intimacy with her second husband, so that this story reads as a retelling of her experience of being forced to reimagine intimacy in different ways.

The narrator in "Nettles" is a woman attentive to her emotions and sensations, with a poetic, imaginative mind, and a desire to become a writer. The overall course of the narrative also shows her, around the time of her encounter with Mike, in the process of redefining the way she relates to men in terms of the kind of sexual and affective intimacy she can imagine sharing with them. That process implies tension between some of the ready-made gender roles and attitudes that she unconsciously inherited and embodied as a child, and the deeper intimacy that she wants to experience. The revelation about Mike's child's death towards the end of the story introduces dramatic tension, signals a turning point in the plot, and triggers what appears as an epiphany, marked by the strong, unpleasant feeling of unfairness. This scene is followed by the nettles incident, which shifts the course of events to family comedy by foregrounding the uncontrollability of bodily reaction to external elements, the return to sociability (with no sign of "real misdoing" [Munro 2001, 184] between Mike and the narrator), and easy ways of relieving pain (in the form of basins of water and thick cloth). The very final paragraph, which is detached from the rest of the text and is written in hindsight, is also seemingly detached emotionally. It reads as a coda on the semantic distinction between nettles and the inoffensive plants that look like them, emphasizing the narrator's error of judgement at the time, and suggesting the need to learn to distinguish, among "the flourishing of the waste meadow" (185), what stings and what does not, in other words what hurts profoundly in life and what is apparent vivid pain that can be overcome. Touch and affect as experienced that day thus resonate deeply in the narrator's life by forcibly reshaping her sense of intimacy, that is to say her idea of "a narrative about something shared" (Berlant 1998, 1), and her view of how her story about herself and a man should turn out.

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Des affects plein l'assiette. Migration, nourriture et agentivité chez Kim Thúy

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Abstract

This article studies, from a feminist perspective, the intermingling of affects and feeding behaviour in the production of Kim Thúy, a Quebec writer of Vietnamese origin. Associated with trauma, survival, memory and gratitude in *Ru*, food becomes an empowering instrument for the narrator of *Mãn*, who experiences care and love in its various nuances through the act of cooking. The successive transformations of the food-culinary sensorium and habitus of Thúy's narrators, who are also endowed with a certain agency, testify to a shift in the visceral reactions (both physical and social), as well as in the taste syntax and its emotional resonance at the end of the migratory experience.

Résumé

Cet article étudie, dans une perspective féministe, l'intrication des affects et du geste alimentaire dans la production de Kim Thúy, écrivaine québécoise d'origine vietnamienne. Associée au trauma, à la survivance, à la mémoire et à la gratitude dans *Ru*, la nourriture devient un instrument d'autonomisation pour la narratrice de *Mãn*, qui expérimente le *care* et l'amour sous ses différentes déclinaisons par l'entremise de l'acte de cuisiner. Les transformations successives du sensorium et de l'habitus alimentaire-culinaire des narratrices de Thúy, par ailleurs dotées d'une certaine agentivité, attestent d'une modification des réactions viscérales (qui sont à la fois physiques et sociales), ainsi que de la grammaire gustative et de ses résonnances émotionnelles au sortir de l'expérience migratoire.

Affects, sensorium et viscéralités

> Affect arises in the midst of *inbetween-ness*: in the capacities to act and be acted upon. Affect is an impingement or extrusion of a momentary or sometimes more sustained state of relation *as well as* the passage (and the duration of passage) of forces or intensities. That is, affect is found in those intensities that pass body to body (human, non-human, part-body, and otherwise), in those resonances that circulate about, between, and sometimes stick to bodies and worlds, *and* in the very passages or variations between these intensities and resonances themselves. (Gregg et Seigworth 2010, 1)

Comment penser la dimension sensible, sensorielle de l'affect, qui est produite selon Melissa Gregg et Gregory J. Seigworth (2010) lorsque deux corps (toujours sociaux) entrent en relation ? Dans son article « Bitter After Taste », qui s'inscrit dans le domaine de la recherche culturelle axée sur le corps, Ben Highmore (2010) propose le terme générique d'esthétique sociale[1] (*social aesthetics*) pour décrire les formes et les enchevêtrements de la perception, de la sensation et de l'attention chez le sujet humain, considérant la situation générale de synesthésie qui lie les sens et les affects. Pour le chercheur, le goût est une « orchestration du sensible » (126, je traduis) :

> This is where every flavour has an emotional resonance (sweetness, sourness, bitterness). Here the bio-cultural arena of disgust (especially disgust of ingested or nearly ingested foods) simultaneously invokes a form of sensual perception, an affective register of shame and disdain, as well as bodily recoil. (120)

Préoccupation des snobs et des gourmets, dont le jugement—gage d'un certain statut social—distingue et discrimine, le goût semble d'emblée occuper une frange superficielle de la culture. Il constitue pourtant, d'après Highmore, le fondement même de la culture, non pas simplement comme système de valeurs, mais comme manière dont ces valeurs sont intériorisées par les corps (126). L'aliment peut, par exemple, susciter la honte de multiples manières, que ce soit à cause d'un manque de connaissances culinaires ou d'un palais trop peu sensible, l'humiliation étant toujours accentuée lorsqu'elle s'attache au corps et à ses frontières (126). Refuser par dégoût la nourriture de l'autre ou manger avidement un plat très piquant perçu comme étranger par bravade machiste donne par ailleurs lieu, selon Highmore, à une forme de schismogenèse, concept qu'il emprunte à l'anthropologue Gregory Bateson pour décrire les interactions sociales entre les groupes (132). Résumant l'argumentation de Highmore, Oona Morrow (2012) déclare que,

> [t]hrough discussions of cross-class and cross-cultural encounters, Highmore shows how taste and social aesthetics can be ordered and reordered in ways that both reinforce and upset social inequality. This essay is exceptional for offering a glimmer of hope, and suggesting that affect might be central in pushing us toward developing more ethical tastes and habits. (133)

Dans un ordre d'idées similaire, Jessica Hayes-Conroy (2014), dans le chapitre « Exploring Visceral (Re)actions » de son ouvrage *Savoring Alternative Food*, développe une politique de la viscéralité où le corps, envisagé comme interface sensorielle et affective avec le monde (physique et social), devient ancrage de l'agentivité et lieu de transformation où s'avère possible la résistance—notamment aux biopouvoirs foucaldiens. Soulignant la remarquable contribution scientifique des études sur l'affect et l'émotion, qui ont encouragé ces dernières années l'analyse des « moments corporels de jugement et de mouvement » (30, je traduis), Hayes-Conroy retient pour sa part le concept de géographies viscérales et considère les expériences sensorielles comme de complexes interconnexions physiques et sociales (7). Si les jugements corporels comme le goût—à la fois intimes et exogènes, diachroniques et instantanés—peuvent paraître naturels et fixés tant les actes de sentir et de percevoir deviennent familiers pour les corps, les réactions viscérales sont néanmoins ouvertes à la modulation, au détournement et à la réappropriation (21, 25, 26). La reconnaissance des mécanismes de reproduction de ces jugements permettrait, d'après Hayes-Conroy, de résister *à travers* nos corps, en s'ouvrant notamment à d'autres types de chorégraphies ou d'attachements alimentaires (24), que ce soit pour des raisons personnelles, politiques ou pratiques (26).

L'écriture sensible de Kim Thúy

Si, aux États-Unis, un noyau d'œuvres critiques (Cynthia Wong, Jennifer Ho, Wenying Xu, Anita Mannur, etc.), à la frontière des *Asian American Literary Studies* et des *Food Studies*, s'intéressent à la nourriture dans les écritures migrantes, et malgré le certain élan que connaît actuellement ce domaine de recherche, peu d'études en français investiguent encore sous cet angle la production récente d'écrivaines venues de l'Asie de l'Est.[2] Pourtant, un nombre croissant d'auteures, en France (de Kim Lefèvre à Shan Sa) comme au Canada (pensons à Ying Chen ou à Aki Shimazaki), s'inscrivent dans une « francographie asiatique » (Parker 2013, 247), offrant des images d'une Asie qui s'incarne parfois par l'entremise de la dimension concrète de la cuisine. Pour Pamela V. Sing (2013), le sujet interculturel réactualise par la migration sa mémoire sensorielle, gustative, superposant et liant différentes expériences localisantes. Cette pratique, qui le dote d'agentivité, lui permet de donner forme et sens à ses expériences spatio-temporelles dans une démarche visant à créer de l'intime, du familier (283-284). Pour la chercheuse, incorporer au récit une charge ou une temporalité poétiques où présent et futur se télescopent serait, pour des écrivaines migrantes—dont Kim Thúy—, une stratégie permettant d'écrire autrement le choc de la mouvance géographique (et identitaire) (282).

Écrivaine québécoise d'origine vietnamienne, Kim Thúy est devenue en quelques années une figure médiatique appréciée du public et une étoile montante sur la scène littéraire francophone, lauréate de plusieurs distinctions dont le Prix du Gouverneur général (2010) et nommée en 2015 chevalière de l'Ordre national du Québec. En novembre 1978, dans le sillage de la guerre du Vietnam, Kim Thúy, dix ans, quitte Saigon (sous contrôle communiste) avec d'autres *boat people*. Après un séjour de quelques mois au camp de réfugiés Pengorak en Malaisie, sa famille s'installe dans la ville de Granby dans les Cantons-de-l'Est, bénéficiant des politiques gouvernementales favorables à l'accueil d'immigrants asiatiques. C'est après avoir pratiqué diverses professions (couturière, avocate, traductrice, restauratrice et critique gastronomique) que Thúy se tourne vers la création littéraire. Francophone d'adoption et francophile, elle incarne selon Gabrielle Parker (2013) une « nouvelle génération pour laquelle la langue d'écriture est tout simplement la langue d'arrivée, exonérée de tout passif colonial » (241).

En 2009, Thúy publie *Ru*, un premier roman autobiographique[3] obtenant un succès à la fois critique et commercial, traduit en plus de vingt langues, et décrivant la migration en sol québécois de la jeune Nguyễn An Tịnh. Après la parution de *À toi* en 2011, un recueil de correspondances coécrit avec l'écrivain suisse Pascal Janovjak, Kim Thúy publie au printemps 2013 le roman *Mãn*, qui s'inscrit dans le sillage de *Ru* sans en être la suite, et relate le parcours d'une narratrice éponyme qui, après avoir grandi au Vietnam sans rêver, s'épanouit à Montréal en inventant une cuisine personnelle, inspirée par les saveurs de son enfance. Sing (2013) soutient que : « Mãn cherche à nous servir "le"—ou peut-être serait-il plus juste de préciser "son"—Vietnam sur un plateau : ses gens, sa nourriture, sa langue, ses croyances, ses rues et ses gestes d'affection, tous racontés sous l'angle de leurs aspects gustatifs, olfactifs et tactiles » (285). Dans la production de l'écrivaine migrante, les perceptions sensorielles, les traces mnésiques et la vie affective des protagonistes sont entremêlées.

À l'occasion de ce dossier consacré aux « affects féministes dans les productions littéraires et culturelles », je me propose d'étudier le motif de l'aliment chez Thúy, considérant que, pour Ben Highmore (2010) et Jessica Hayes-Conroy (2014), le goût constitue un champ d'expérimentation affectif et sensoriel où le politique s'expérimente et s'incarne dans la vie quotidienne. Carolyn Pedwell et Anne Whitehead (2012) rappellent, dans cet esprit, que les études féministes ont depuis longtemps reconnu les liens entre les affects et les relations de pouvoir fondées sur le genre, la race, ou la classe (115-116), le rôle de l'affect dans les phénomènes d'oppression, mais aussi de transformation sociale ayant été largement démontré (120). Nous verrons ici que la nourriture est associée au trauma, à la survivance, à la mémoire et à la gratitude, qui possèdent une dimension politique dans *Ru*, et devient un instrument d'autonomisation pour la narratrice de *Mãn*. Celle-ci en vient de fait à expérimenter l'amour sous ses différentes formes et déclinaisons culturelles par l'entremise de l'acte de cuisiner, qui constitue d'ailleurs une modalité de son éthique du soin. Soulignant l'évolution de l'univers affectif de ses narratrices migrantes dont se révèle la subjectivité, Kim Thúy résume en ces termes son

parcours bibliographique : « *Ru*, c'était survivre. *À toi*, c'était vivre. *Mãn*, c'est aimer » (Lapointe 2013).

Trauma et résilience

Avec *Ru*, Thúy offre une fiction personnelle qui « suit une certaine "logique de la mémoire"…où une idée, une impression ou une sensation en entraîne une autre » (Yang 2014, 131) et où se conjuguent et se réinventent, par le travail de l'écriture, petite et grande histoires. Dans une suite de fragments évoquant le patchwork, la narratrice décrit son enfance vietnamienne aisée, l'arrivée des forces communistes et l'occupation de la maison par les soldats, la cale nauséabonde du bateau où s'entassent les réfugiés, l'arrivée au Québec, l'enracinement à Granby, la poursuite du rêve américain et un retour touristique au Vietnam (Sing 2013, 284). Récit du trauma et de la survivance, *Ru* évoque d'entrée de jeu le cauchemar de la traversée vécu par Nguyễn An Tịnh et sa famille, de Rach Giá jusqu'à un camp de réfugiés en Malaisie. La narratrice rapporte que, dans le « ventre » du bateau, le paradis—soit la promesse d'une nouvelle vie—côtoie l'enfer et ses terreurs, notamment la peur de mourir de faim, de soif, sans revoir la terre ferme ou les parents (Thúy 2009, 13-14). Dans cette situation de lutte pour la survie, les émotions sont exacerbées, contagieuses, communes : la noyade[4] d'une petite fille anesthésie ou euphorise les 200 passagers, transformant « les biscottes imbibées d'huile à moteur en biscuits au beurre » (15).

Après avoir accosté sur une plage de Malaisie à proximité d'un Club Med, les passagers observent avec stupeur leur bateau détruit par une simple pluie quelques minutes après le débarquement chaotique. Au camp surpeuplé, la narratrice raconte dormir en groupe dans un abri sur pilotis de fortune couvert d'une toile de plastique bleu. Elle décrit néanmoins avec poésie ces moments de dénuement extrême où naît une « complicité silencieuse » :

> Si un chorégraphe avait été présent sous cette toile un jour ou une nuit de pluie, il aurait certainement reproduit la scène : vingt-cinq personnes debout, petits et grands, qui tenaient dans chacune de leurs mains une boîte de conserve pour recueillir l'eau coulant de la toile, parfois goutte à goutte. (Thúy 2009, 25-26)

La narratrice rend par ailleurs hommage à l'enseignant d'anglais dévoué qui élève les esprits loin des trous d'excréments, de la puanteur, des parasites et des insectes dans un monologue imagé où l'espoir, qui se profile en filigrane, contraste avec les abjections quotidiennes : « Sans son visage, nous n'aurions pas pu imaginer qu'un jour nous ne mangerions plus de poissons avariés, lancés à même le sol chaque fin d'après-midi à l'heure de la distribution des vivres. Sans son visage, nous aurions certainement perdu le désir de tendre la main pour rattraper nos rêves » (27). Dans *À toi*, la narratrice Kim, également survivante d'un séjour en camp malaisien, fait pour sa part l'apologie du corps et de ses capacités de guérison, affirmant que la privation d'eau lui a appris à digérer la viande pourrie sans mourir et l'a guérie de ses sévères allergies aux fruits de mer (Thúy 2011, 81). Sing (2013) remarque que « [c]hez Thúy, l'écriture se charge de révéler violences, atrocités, peurs, mais aussi douceurs, gentillesses et consolations avec une même légèreté, un même détachement, dans une prose sobre au rythme restreint » (284). Ziyan Yang (2014) évoque quant à lui le ton optimiste et léger des œuvres de Thúy et sa « tendance à poétiser la mise à l'épreuve humaine » (35). Il me semble que l'écrivaine éclaire, par sa prose habile, certains pans sombres de son parcours familial et personnel. Elle construit, autour de ses narratrices résilientes,[5] des histoires d'immigration réussie, ce qui pourrait en partie expliquer la popularité de sa production ; j'y reviendrai.

Éblouie et enivrée par la blancheur des bancs de neige aperçus à travers le hublot de l'avion à l'aéroport de Mirabel, la jeune Nguyễn An Tịnh est désorientée sur les plans culturel et corporel à son arrivée au Québec :

> J'étais étourdie autant par tous ces sons étrangers qui nous accueillaient que par la taille de la sculpture de glace qui veillait sur une table couverte de canapés, de hors-d'œuvre, de bouchées, les uns plus colorés que les autres. Je ne connaissais aucun de ces plats, pourtant je savais que c'était un lieu de délices, un pays de rêve. (Thúy 2009, 18)

Rapidement, la mère de la narratrice, modèle de résilience selon Mariana Ionescu (2014, 101), donne à sa fille « des outils pour [lui] permettre de recommencer à [s]'enraciner, à rêver » (Thúy 2009, 30). La narratrice relate à cet égard un épisode de « honte extrême » lorsque sa mère l'a envoyée quérir du sucre, même si la migration l'avait laissée « sourde et muette » : « Je me suis assise sur

les marches de l'épicerie jusqu'à la fermeture, jusqu'à ce que l'épicier me prenne par la main et me dirige vers le sac de sucre. Il m'avait comprise, même si mon mot "sucre" était amer » (30). Au contact de la bienveillante Marie-France, sa première enseignante en sol canadien, décrite comme une maman cane guidant ses petits, la narratrice, qui chemine « vers [son] présent », en vient à nourrir son premier désir d'immigrante : « celui de pouvoir faire bouger le gras des fesses comme elle » (19), c'est-à-dire d'adopter « une "attitude corporelle" étrangère à sa collectivité d'origine » (Yang 2014, 36). La narratrice, à qui sa tante Six offre pour ses quinze ans une boîte à possibles contenant le nom de dix professions, apprend à espérer, à désirer, à convoiter, partageant longtemps avec ses proches un même rêve américain (Thúy 2009, 84), que plusieurs membres de la famille réaliseront d'ailleurs.

Enracinement et gratitude

Yang (2014) rappelle, à la suite de Sing, que l'identité d'un sujet (*a fortiori* un sujet migrant) est amenée à évoluer sous l'effet de l'actualisation constante de son sensorium (89). Aussi l'acculturation vécue par la narratrice en sol québécois se manifeste-t-elle notamment par une modification des habitudes alimentaires. Yang déclare :

> Dans *Ru*, la cuisine vietnamienne, en tant que symbole des racines ethniques perdues, est abordée d'un ton nostalgique et participe à un certain processus de folklorisation…La narratrice décrit minutieusement la soupe aux vermicelles, …plat majeur du déjeuner vietnamien[, qui] constitue le repère identitaire perdu…dans la mesure où[,] au Québec, sa famille cesse progressivement d'en manger. (89)

Dans cet esprit, Nguyễn An Tịnh explique que ses parents ont acquis, à la recommandation des parrains de Granby, un grille-pain qui est demeuré un certain temps inutilisé, car, écrit-elle, « nous déjeunions avec du riz, de la soupe, des restes de la veille. Tranquillement, nous avons commencé à manger des Rice Krispies, sans lait. Mes frères, eux, ont continué avec des rôties et de la confiture » (Thúy 2009, 116). Si, pour le plus jeune frère devenu adulte, ce grille-pain, qu'il transporte toujours lors de ses affectations internationales, constitue un « point d'ancrage », c'est plutôt l'odeur d'une feuille de Bounce qui remplit cette fonction pour la narratrice.

Ru peut également se lire comme l'expression d'une gratitude envers plusieurs individus courageux et généreux qui ont rendu possible et favorable l'expérience migratoire, de l'héroïque Ahn Phi—qui a remis, malgré sa faim, un sac de taels d'or et de diamants aux parents de la narratrice, rendant possible le voyage en Amérique—, à la chaleureuse enseignante Marie-Paule, en passant par les parrains de Granby, l'ange et amie Johanne (Thúy 2009, 32), Jeanne, la fée vêtue de rose de l'école Sainte-Famille (66), et Madame Girard, qui a embauché sa mère comme ménagère (80). Cette gratitude s'enracine également dans les repas « partagés » au quotidien au sein de la communauté d'accueil hospitalière. La narratrice raconte :

> Les élèves de mon école primaire faisaient la queue pour nous inviter chez eux pour le repas du midi. Ainsi, chacun de nos midis était réservé par une famille et, chaque fois, nous retournions à l'école le ventre presque vide, parce que nous ne savions pas comment manger du riz non collant avec une fourchette. Nous ne savions pas comment leur dire que cette nourriture nous était étrangère, qu'il n'était pas nécessaire pour eux de courir les marchés pour dénicher la dernière boîte de Minute Rice. Nous ne pouvions ni leur parler ni les écouter. Mais l'essentiel y était. Il y avait de la générosité et de la gratitude dans chacun de ces grains de riz laissés dans nos assiettes. (31)

Selon Vinh Nguyen (2013), cette gratitude du réfugié (*refugee gratitude*), de l'immigrant modèle, aurait contribué à la réception favorable de *Ru* en Occident.[6] Car, déclare-t-il, les récits montrant la réussite d'auteurs migrants ou minoritaires accueillis en Amérique contribuent à réaffirmer « les idéaux libéraux de liberté, de démocratie et d'égalité », attestant du caractère inclusif et tolérant des nations canadienne et américaine (18, je traduis). Pour cette raison, le succès pour les réfugiés (en l'occurrence ceux de la diaspora vietnamienne) peut devenir un « dispositif narratif, une stratégie rhétorique et un mode d'articulation » permettant de reconfigurer et de donner sens à leur expérience (20, je traduis). Associée à un parcours migratoire fructueux, la gratitude du réfugié peut donc être considérée, selon Nguyen, comme un affect ou un sentiment social,[7] produit et constituant des moments de contact et d'échange entre les réfugiés et l'État, où elle existe comme agent de liaison, reliant des sujets

et des institutions, mais aussi des individus et leur communauté (composée d'enseignants, de parrains, de voisins, etc.), fournissant ainsi un modèle possible de subjectivité basé sur la socialité (28).

Filiation, transmission et devoir de mémoire

Appelée à se pencher sur ses origines dans le cadre de l'émission *Qui êtes-vous ?*, Kim Thúy affirme que retrouver Saigon à titre de touriste implique chaque fois pour elle une « orgie de bouffe » : « Le riz goûte l'enfance. Le riz goûte la famille, les échanges, le rire. Je suis toujours happée par ce bonheur-là » (De Gheldere et Legault 2015). De même, dans *Ru*, la nourriture est associée à l'enfance vietnamienne de Nguyễn An Tịnh (pensons à la galette de riz séchée et aux mangues juteuses avalées chez la cousine Sao Mai), mais aussi à la transmission d'une histoire familiale. La narratrice évoque à ce propos les bols bleus remplis de riz au porc rôti arrosé de sauce soya et de beurre Bretel que la tante Cinq a servi durant dix ans au grand-père malade :

> Aujourd'hui, mon père prépare ce plat pour mes fils lorsqu'il reçoit une boîte de beurre Bretel en cadeau d'amis qui reviennent de la France. Mes frères se moquent affectueusement de mon père parce qu'il utilise les superlatifs les plus déraisonnables pour qualifier ce beurre en conserve. Moi, je suis d'accord avec lui. J'aime le parfum de ce beurre parce qu'il me ramène à mon grand-père paternel, celui qui est mort avec des soldats pompiers. J'aime aussi utiliser ces bols bleus aux anneaux d'argent pour servir de la crème glacée à mes enfants. (Thúy 2009, 76-77)

Si une denrée ou une pièce de vaisselle permettent à la narratrice et à ses fils de communier symboliquement avec les ancêtres, le geste alimentaire dans *Ru* est en outre parfois subordonné à un devoir de mémoire.

Rapportant des propos tenus par Thúy en entrevue, Mariana Ionescu (2014) souligne que bien que *Ru* soit un roman d'inspiration autobiographique, le projet d'écriture qui le motive est de « raconter à travers [s]oi » le vécu des gens héroïques qui l'ont croisée ou influencée, car « [m]algré leurs souffrances, leur immense pauvreté, il y a dans leur histoire une beauté extrême » (97-98). Ainsi, Nguyễn An Tịnh affirme qu'en l'honneur des femmes vietnamiennes qui cuisinaient avec dévouement des boîtes de porc rôti, séché et salé (*thịt chà bông*) pour leurs époux enfermés dans les camps de rééducation, sans savoir si elles pourraient les retrouver, elle « prépare de temps à autre cette viande rissolée pour [s]es fils, afin de préserver, de répéter ces gestes d'amour » (Thúy 2009, 44). Selon Yang (2014),

> [e]n se plaçant et en plaçant ses enfants dans la foulée de ces êtres qui leur ont frayé un chemin, la narratrice se figure comme leur héritière imaginaire qui continue leur trajet de survivance, un trajet qui commence non par l'oubli du passé comme le suggère Augé dans la figure du recommencement, mais par un projet de mémoire en l'honneur des prédécesseurs. (2014, 135)

Ionescu (2014) ajoute que *Ru* rend « hommage à tous ceux que la grande Histoire a empêchés de dire leurs histoires. C'est un "geste de restitution" s'adressant, comme le remarque Dominique Viart, non seulement à ceux à qui on rend leur propre histoire, mais aussi "à ceux dont ce n'est pas l'Histoire" » (98).

Nourritures affectives

Dans *Mãn*, troisième ouvrage de Kim Thúy, les souvenirs se succèdent au gré des pages suivant une logique similaire à *Ru*, avec une accentuation des perceptions sensorielles, « l'affect étant le fil conducteur du récit » d'après Yang (2014, 131-132). Parker (2013) souligne, à la suite de Sing, que pour Thúy, « l'incorporation de la langue vietnamienne[8] dans le récit est une autre façon de savourer *son* Vietnam et de le faire goûter au lecteur », les langues s'intégrant « dans le sensorium complexe qui lui permet de transporter "la maison qu'on habite" » (258). Dans *Mãn,* la narratrice « raconte son mariage arrangé, son départ du Vietnam,…son adoption de certaines pratiques culturelles québécoises, son évolution comme restauratrice et, pour reprendre l'expression d'un journaliste montréalais, "sa petite éducation sentimentale" (Tardif 2013) » (Sing 2013, 285). Dans ce roman initiatique, la narratrice autodiégétique découvre différents visages de l'amour (la mère, l'époux, l'amie, l'enfant, l'amant) qui l'amènent à s'éveiller à la vie. L'univers affectif de Mãn est révélé avec finesse par une narration truffée de formules poétiques et évocatrices, l'impossibilité de dire pour la protagoniste se trouvant souvent mise en acte par le truchement du culinaire.

Sarah Sceats (2003 [2000]) signale que, de façon universelle, « [f]ood is a currency of love and desire, a medium of expression and communication…From infants' sticky offerings to anniversary chocolates, from shared lunch boxes to hospital grapes, the giving of food is a way of announcing connection, goodwill, love » (11). Dans cet esprit, Kim Thúy déclare à Karine Vilder (2013) : « Dans la culture vietnamienne, la cuisine est l'élément de base. Toute l'affection, la tendresse s'exprime à travers la nourriture » (Q14), affirmation faisant écho à un passage de *À toi*, où la narratrice Kim avance : « chez les Vietnamiens, l'amour s'exprime avec une joue de mangue, une côtelette à la citronnelle ou un dessert au tapioca. La première phrase que nous prononçons n'est pas "Comment ça va ?" mais plutôt : "As-tu mangé ?" » (Thúy 2011, 165). Dans *Mãn*, la nourriture devient caisse de résonance affective et instrument d'autonomisation pour la protagoniste qui, à travers les plats qu'elle prépare ou décrit, explicite les liens complexes qui l'unissent à sa mère, à une époque marchande de bananes glacées, à son mari, propriétaire d'un restaurant montréalais où elle trouve sa vocation de cheffe, et à son amie Julie, avec laquelle elle réalise maints projets culinaires (dont des démonstrations, un livre de cuisine et une émission télévisée), qui la conduisent à Paris, où elle fait la rencontre du restaurateur Luc, pour lequel elle éprouve une vive passion amoureuse.

La cuisine au cœur d'une éthique du soin

Le roman *Mãn* se développe autour d'une constellation de personnages, qui sont souvent associés dans le récit à des rituels ou à des expériences impliquant la nourriture. On raconte que Mãn a eu trois mères : la première, une adolescente qui l'a mise au monde, la seconde, une moniale qui l'a trouvée dans un potager, et la troisième, une enseignante devenue espionne malgré elle et qu'elle appelle Maman. Pensant à l'avenir de sa fille, Maman confie Mãn, devenue adulte, à un prétendant exilé à Montréal, qui la courtise en lui apportant une boîte de biscuits à l'érable (Thúy 2013, 16). Dès son arrivée au Québec, la narratrice connaît un amour sans vague auprès de son mari, dont elle anticipe parfaitement les besoins. Cuisinant pour son époux dans la quiétude du quotidien, Mãn tient à lui faire redécouvrir le mariage des saveurs de la banane, des arachides et de la noix de coco par une recette aux accents vietnamiens héritée de Maman. Celui-ci ne sent pas la nécessité d'avoir pour elle maints égards, car il l'a choisie entre toutes et lui a offert un nouveau départ en sol canadien. Patiemment, Mãn fait sa place dans la cuisine du restaurant de son époux, où l'on sert d'abord des plats rudimentaires comme des soupes tonkinoises. Lorsque son mari tombe malade, Mãn lui prépare un plat équilibrant de poulet avec des graines de lotus, des noix de ginkgo et des baies de goji (39), qu'elle lui fait manger avec dévouement, bouchée par bouchée, trois jours durant. La narratrice rapporte que, selon les croyances, les mangues, les piments et le chocolat enflamment et abîment, contrairement aux aliments froids et amers qui rétablissent l'équilibre (39). Cette « explication gastrothérapeutique » met en lumière, d'après Yang (2014, 91), une philosophie où sont préconisées la modération et l'abnégation, « couleurs essentielles à l'âme vietnamienne » au dire de Mãn (Thúy 2013, 25).

Aux clients du restaurant, des hommes célibataires pour la plupart, la protagoniste sert des repas du matin variés, conçus au gré de sa visite imaginée des rues du Vietnam, pratique que Pamela Sing (2013) qualifie de « translocalisante » (286). Un client originaire de Rach Giá est ému lorsqu'on lui sert une soupe-repas au poisson poché avec des vermicelles, typique de la région : « En mangeant cette soupe, il m'a susurré qu'il avait goûté sa terre, la terre où il avait grandi, où il était aimé » (Thúy, 2013, 42). Mãn cuisine chaque fois un seul plat du jour, « pour ne pas que les émotions débordent les limites de l'assiette » (43), confie-t-elle, signe de l'intrication chez elle du culinaire et du pulsionnel. Dans cet esprit, Deborah Lupton (1996) explique : « Preparing a meal may evoke memories of past events at which that meal has been prepared and eaten, conjuring up the emotions felt at that time » (32). Quand les clients se font plus nombreux, Mãn passe souvent une partie de la nuit en cuisine, un espace qu'elle fait sien. Faire à manger apparaît d'abord pour la protagoniste comme un geste de bienveillance, qui lui permet de contribuer au bonheur tranquille des clients et de tisser des liens avec autrui.

Dans l'introduction de leur ouvrage *Careful Eating*, Anna Lavis, Emma-Jayne Abbots, et Luci Attala (2015) soulignent que les travaux actuels en études sur l'alimentation ont souvent décrit le soin (*care*) comme un geste d'amour, une pratique vertueuse par laquelle les individus sont incorporés (sur les plans culturel, émotionnel et biologique) dans un groupe social (4-

5). Or, constatent les chercheuses, la bienveillance apparente du soin est parfois profondément ancrée dans les processus politiques régissant le contrôle des corps : « [W]hen associated with food and eating, care may be problematically entwined around regulatory ideas of good or normative practices, citizens and bodies » (7). Dans son ouvrage *Food, Consumption and the Body in Contemporary Women's Fiction*, Sara Sceats (2003 [2000]) souligne que si la culture occidentale propose traditionnellement des images de femmes nourricières, responsables de l'allaitement des enfants et de la préparation des repas, la fiction contemporaine s'intéresse autant sinon davantage à leurs appétits, puisque les femmes cuisinent et servent, tout comme elles mangent et font l'expérience de la privation (2). Or, la narratrice migrante de *Mãn*, issue d'une culture où la femme est traditionnellement moins émancipée, nourrit l'autre plus qu'elle ne mange elle-même, mettant de côté son propre plaisir et réservant le plus souvent son attention et sa sollicitude pour autrui, la nourriture étant au cœur de son éthique du soin, pour reprendre l'expression de Carol Gilligan (2008). Nous verrons néanmoins que l'acte de faire à manger facilite l'enracinement de Mãn en sol québécois et la conduit à apprendre à « désir[er] l'horizon » (Thúy 2013, 65).

Maillage relationnel, autonomisation et hybridations culinaires

De fait, le restaurant de son époux devient pour Mãn le catalyseur de belles amitiés : « Julie a été la première à pencher son visage dans la fenêtre par laquelle je sortais les plats. Son sourire s'étendait d'un côté à l'autre de l'ouverture…Instantanément, avant même qu'un mot soit prononcé, nous sommes devenues amies et, avec le temps, sœurs » (Thúy 2013, 54). Par l'entremise de Julie, Mãn découvre et partage plusieurs mets québécois, « du *smoked meat* à la tourtière, du ketchup à la sauce béchamel » (54). Pour Geneviève Sicotte (2014), la représentation du repas, généralement dysphorique dans la littérature québécoise de la seconde moitié du 20e siècle, est plus positive dans le corpus des 25 dernières années, qui réinvente le « banquet heureux des origines » (soulignant l'union du groupe ou la maîtrise de la nature), cas de figure que l'on retrouve notamment chez Kim Thúy. Julie entraîne un jour la narratrice dans le local voisin, qu'elle a secrètement aménagé en un atelier de cuisine où se trouvent une multitude d'épices et une précieuse bibliothèque. Mãn, qui a du mal à verbaliser sa reconnaissance, se fait prévenante pour sa camarade : elle lui apporte à tout moment le soda-lime qu'elle préfère et adoucit son quotidien par mille petites attentions (Thúy 2013, 72-73). Portées par la vision de Julie, les deux femmes montent un programme de cours de cuisine vietnamienne avec dégustation. Mãn, qui arrivait à peine à soutenir les regards, s'épanouit : elle donne bientôt naissance à un premier fils (61) et reçoit de Julie une « éducation en langues, en gestes, en émotions » (65). Yang (2014) déclare à ce propos que, dans *Mãn*, le culinaire « incarne le processus de la reconstruction de l'habitus culturel individuel », témoignage de la transformation transculturelle vécue par la narratrice, qui commence à « "saluer [en français] avec la température" [plutôt qu']avec le manger à la vietnamienne », et apprend à mouvoir son corps figé et son visage neutre pour respirer profondément, mordre (dans une pomme, à pleines dents), expérimenter et exprimer (90-91).

Parallèlement, la famille professionnelle de Mãn s'agrandit : à son frère-soleil, le plongeur vietnamien, s'ajoutent Hồng, une vaillante aide-cuisinière (Thúy 2013, 62), et Philippe, un chef pâtissier qui revisite les desserts vietnamiens en mariant les traditions de l'Est et de l'Ouest (69-72). Julie et Mãn lancent leur premier livre : *La Palanche*, où chaque recette est motivée par une histoire[9] ou un conte, ce qui n'est pas sans rappeler le projet de *Ru*, qui se voulait dépositoire de paroles fragiles. À la suite du succès du livre naît une émission de télé, où Mãn et Julie invitent des chefs québécois à réinventer leurs recettes à l'écran, ce qui donne lieu à des rencontres culinaires harmonieuses (80-81). Sing (2013) rapporte que la narratrice-restauratrice « admet sans hésitation que "certains goûts sont exclusifs et tracent une forte frontière identitaire", mais constate qu'en général, les goûts vietnamiens et québécois se marient avec bonheur » (286). La nourriture constitue ici pour Mãn un instrument d'intégration et d'émancipation, et le restaurant, un carrefour d'entraide permettant l'émergence de nouvelles solidarités et de projets créatifs. Dans cet esprit, la narratrice de *À toi* confie avoir elle-même engagé, au sein de son défunt restaurant montréalais (qu'on suppose être Ru de Nam), un père mexicain sans expérience :

> Mon équipe au restaurant et moi l'avons embrassé

> inconditionnellement, de la même manière que les Québécois m'ont prise sous leur aile à mon arrivée. Même si le menu était vietnamien, des mots comme *camarones*, *arroz*, *querida* traversaient joyeusement la cuisine parmi le ronronnement de la hotte et la cacophonie des poêles lancées à la hâte dans les éviers débordants. (Thúy 2011, 37)

Si les femmes, historiquement reléguées à l'anonymat de la sphère domestique, se sont longtemps vu confier la cuisine du quotidien, l'univers de la haute cuisine, flamboyante et festive, demeure à ce jour marqué par une forte présence masculine, bien que de plus en plus de femmes portent le titre de cheffe. Le roman *Mãn* célèbre justement la cuisine habile d'une restauratrice migrante, qui s'attire le respect de son équipe hétéroclite, du public et de ses pairs, au Québec comme à l'étranger, non seulement par son travail quotidien avec la nourriture, mais aussi par ses projets multimédiatiques qui invitent au voyage et valorisent les hybridations.

Traduire le geste d'aimer. Modulation du sensorium

La nourriture chez Kim Thúy est en outre assimilée à un rituel amoureux. Elle constitue un instrument de séduction privilégié, qu'on pense au jardinier dans *Ru* qui apporte à une ouvrière tous les matins du riz dans une feuille de bananier (Thúy 2009, 79), ou aux jeunes Vietnamiens qui offrent à leurs prétendantes dans *À toi* « une branche de bougainvillier, une boîte de petits-beurre LU, un fer à repasser » (Thúy 2011, 89). La narratrice de *Mãn* confie que les recettes au Vietnam, capables d'envouter l'élu, se transmettent à voix basse de mère en fille (Thúy 2013, 12). C'est sa carrière culinaire internationale qui l'amène pour sa part à vivre une première passion amoureuse. Dans le cadre d'un festival où les restaurateurs français reçoivent des chefs étrangers, Luc, dont Mãn a rencontré la sœur au Salon du livre de Paris, invite la jeune femme à cuisiner dans son établissement. Les soirs où l'on sert le repas vietnamien, il installe trois îlots dans la salle à manger, où Mãn prépare des crêpes au curcuma et aux crevettes (130-131). Yang (2014) signale que la narratrice, qui privilégiait pour son mari une cuisine équilibrante aux « saveurs imperceptibles », renouvelle son registre sensoriel afin de charmer Luc par l'entremise de ce plat qui « évoque de riches sensations presque voluptueuses » : la crêpe craquant entre les lèvres, fondant dans la bouche, la langue goûtant l'amertume et la fraîcheur de la deuxième bouchée, enrobée d'une feuille de laitue moutarde (92). Le restaurateur devient bientôt le guide linguistique et l'amant de la narratrice, qui reconnaît son reflet dans le visage de Luc plus que dans les miroirs qui l'entourent (Thúy 2013, 131). Sing (2013) déclare que la passion amoureuse vécue auprès de Luc à Paris et à Québec conduit Mãn à expérimenter une intensité sensorielle inégalée à travers les gestes intimes, textures, odeurs et goûts partagés, du *bánh xèo* à la tarte Bourdaloue aux poires et aux pistaches (287-288). Les amants imaginent en vain des scénarios pour empêcher la tornade qui les happe de dévaster les nids[10] qu'ils ont construits. Une question est lancée par Luc ; Mãn en saisit trop tard la portée. Alors que la protagoniste, de retour à Montréal, prépare des vivaneaux aux dix condiments cuits à la vapeur, un appel de l'épouse de Luc met un terme à leur idylle : « Je reste. Vous comprenez. Je reste » (Thúy 2013, 137). Pour consoler son chagrin, vécu en silence, Mãn trouve réconfort les semaines suivantes dans la préparation de plats complexes : « C'était un travail de moine qui me permettrait de me retirer dans mon univers, celui qui n'existait plus » (139).

Après avoir choisi le renoncement, comme l'avait fait sa mère avant elle,[11] en demeurant à la fin du roman dans un mariage sans joie, Mãn, tiraillée par des identités inconciliables, nourrit en silence des affects dévorants qu'elle ne peut exprimer qu'en les inscrivant à même son corps, sous la forme de points à l'encre rouge, vestiges douloureux d'une passion avortée. Yang (2014) avance que « [m]ême après sa rupture avec Luc, acte d'abnégation initié sans doute par sa vietnamité, cette volupté sensorielle reste chez elle, lui laissant un "modèle sensoriel" transformé », qui se traduit non seulement par le marquage du corps par l'entremise du tatouage, mais aussi par l'intériorisation d'un nouveau langage corporel et émotionnel (92). La narratrice de *Ru* explique que, dans la langue vietnamienne, « il est possible de classifier, de quantifier le geste d'aimer par des mots spécifiques : aimer par goût (*thích*), aimer, sans être amoureux (*thuở ng*), aimer amoureusement (*yêu*), aimer avec ivresse (*mê*), aimer aveuglément (*mù quáng*), aimer par gratitude (*tình nghĩa*) » (Thúy 2009, 104). Aussi déclare-t-elle que le geste « d'aimer n'est pas universel : il doit aussi être traduit d'une langue à l'autre, il doit être appris » (104). Un jour, en remettant leurs lunchs à ses enfants, Mãn imagine la main de

Luc caresser le haut de son dos pour qu'elle s'incline et les embrasse. Le lendemain, elle dépose contre leur sandwich le message : « Je t'aime mon ange », donnant une nouvelle vie au surnom affectueux que Luc lui réservait. Depuis, elle coiffe sa fille et fait la toilette de son fils avec la tendresse qu'elle a connue auprès de Luc. À l'instar de Sing (2013), j'estime que *Mãn* s'achève sur la mise en place d'un nouveau sensorium qui favorise l'intimité parent-enfant, s'écarte du répertoire tactile affectueux restreint hérité de la mère vietnamienne (qui se limite en l'occurrence à la caresse des cheveux) et permet à la narratrice d'investir le présent montréalais de couches de sensations, de significations et de souvenirs connus dans d'autres contextes temporels ou géographiques (288).

Pour conclure

Dans sa thèse de doctorat, Yang (2014) met en relief la thématique transculturelle qui imprègne et alimente la production littéraire de Kim Thúy :

> [Q]u'il s'agisse de *Ru*, autofiction s'inspirant tant de l'expérience tumultueuse des réfugiés vietnamiens comme sa famille que des histoires des gens qu'elle côtoie au cours de son immigration au Québec, ou de *À toi*, dialogue de deux êtres vivant entre deux/plusieurs cultures au sujet de l'identité, du métissage culturel et de la poéticité du quotidien, ou de *Mãn*, récit d'un personnage toujours similaire à « la personne physique de l'auteure » selon certains…, Kim Thúy explore constamment comme thèmes majeurs l'ethnicité vietnamienne, la confrontation Orient-Occident, l'expérience de l'entre-deux et de l'acculturation liée à l'immigration, sources foncières de cette auteure qui navigue à l'aise entre deux cultures, québécoise et vietnamienne, entre trois langues, le français, l'anglais et le vietnamien. (253)

Considérant l'existence, chez le sujet migrant, d'une « volonté de forger des lieux d'"habitabilité territoriale et psychique" (Harel 2005[,] 46) », notamment par le travail de l'écriture, Sing (2013) déclare que « l'univers romanesque [chez Kim Thúy] acquiert des épaisseurs d'intensité et une matérialité révélatrice de la dimension expérientielle des passages et traversées » (298). Pour la chercheuse, une étude de la sensorialité dans les romans de l'écrivaine permet de mettre en lumière, par l'entremise des narratrices, des « sujets incarnés ancrés dans le monde », de nouvelles façons d'habiter un lieu donné (298), les fictions étant d'ailleurs capables de produire des expériences culturelles potentiellement transformatrices.

Nous l'avons vu, le goût des protagonistes de Kim Thúy évolue, alors que les corps (et les postures) se transforment, s'adaptent aux nouveaux environnements alimentaires, qu'ils soient hostiles ou simplement différents. Survivant aux privations connues sur le bateau et au camp de réfugiés en Malaisie (pensons aux biscuits imbibés d'huile ou aux poissons avariés qui font office de nourritures quotidiennes), la résiliente narratrice de *Ru* s'enracine dans la communauté accueillante de Granby, connaît une acculturation qui se traduit par l'adoption progressive de nouvelles habitudes alimentaires (dont l'abandon de la soupe au déjeuner), et nourrit à l'égard de sa communauté d'accueil une « gratitude du réfugié », sans toutefois négliger, une fois adulte, de rendre hommage aux ancêtres vietnamiens, notamment en cuisinant de la viande rissolée pour garder vivants des gestes d'amour oubliés par l'Histoire.

Enfant sans rêve, Mãn traverse pour sa part le Pacifique jusqu'à Montréal, puis l'Atlantique jusqu'à Paris pour aller à la rencontre d'elle-même. De cuisinière timide, au service de l'autre, recréant avec doigté des plats traditionnels vietnamiens, elle devient une amie loyale, une entrepreneuse innovante, une cheffe réputée favorisant les hybridations savoureuses, une amante éprise qui découvre sa fragilité, et une mère plus affectueuse et démonstrative avec ses enfants. C'est la nourriture qui rend possibles dans *Mãn* les rencontres et les transformations.

Dans son récent roman *Vi* (2016), Kim Thúy reprend et actualise certains motifs narratifs et formels explorés précédemment : l'immigration au Québec d'une jeune Vietnamienne, la périlleuse fuite en mer et le séjour au camp de réfugiés, la découverte de l'amour passionnel dans ses déclinaisons culturelles et l'exploration sensorielle d'un univers géographique et poétique complexe. Si la narratrice Vi cuisine pour prendre soin de son amant d'origine vietnamienne Tân (comme sa mère avait elle-même séduit son futur mari par la constance de ses attentions et la qualité de son café), manger devient pour elle synonyme de plaisir, de découverte et de partage auprès de son petit ami français Vincent, qu'elle fréquente lors d'un séjour professionnel à Hanoi et qui la convainc qu'elle a tort de se croire

invisible, en dépit de son nom qui signifie « Précieuse minuscule microscopique ».

En définitive, les modifications successives du sensorium et de l'habitus alimentaire-culinaire sont le plus souvent vécues de façon positive et célébrées par les narratrices de Kim Thúy, qui cheminent pour devenir pleinement sujets et agentes. Si ces remodelages ne témoignent pas d'un rejet de la culture d'origine, ils attestent néanmoins d'une transformation des attitudes corporelles, des réactions viscérales (qui sont à la fois physiques et sociales), ainsi que de la grammaire gustative et de ses résonnances émotionnelles au sortir de l'épreuve migratoire. Ching Selao (2014) souligne qu'à l'instar de ses narratrices, pour qui l'expérience exilique rend possible une renaissance, un « re-membrement » (151), l'écrivaine néo-québécoise, souriante, animée et à l'aise, incite « à voir la vie et l'exil avec des lunettes roses » (164) et semble afficher elle-même—contrairement à d'autres réfugiées comme Linda Lê—, « un parti pris pour le bonheur » (150).

Dans « Happy Objects », Sara Ahmed (2010) déclare à ce sujet que « happiness is attributed to certain objects that circulate as social goods. When we feel pleasure from such objects, we are aligned ; we are facing the right way » (37). À l'instar de Ben Highmore, qui suggère, par sa notion d'esthétique sociale, l'indissociabilité du perçu, du senti et du ressenti, Ahmed (2014 [2004]) « avoid[s] making analytical distinctions between bodily sensation, emotion and thought », car celles-ci n'appartiennent pas à des domaines étanches ou distincts et sont expérimentées sous la forme d'impressions (6). La chercheuse rappelle que le choix d'un objet dans lequel quelqu'un « investit son bonheur » (tout comme la mise à distance d'objets qu'il refuse de toucher, d'entendre ou de ressentir) dépend d'une « orientation corporelle » acquise, influencée par une économie morale dans laquelle reconnaître ce qui « goûte bon » constitue une marque sociale de « bon goût » (2010, 32, 35, je traduis). Il semblerait ainsi, pour paraphraser Ahmed, que Kim Thúy témoigne par ses récits d'une proximité avec des objets cognitifs ou sensoriels considérés comme positifs par sa communauté affective d'accueil, avec laquelle elle se trouve « alignée », ce qui contribue à la réception favorable de sa production.

Notes

[1] Highmore (2010) pose ce concept comme héritier d'une contre-tradition de la pensée esthétique (de Georg Simmel à Jacques Rancière) qui se désintéresse de l'éventuelle mission morale de l'œuvre et de son évaluation (124).

[2] Soulignons à cet égard la contribution de Tess Do (Université de Melbourne), dont les travaux portent notamment sur la représentation de l'alimentation et de la mémoire traumatique dans les productions d'auteurs issus de l'immigration postcoloniale, dont Linda Lê, Anna Moï et Thanh-Van Tran-Nhut.

[3] *Ru* est également parfois qualifié d'autofiction (Yang 2014).

[4] Alors que la photo du corps sans vie du jeune Aylan Kurdi, échoué sur la plage de l'île grecque de Kos, continue d'émouvoir le monde et que plus de 30 000 réfugiés syriens sont arrivés au Canada, le texte de Thúy se révèle d'une poignante actualité.

[5] En entrevue (Lepage 2015), Thúy confie avec humilité son malaise lorsqu'on salue sa résilience, qui implique à ses yeux un choix conscient et volontaire. Elle affirme plutôt avoir été portée par la chance et par un « instinct de survie ».

[6] Ching Selao (2014) déclare, dans le même esprit : « Il n'est par conséquent pas étonnant que *Ru* ait bénéficié d'un accueil des plus enthousiastes dans la mesure où le récit est empreint de tendresse et d'admiration pour les Vietnamiens et de reconnaissance pour l'accueil chaleureux et généreux du Québec » (164).

[7] À ce chapitre, Sara Ahmed (2014 [2004]) affirme : « In my model of sociality of emotions, I suggest that emotions create the very effect of the surfaces and boundaries that allow us to distinguish an inside and an outside in the first place. So emotions are not simply something "I" or "we" have. Rather, it is through emotions, or how we respond to objects and others, that surfaces or boundaries are made: the "I" and the "we" are shaped by, and even take the shape of, contact with others…In other words, emotions are not "in" either the individual or the social, but produce the very surfaces and boundaries that allow the individual and the social to be delineated as if they are objects » (10).

[8] *Mãn* est parsemé de termes vietnamiens—des mots-clés inscrits à l'encre verte en marge du texte, des paroles de chanson, des poèmes—, accompagnés de leur traduction en français, ce qui confère selon Sing une certaine musicalité rythmique et tonale au texte (2013, 285).

[9] La soupe aux tomates et au persil constitue ainsi un hommage au père de Hồng, qui s'est sacrifié pour ses enfants alors qu'ils étaient emprisonnés pour avoir tenté de fuir le Vietnam par bateau.

[10] Notons ici que le choix du mot « nid » n'est pas fortuit, car il rappelle le nid d'hirondelle offert à Mãn par son mari dans l'espoir

qu'ils deviennent parents (Thúy 2013, 56).

[11] Après la rupture de Mãn avec son amant Luc, Maman— finalement immigrée à Montréal— invite sa fille à dormir dans sa chambre et lui remet la plaque d'identification du soldat Phương, son premier amour. Maman a perdu Phương par deux fois : d'abord lorsqu'il est parti combattre, puis lorsqu'elle l'a retrouvé dans la jungle, trop tard, aux côtés de sa nouvelle famille, et qu'elle a choisi de ne pas se manifester pour ne pas troubler son bonheur fragile (Thúy 2013, 141-143). De l'aveu de Kim Thúy, c'est cette anecdote sur l'amour et le renoncement, inspirée d'une histoire vécue par sa tante, qui est à l'origine du roman *Mãn* (Vilder 2013, Q14).

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The Affect of Absence: Rebecca Belmore and the Aesthetico-politics of "Unnameable Affects"

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Abstract

This essay discusses Rebecca Belmore's work as a form of protest against violence and a memorial for native cultures and compares her performances and their documentation with later installations in galleries. Her work overcomes the dichotomies of presence and absence, of speaking out and silence, and that of image and language with affect that transgresses genres, media, and material.

Résumé

Cet essai traite de l'œuvre de Rebecca Belmore comme une forme de protestation contre la violence et un mémorial aux cultures indigènes et compare ses performances et leur documentation avec des installations ultérieures dans des galeries. Son œuvre surmonte les dichotomies de la présence et de l'absence, de la parole et du silence, de l'image et du langage et est chargée d'un affect qui transgresse les genres, les médias et le matériel.

For almost three decades, Anishinaabe artist Rebecca Belmore has addressed in various media the politics of Indigenous[1] representation, voice, and identity, and advanced the discussion of political identity in Canadian Art. Since 1987 Belmore has shown her installations and performances in numerous group and solo exhibitions all over Canada as well as internationally. She represented Canada at the Havana Biennial, Cuba (1991), at the Sydney Biennale, Australia (1998), and most prominently at the 2005 Venice Biennale (Townsend-Gault 2014; Hill et al. 2013; O'Brian and White 2007; Mars and Householder 2004; Nemiroff et al. 1992). In art historical writing Belmore is foremost known as a performance artist. By discussing her work in the context of a special journal issue on affect and feminism, I do not seek to write her into a feminist art history. Instead, this article looks at how Belmore's art sheds some light on performances and installations that deal with the violence against and murder of Indigenous women. Belmore would not consider herself a feminist artist, but as she admitted in a talk she gave in 2007 at the symposium in conjunction with the exhibition *Global Feminisms*, she identifies as an artist, as a human being, and as a woman. As a "woman of her people," the Anishininaabe—her artistic practice is deeply rooted in the Anishinaabe legacy she inherited from her grandmother. Born and raised to speak English, her mother prepared her for a life in modern Canada, where her Anishinaabe language (Anishinaabemowin) and culture would be constantly under threat; the loss of her mother language became the source force of many pieces. Rebecca Belmore's early work gave visibility to the "destructive forces of colonialism" (Corntassel 2012, 88), and commemorated acts of violence against and resistance of Indigenous people, especially women. Her 2002 performance *Vigil*, for example, commemorates dozens of women who went missing in downtown Vancouver.

This essay compares *Vigil* and its video installation *The Named and the Unnamed* (2002) with the

more recent video piece *Apparition* (2013) and the 2015 re-installation of *Vigil* in the video installation *Somewhere Else* (2015). While *The Named and the Unnamed* gave witness to Belmore's shouting out of the names of disappeared Indigenous women from Vancouver's Downtown Eastside, with *Apparition*, she reflects on the loss of language brought by the role residential schools played in the silencing of Indigenous languages. By refusing to express that loss in the language of its exterminator, Belmore's video performance becomes a powerful medium for the intergenerational, intercorporeal transmission of "unhappy affects." In the theoretical context of Lisa Blackman's (2011) argument, those "unhappy affects" such as trauma, shame, isolation, and loneliness have been associated with queer lives (185). In "Affect, Performance, and Queer Subjectivities," Blackman contends that "communities of affect" like the queer community could be explored with a practice such as performance, "which can hold the tension between happiness and unhappiness…in close proximity" (196-197) where the transmission of affect is key.

Central to Belmore's practice is the way she uses her body to invoke presence, but also absence.[2] The video installations of the documented performances function here as a form of memorial-turn-protest by forcing the viewer into a conscious act of witnessing. Belmore's speaking out—with or without words—changes from an acclamation of the absent to a provocation of the present by activating the body of the viewer through affect. It is the way affect works that moves the spectator, making the created aesthetic image ethical and her art political. This art, as she shows in the exhibition "Somewhere Else," does not even need the body of the artist anymore. What Florence Belmore (2015) called the "endurance of the image over action" in the essay to the exhibition hints on the videos and other forms of documentation that outlive the actual performances. By the "performative power of materiality" (Bolt 2013, 7), even the documents of a performance can evoke "unnameable affects"—those affects that, according to Julia Kristeva (2002), are too painful to express in words (23). In her reading of Kristeva, Estelle Barrett (2013) claims that only a combination of material processes, affect, and feeling can create embodied knowledge (64-65).[3] Understood as a material process, as I will show, artistic production is able to turn an aesthetic image not only into an ethics, but into a political entity. By comparing the performance *Vigil* with its documentation and latter video installation, we are able to understand that Belmore's work overcomes the dichotomies of presence and absence, of speaking out and silence, and even that of image and language with affect. And she does that transgressing genres, media, and material—and "does not require a distinctly human body in order to pass and register" (Blackman 2012, 13).

Different authors have already alluded to the metonymic and metaphoric qualities of the different elements of Belmore's performances. In this article, I do not question their symbolic power, but I want to put forward that the aesthetic images created exceed what can be captured by the symbolic because they exist only in and as an interchange with the viewer. By using her body to address the viewer's body, Belmore can affect the recipient in ways that resist interpretation. As soon as the viewer gets engaged in the performance, the conventionalized roles of artist and recipient break up. Performances can create unexpected moments and an intensity that tops mere empathy. Then, I argue, affect mediates not only between mind and body, but also between the aesthetic and the ethical. In this constellation, the aesthetic is neither the visual by-product of an artist's political agenda nor a specific form of representation, but the inherent force that carries the affect.

Rebecca Belmore's Performance *Vigil* (2002) and its Installation in *The Named and the Unnamed* (2002)

In 2013, The Canada Council for the Arts conferred the Governor General's Award in Visual and Media Arts to Rebecca Belmore. On this special occasion, the National Gallery of Canada put Belmore's 2002 installation *The Named and the Unnamed*[4] on display. It was there and then where I was confronted with the work *Vigil* for the first time. The installation consisted of a 50-minute video loop, which was projected on an eight-by-nine foot screen in an otherwise empty room. [**Figure 1**]

Figure 1: Rebecca Belmore, *The Named and the Unnamed* (2013, video installation). Collection of the Morris and Helen Belkin Art Gallery, UBC. Purchased with the support of the Canada Council for the Arts Acquisition Assistance program and the Morris and Helen Belkin Foundation. Photo: Howard Ursuliak.

Taking a seat in front of the screen, I got mesmerized by the forty-eight light bulbs that pierced the screen and sometimes the projected image of candles glared the screen. But most of the time, my desire to fully immerse in the video got disrupted by the presence of the light bulbs. *The Named and the Unnamed* presents the documentary video of Belmore's performance *Vigil,* held on June 23, 2002 at the corner of Gore Street and Cordova Street, Vancouver, as an installation. The performance was commissioned by the Full Circle Native Performance's Talking Stick Festival and Margo Kane to draw attention to the disappearance of dozens of women from this area (Townsend-Gault and Luna 2003).

Since 1987, Belmore has engaged with the political and social realities of Indigenous communities. The artist, who was born in Ontario, is a member of the Lac Seul First Nation at Frenchman's Head, Ontario, and currently resides in Montréal, Québec. By addressing history, place, and identity, her oeuvre represents and employs the resistance of Indigenous peoples. Belmore's performances, sculptures, videos, photographs, and installations draw upon the connections between bodies, land, and language, and the violence that colonialism enacted upon them. For Belmore (2007), performance is always personal: "It is because it's done by me, my persona, my body, and I think that with my body I can address history, the immediate and political issues. For me performance is deeply personal, because it's my way of speaking out." Belmore not only addresses the politics of Indigenous representation, voice, and identity in different media, but also gives visibility to physical violence, particularly violence against women, by invoking presence and absence with the body, with hers and others. Belmore's feminist agenda is grounded in her being a cis woman, and that of her people, as she explained in 2007. Even if Belmore's pieces are recognized and discussed by feminist art history, she is not producing feminist art in the art historical sense. Her work, however, joins feminist discourse, since it addresses the discrimination of Indigenous women from the perspective of an Indigenous woman who experienced discrimination and loss of language herself.[5]

The Performance as *Vigil*

Vigil is a performance piece that took place in the same year as rural settler Canadian pig farmer Robert Pickton was charged with the murder of twenty-six women. Since the mid-1980s, over sixty women from Vancouver's Downtown Eastside went missing before the Vancouver Police Department and the city council took action. All of the women were street-level sex-workers—predominantly Indigenous. In 2001, an investigation was launched that led to charges of murder, especially when DNA of twenty-six of the missing women were discovered spread all over Pickton's property. When we speak of DNA traces, we speak of pieces of scalp or bones, single particles of human cells. It is hard to think of a more brutal effacement and disappearance of the women's physical presence; there was literally no-thing left of these women (Lehmann 2012). The absence of any material remnants made it difficult not only to prove their disappearance to the authorities, but also to give their families the chance to grieve the loss of their mothers, sisters, and daughters in any kind of ritual that requires a dead body.

Like the vigils usually held by the relatives of the disappeared or deceased, Belmore's *Vigil* symbolically watches out for the missing women. At a non-descript urban intersection, the performance begins with a ritualistic cleansing of the sidewalk, followed by the lighting of candles, the distribution of red roses, and the calling out of women's names. The names that Belmore

cries out are inscribed on her arms in thick black ink. **[Figure 2]**

Figure 2: Rebecca Belmore, *The Named and the Unnamed* (2013, video installation). Collection of the Morris and Helen Belkin Art Gallery, UBC. Purchased with the support of the Canada Council for the Arts Acquisition Assistance program and the Morris and Helen Belkin Foundation. Photo: Howard Ursuliak.

After each name is called, she drags a rose across her mouth, stripping of the petals and leaves, and spitting them to the ground. Then she puts on a long red dress and begins nailing the dress to a wood pole nearby. [**Figure 3**]

Figure 3: Rebecca Belmore, *The Named and the Unnamed* (2013, video installation). Collection of the Morris and Helen Belkin Art Gallery, UBC. Purchased with the support of the Canada Council for the Arts Acquisition Assistance program and the Morris and Helen Belkin Foundation. Photo: Howard Ursuliak.

She then rips the dress from the pole, nailing and ripping it again and again until the dress is nothing but scattered shards of red fabric clinging to the pole and littering the sidewalk. The artist puts on a pair of jeans and a tank top, washes her face and arms, wipes away the women's names, and goes and leans against a parked pickup truck. We can hear music out of the open windows of the car. James Brown is singing, "This is a man's world, this is a man's world, that wouldn't be nothing—not one little thing—without a woman or a girl" (Belmore 2002). Several authors have already alluded to the metonymic and metaphoric qualities of the different elements of the performance: candles are blown out by the wind, red roses are shredded, and a red dress is ripped. These elements were interpreted as the representation of unrepresentable pain and trauma or as the female body constantly in danger (Lauzon 2008, 155-179; Crosby 2008, 77-87). What has been overlooked so far is that these elements (candles, roses, red dress, jeans, and tank top) are symbols of the Western colonial, white, and of course hetero-normative discourse of love, tragedy, and grief. I do not mistrust the symbolic power of these elements nor do I interpret Belmore's use of it as irony or cynicism—every time a woman's name is called out, for instance, the artist shreds a rose with her mouth, as if the life of this woman and her body were violently destroyed. I am convinced that the aesthetic images created through this performance exceed what can be captured by the symbolic by actually employing elements that have already lost their symbolic positive value, like the red colour or the candles in such a minimalist way in her performance. Barrett's (2013) "new materialist" approach proposes to see the aesthetic image as performative and "unlike images that operate via established symbolic codes and that serve to communicate information…it emerges through sensory processes and give rise to multiplicity, ambiguity and indeterminacy" (63). However, as Jessica Jacobson-Konefall (2014) reminds us, there is a specific "Indigenous materialism" that exceeds the new materialism in art history, which is caught in the "gendered dimensions of citizenship" of a settler society like Canada where Indigenous femininity and womanhood are marginalized or obliterated altogether (66-87).

Affect and the Absent Body

At the beginning there is trauma, bodies in trouble, and a troubled body—that of the artist. Charlotte Townsend-Gault recalls a meeting with Belmore in preparation of the 2002 exhibition of *The Named and the Unnamed*:

> Belmore, habitually circumspect, always says that she is in awe of the power of words to shape experience…She wanted to make a work about what was troubling her most, the disappearance of more than fifty (the number remains imprecise) women form the streets of Vancouver's downtown East Side, and the criminally desultory response of the authorities to the horrible plight of the least powerful. She had tried to find a way of "speaking" about the unspeakable, to declaim the secret that had been known but unspoken for an unconscionably long time. (Townsend-Gault and Luna 2003, 18)

It is intriguing to watch how Belmore achieves a "full-on corporeal involvement" by the spectator (13). Belmore's performance, as Townsend-Gault points out in the 2003 exhibition catalogue, threatens to overwhelm the spectator in a "splat of emotion" created by "an almost too familiar overload of culturally conflicting allusions and irresolvable epistemological confusions…Except that Belmore is in control. She is focused on the fine-grain of the physical, of touch and of sound. And then the sensations segue into ethics, clearly" (29). Using her own body to address the viewer's body enables the artist to affect the recipient in ways that resist a mere interpretation of signs. To look at Belmore's face expressing grief, pain, and exhaustion would be just enough to affect the viewer—as it happened to me when looking at *Vigil*. However, contemporary affect theory, as shaped by Patricia Clough, Brian Massumi (2001) and others, separates affect from cognition. In Blackman's (2012) definition, "affect bypasses cognition and is registered prior to its translation into emotion or feeling. The registering of affect is often aligned to the action of the central or autonomic nervous system, such as the mirror neurons, which are seen to grant affect its potential autonomy from meaning and interpretation" (21). I think one has to be very careful not to confuse the affect created by a video installation like *The Named and the Unnamed* with the emotional identification with or sympathy for the victims or a sheer physiological phenomenon like those of mirror neurons. Rather, I would like to search for what Jill Bennett (2005) calls the "affective dynamic internal to the work" (1-7). The names of the missing women are written on the artist's body, called out loud. Each woman is remembered with a rose that the artist shreds with her mouth and with a dress that is ripped, before the names are washed off again. By the quick change of different kinds of representation of the missing women in language, sound, and image, and their final disappearance, the spectator witnesses how the artist performs their presence and absence with all her senses.

It is important to stress that settler and Indigenous viewers do not engage with Belmore's work in the same way. Lived experiences of the destructive forces of colonialism differ from experiencing embodied knowledge simply through spectatorship. However, Belmore's performance is able to make the absence of the murdered Indigenous women palpable for settler viewers by addressing "the continued colonial mapping and erasing of Indigenous presence within this [colonial] space" (Nanibush 2010, 2). For the activist and curator Wanda Nanibush (2010), performance art is closer to Indigenous ideas of art and resistance "because it is based on process, contradiction, action and connection" (2) and based on collective truths that derive from the experience of individuals, relationships and connection through action, or what Leanne Simpson (2012) calls "presencing" (96).

The question that Western affect theory as well as Indigenous "presencing" shares is, then, how is affect produced and experienced by the audiences? Two examples taken from *The Named and the Unnamed* shall help answer this question.

The uncanniest moment of the performance takes place when Belmore calls out the names of the missing women and there is actually a woman—probably in the neighbourhood close by—who answers her call. For a short moment, the artist and the audience hold their breath. In the video caption, one sees a close up of Belmore's face. For a second, her facial expression is frozen and the only bodily expression is a blink of her eyes before she keeps going. By calling for the dead, she reached the living. Brian Massumi (2001) would prefer the term "unexpected" (27) to describe this moment, rather than "uncanny," just to avoid this highly charged psychoanalytical term. These unexpected

moments create an intensity that exceeds mere empathy by breaking up the conventionalized roles of artist or recipient, of transmitter and receiver. They describe the "critical point," following Massumi's vocabulary, when the viewer gets engaged in the performance. In Massumi's reading of Spinoza's ethics, affect is the philosophy of the "becoming active" of mind and body alike (32). The witnesses of Belmore's performance are reminded of the cruelty leading towards the violent destruction of the women's lives and bodies and the ignorance and oblivion of the public that followed, contrasted with the grief of the women's families.

By naming the disappeared women during her performance, Belmore creates a gap between the language that signifies the women and the reality of the absent bodies, a process that makes their absence even more present to the spectator. The performance operates here, following Barrett's (2013) reading of Kristeva's theory of creative textual practice, as a "new form of language in order to externalize our experience or aesthetic encounters" (68). As Barrett argues, this performativity shall not be confused with J. L. Austin's speech act theory or other discursive citational practices. Instead,

> performativity in creative production involves an interaction between the subject (artist) as material process, as *being and feeling*—and the subject as *signifying process*, as *sense-making*…In the making and viewing of art, experience-in-practice materializes or makes available to consciousness, a new object of knowledge…as an interactive *in situ* encounter. This shifts our understanding of knowledge from a passive to an active ingredient of social life. (68)

Therefore, Belmore's naming of the women turns from an acclamation of the dead to a provocation of the living. If we understand "provoking" in its etymological Latin origin (*pro-vocare*) as to "call forth," it becomes clear that Belmore's work does not work as a static monument, but as a provocation that is only effective if it reaches another being that is listening. In this sense, performance becomes an affective way of acting in the world, mediating not only between mind and body, but also between different bodies. Blackman (2012) deals in her work with phenomena like voice hearing, delusion, or embodied remembering as "modalities of communication that disclose our fundamental connectedness to each other" (21). In this sense, absence does not function as negativity, a space that separates people and experiences from one another, but as Nanibush (2010) claims, Rebecca Belmore's performance is able to create a space of "resurgence" with knowledge that is created through "the movement of the body, and sound, testimony and witnessing, remembering, protest and insurrection" (2).

A Vigil in the Gallery

The second provocation of the spectator—this time in a figurative sense—happens in the gallery space as Charlotte Townsend-Gault introduces the installation in the catalogue: "The continuous projection of the video, its looping repetitive re-enactment, also the re-enactment which characterizes trauma, was to become a kind of shrine or memorial to *The Named and the Unnamed*. The title fixes the secret, because the named were unnamed for so long, and because the unnamed remain unnamed" (Townsend-Gault and Luna 2003, 19). For those who have not witnessed the actual performance in downtown Vancouver, the 50-minute video loop functions as a document. Whereas the immersive quality of the medium of video and film helps to transport messages, to arouse attention, and create feelings, it never comes as close as to the immediate experience of the performance. In order to gain the same troubling effect of the actual performance, the filmic document needs to be troubled too. To project moving images on fixed objects—in this case, light bulbs—produces two contradictory effects. First, the light bulbs become part of the aesthetic image; for example, when they echo the candles lit on the floor or the nails pinned through the dress. As if by accident, the forty-eight light bulbs spread over the screen take up the same rhythm as the visual elements projected upon them. These moments of aesthetic pleasure last only for seconds before a restless camera breaks them. Then, the light bulbs remain alien to the projection. They seem to have nothing to do with the image projected upon them. They make no other sense than to disturb the aesthetic experience of the projected image in order to make it harder to fully immerse in the filmed performance.

In addition, the projected moving image and the static light bulbs on the wall create a strange,

destabilizing effect for the viewer, depending on which element the eye focuses on, the image or one of the light bulbs. Having focused on the latter, the moving image literally moves the spectator. This visually induced self-motion illusion that neuroscience calls vection, and that we all know from our daily lives, would not be expected during a visit to the gallery space. By provoking a visceral response this way, the spectator is reminded of her own physical existence facing the void left by the murdered women of downtown Vancouver. This is as close as it gets to the actual definition of affect as the potential of "a body's capacity to affect and to be affected" (Seigworth and Gregg 2010, 2). *The Named and the Unnamed* is thus no longer a visual art piece, but becomes a corporeal experience for the spectator.

As I argue, it is affect that binds the corporeal experience together with the illusion and that which exceeds the vision/emotion nexus that formerly worked on a semiotic level. Although affect becomes pre-individual in this constellation, this does not mean that affect cannot be mediated. In the case of *The Named and the Unnamed*, the installation becomes the actual permanent vigil filling the exhibition space with viewers who are assured of their bodily existence by acknowledging the absence of the missing bodies. It is important to note that, while the performance commemorates the missing women's bodies, the corporeal experience in the gallery space is independent of the gender of the spectator and asks Canadian settler society as a whole to take responsibility.

Since Belmore's 2002 *Vigil* for the disappeared and murdered women of the Vancouver Downtown Eastside, vigils are held every year all over Canada for the missing and murdered Indigenous women. The local case of Robert Pickton became a national inquiry that has received support from various national and international human rights organizations. It is estimated that at least 1,017 Indigenous women went missing under suspicious circumstances between 1980 and 2012 (Huntley 2015). *No More Stolen Sisters* or *Sisters in Spirit* activists have gathered together and marched with those who are engaged in the Indigenous rights movement *Idle No More*, founded in 2012, which denounces ongoing genocidal violence against the Indigenous peoples in Canada.

After Belmore, other artists have focused their work on missing and murdered Indigenous women. For example, *The REDress Project. An Aesthetic Response to the More than 1000 Missing and Murdered Aboriginal Women in Canada*, initiated by Winnipeg-based Métis artist Jamie Black (2015), is particularly interested in feminism and Indigenous social justice, and the possibilities for articulating linkages between and around these movements. The *REDress Project* aims to raise awareness about racial and gender violence and seeks to collect 600 red dresses by community donation to evoke a presence through the marking of absence. Works such as Belmore's and the *REDress Project* raises questions about the ability of contemporary art to address collective trauma. Literature on art and trauma tends to assume that artists need to either identify with trauma or defuse it. Bennett (2005), who focuses on art and trauma in her book *Empathic Vision: Affect, Trauma, and Contemporary Art*, is convinced that art can be a "vehicle for the interpersonal transmission of experience" (7). Bennett argues that, in the case of Belmore, the artist lends her body to create an experience for the spectator and by that helps to address the experience of trauma that "paradigmatically encapsulates both direct, unmediated affective experience and an absence of affect, insofar as it is resistant to cognitive processing and induces 'psychic numbing'" (5). Thus, the artist's body functions as a medium upon which affect is carried. This becomes even more crucial when it comes to raising awareness about the fate of marginalized groups, such as Indigenous women in Canada. Artworks such as Belmore's not only raise awareness about Indigenous women's struggles, but should also affect the collective consciousness in the direction of justice and equal rights.

Witnesses: Art and Canada's Indian Residential Schools

In 2013, Belmore participated in an exhibition in the Morris and Helen Belkin Art Gallery at the University of British Columbia, Vancouver. The exhibition, "Witnesses: Art and Canada's Indian Residential Schools," brought together a group of twenty-two artists to raise awareness about the history and legacy of Canadian residential schools. It was important for the organizers to pair up with Chief Robert Joseph, hereditary chief of the Gwa wa enuk First Nation, the curator Scott Watson, and a group of co-curators to focus on reconciliation (Turner 2013). In the exhibition catalogue, they expressed a desire to honour this request

by showing "works that might point to healing and the future while still telling some of the stories that needed telling about the schools…The story of the schools has few redeeming features and many former students and their children tell of experiences that are difficult to recount and painful to hear. There are too many stories of the abuse of children at the hands of schoolteachers" (Watson 2013: 5). Since the end of the nineteenth century, the United States and Canada established boarding schools to "civilize" Indigenous children. Following the dictum "kill the Indian, save the man," these efforts resulted in cultural genocide by prohibiting Indigenous traditions and languages in the schools (Smith 2005, 35-37). As the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRC) reported in 2001, 50,000 children were murdered in Canada from 1879 to 1986 through the system of Indian Residential Schools maintained by the Christian churches and the federal government (39-40). The violence of this policy cannot be better illustrated than by the 1920 statement made by Duncan Campbell Scott, Superintendent of the Department of Indian Affairs (1913–1932), in reference to Bill 14: "I want to get rid of the Indian problem. I do not think as a matter of fact, that the country ought to continuously protect a class of people who are able to stand alone…Our objective is to continue until there is not a single Indian in Canada that has not been absorbed into the body politic and there is no Indian question, and no Indian Department, that is the whole object of this Bill" (Watson 2013: 5).[6]

In 2008, the Canadian federal government issued an official apology. The former Prime Minister Stephen Harper's statement of apology on June 11, 2008 on behalf of Canadians for the residential school system was discussed during the "Dialogue on the History and Legacy of the Indian Residential Schools," held at UBC First Nations House of Learning on November 1, 2011. As Geoffrey Carr (2013) pointed out in the catalogue to the exhibition, "these apologies avoid difficult questions about racially-based policies of assimilation and segregation, forcible removal of children, and extremely high mortality rates in certain residential schools. Some critics question whether these misdeeds should be considered crimes against humanity, while others raise concerns of genocidal intent" (9). Belmore's participation in the exhibition *Witnesses: Art and Canada's Indian Residential Schools* was an indirect reaction to the Prime Minister's statement and the first to address this subject.

The artist's mouth, as illustrated in **[Figure 4],** is sealed with a duct tape when she appears on screen.

Figure 4: Rebecca Belmore, *Apparition* (2013, video installation). Courtesy of the artist. Photo: Michael R. Barrick, Morris and Helen Belkin Art Gallery.

In her four-minute video installation *Apparition,* Belmore presents herself to the spectator, wearing jeans and a T-shirt, facing the viewer. First on her knees, then moving on to sit cross-legged, she is constantly looking straight into the camera while slowly tearing the duct tape away. The artist remains completely voiceless, even after the tape is fully removed. Belmore keeps sitting in silence, looking towards the audience for a few more minutes, until she slowly fades away only to reappear again as the video is replayed in a loop. In comparison to her performance piece *Vigil*, there is no "speaking out," no "pro-vocation," no "talking back" in *Apparition.* There are no signs and signifiers that would allude to the traumatic experiences of former residential school students either. The work consists only of an artist, an Anishinaabe woman who remains silent in front of the spectator. But her silence is a loud one, reminding us of all the children that were silenced, condemning this unspeakable trauma of a whole generation. I am interested in exploring Belmore's artistic strategy further in relation to the concept of "unnameable affects."

When Susan Sontag (1983) cites John Cage in her 1967 essay "The Aesthetics of Silence" and claims "there is no such thing as silence," she in fact introduces

her hypothesis on the aesthetics and politics of silence:

> that never ceases to imply its opposite and to demand on its presence…A genuine emptiness, a pure silence, are not feasible—either conceptually or in fact. If only because the art work exists in a world furnished with many other things, the artist who creates silence or emptiness must produce something dialectical: a full void, an enriching emptiness, a resonating or eloquent silence. Silence remains, inescapably, a form of speech (in many instances, of complaint or indictment) and an element in a dialogue. (186-187)

It is not only the artwork that is silent, but the artist herself, as Belmore's performance illustrates. And by confronting the spectator with her presence, she is in fact addressing said spectator. Or, as Sontag (1983) puts it, "a person who becomes silent becomes opaque for the other; somebody's silence opens up an array of possibilities for interpreting that silence, for imputing speech to it" (191). Deliberate silence is a "means of power" (191). When Sontag argues that "as language always points to its own transcendence in silence, silence points to its own transcendence—to a speech beyond silence" (192), one needs to ask what happens when this silent speech is lost by a violent interdiction of being spoken, as in the case of Belmore. After her two older brothers went to residential schools, where they were forbidden to speak their language, Belmore's mother wanted her to speak English so that she would be integrated into Canadian society (Fischer 2001, 21). Belmore presents her silence as the logical result of Canada's residential school politics. Her silence is the embodied proof of the loss of her mother tongue.

In the Symposium "Traumatic Histories, Artistic Practice, and Working from the Margins," held during the duration of the exhibition, there was a panel that focused on Indigenous contemporary art. In her talk "Vision, Truth, Memory: Art of the Residential School Experience"—available as a webcast on the gallery homepage—Shari Huhndorf asked what art might possibly contribute to our understanding of the experience of trauma that testimonials cannot bring to light. From Huhndorf's perspective, it is with the body that stories of unspeakable trauma can be told, that narratives of, for example, the consequences of residential schools, alone cannot tell. Assimilation policies defined Indigenous bodies as savage, inferior, and in need of what was termed "reform." Indigenous peoples were consigned to historical pasts that, within the colonial/hegemonic narrative, were destined to disappear in the wake of Western civilization. In a statement about her video installation *Apparition*, Belmore stated the following:

> *Apparition* is an artwork that reflects my understanding of the loss of our language. More, it is an illustration of the potential for its disappearance. I do not speak Anishinaabemowin even though I grew up within it and around it. Sadly, I am well aware of the devastating effects of the residential school system, particularly the deliberate role it played in the silencing of our language. For this reason *Apparition* is an image of myself, a silent portrait of this loss. (35)

And Belmore manages to turn her loss into a powerful gesture. Silence is here represented visually. Her video installation works as a self-portrait addressing the absence and silence of language. Unspoken and unnamed history is told with the artist's own body. Belmore's *Apparition* is "embodied knowledge" (Barrett 2013) that gets transmitted through the image of an artist in silence. Belmore makes the spectator feel the loss of the language experienced by thousands of children by demonstrating the absence of her Anishinaabemowin. Silence functions in this case as the most extreme "alteration of language" (Kristeva 1984), an alteration that forges the aesthetic images to the point where also the unspeakable can be shown and made accessible to the ones who did not experience this loss.

"Somewhere else": The Artist is Absent

In her most recent exhibition "Somewhere Else," displayed at the Montréal gallery OBORO, Belmore again explores the notions of presence and absence, between the lived experience and the documentation of her performances, asking about the role of the artist. In the four channel video installation *Somewhere Else* (2015), Belmore projected the video documentation of four of her past performances on found objects placed in a circle around the projectors. [**Figure 5**]

Figure 5: *Somewhere Else* (2015, video installation). Rebecca Belmore, 12 September-17 October, 2015. OBORO, Montreal. Photo: Paul Litherland, 2015.

The video documentation of *Vigil* was projected into the center onto a piece of cloth covering the hardware containing the memory of these performances. In an artist statement offered by the OBORO gallery accompanying the exhibition, Belmore (2015) confessed:

> I never paid much attention to the documentation of my performances, I was too focussed and concerned about being present and making the work…The documentation of these artworks, captured usually one point of view, one solitary lens had oddly become stronger than my own memory of the lived experience, especially the earlier works. Through the practice of projecting these images and speaking of them over and over again—places me, the artists in the position of the performer once more—somehow present and distant at the same time.

This new installation of *Vigil* shows Blackman's (2012) insights beautifully: "affect does not require a distinctly human body in order to pass and register" (13). In Belmore's pieces *Vigil* and *Apparition*, the question of affect revolves around the status of the artist's body. I propose to look at the installation *Somewhere Else* and think about the artist's body in terms of her *oeuvre*, which could be defined by its "capacity to affect and to be affected" (Blackman 2012, xii) and through the interaction with the spectator. The work of an artist gets activated, I argue, only through the discussion about the work, as well as the conversations around it. I understand writing and talking about art that address loss, absence, and silence as an "affective transfer" that completes the work of the artist. I wish to understand art as an affective transfer that is always "trans-subjective, shared, collective, mediated and always extending bodies beyond themselves" (Blackman 2012, 23). By remembering the disappeared Indigenous women and the loss of their culture and identity in her numerous performances and installations, Belmore bridges the gap between absence and presence, the dead and the living, between the unspeakable and its remembrance, and the fate of named and the unnamed victims of colonial violence and their re-apparition in a settler-colonial Canadian society that dares to look.

Endnotes

[1] As a German art historian, my identity perspective is a European post-imperial one. Pursuing my PhD at a Canadian University, I am constantly learning about ongoing colonialism in a settler Canadian society as well as contemporary decolonization movements and Indigenous resurgence. Whenever I am talking about Indigenousness in this article, I follow Taiaiake Alfred and Jeff Corntassel's (2005) definition of "being Indigenous": "Indigenousness is an identity constructed, shaped and lived in the politicized context of contemporary colonialism. The communities, clans, nations and tribes we call *Indigenous peoples* are just that: Indigenous to the lands they inhabit, in contrast to and in contention with the colonial societies and states that have spread out from Europe and other centres of empire. It is this oppositional, place-based existence, along with the consciousness of being in struggle against the dispossessing and demeaning fact of colonization by foreign peoples, that fundamentally distinguishes Indigenous peoples from other peoples of the world" (597).

[2] In Western critical theory, the framework of absence and presence has been used by Plato, Heidegger, Derrida, and others to define states of being: states of being present as well as states of being absent. The Derridarian strain of this approach being the most employed one argues that being present is always defined by a framework like language and mediated with signs, words or writing (Derrida 1976, 5-12). Since presence is always a mediated presence, even represented absence becomes a form of presence. In *Of Grammatology*, Derrida (1976) developed this argument with language being the medium of representation *par excellence* (4). Derrida's logocentrism, most prominently summed up in

the enigmatic "there is nothing outside of the text" (158), poses problems when thinking about mediation of presence with and through the body and alternative, non-logocentric intellectual traditions. Confronted with Rebecca Belmore's performance art, where multiple forms of representation (verbal, non-verbal, corporeal, sign, etc.) are employed, the traditional critical apparatus to engage with absence/presence seems insufficient.

[3] In her book *Dancing on Our Turtle's Back*, Leanne Simpson (2012) presents alternative, embodied ways of being in the world, which are deeply anchored in Nishnaabeg thought. Unlike Western traditions, "the lines between storyteller and audience become blurred as individuals make non-verbal (and sometimes verbal) contributions to the collective event. The 'performance,' whether a song, a dance or a spoken word story, becomes thus an individual and collective experience" (34). In Nichnaabeg culture, teachings are "worn" and knowledge is "embodied" since meaning gets created by "performing the culture" (42-43). Simpson presents Nishnaabeg society as a society of presence where meaning is created through storytelling, ceremony, singing, dancing, and doing (93). For Simpson, Rebecca Belmore engages with her performances with her "full body of knowledge," infusing Nishnaabeg presence into the colonial space (94-96).

[4] Already in 2009, *The Named and the Unnamed* became part of the National Gallery's permanent collection.

[5] Gender in Anishinabee communities has been conceptualized differently in the past than the binary between male and female expressed in colonial society. Leanne Simpson (2012) argues that, "for Nishnaabeg people there was fluidity around gender in terms of roles and responsibilities. Often one's name, clan affiliation, ability and individual self-determination positioned one in society more than gender, or perhaps in addition to gender" (60).

[6] Bill 14 was an amendment to the Indian Act that made the school attendance for First Nations and Inuit children from age seven to fifteen mandatory. See, National Archives of Canada, Record Group 10, vol. 6810, file 470-2-3, vol. 7, pp. 55 (L-3) and 63 (N-3).

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Posthumanist Feminism and Interspecies Affect in Nalo Hopkinson's *Midnight Robber*

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Abstract

This paper examines the posthuman affective communities in Nalo Hopkinson's dystopia *Midnight Robber* (2000), from an intersectional approach. It focuses on the interspecies affinity developed between a cyborg Black girl and other posthuman beings in outer space, where subaltern 'artisans,' machines, and indigenous communities provide nurturing affects of love and compassion that engender mutual respect and solidarity.

Résumé

Cet article examine les communautés affectives posthumaines dans la dystopie *Midnight Robber* (2000) de Nalo Hopkinson, selon une approche intersectionnelle. Il met l'accent sur l'affinité interspécifique qui se développe entre une cyborg noire et d'autres êtres posthumains dans l'espace, où des « artisans » subalternes, des machines et des communautés indigènes fournissent des affects enrichissants d'amour et de compassion qui engendrent le respect mutuel et la solidarité.

This essay examines the posthuman affective communities imagined by Nalo Hopkinson in her dystopian novel *Midnight Robber* (2000) from an intersectional approach that makes use of critical posthumanism, affect theory, postcolonial literary criticism, and feminist theories of the cyborg. This text has been selected as an outstanding example of the innovative speculative fiction produced by feminist TransCanadian (Kamboureli and Miki 2007) authors in the twenty-first century, following the path opened by distinguished theorists of the posthuman condition, such as Donna Haraway (1991b, 1999), N. Katherine Hayles (1999), Rosi Braidotti (2006, 2013), along with Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri (2004), who have often used examples from speculative fiction to illustrate their sophisticated analysis of current affairs and search for alternatives.[1]

Despite the new interest in this literary mode in Canada, especially due to Margaret Atwood's works,[2] "the huge body of utopian writing published in the so-called 'margins' of the western world has hardly been paid attention to by scholars and readers of speculative fiction" (Pordzik 2001, 28). In particular, Black speculative fiction—also referred to as Black Atlantic Speculative Fiction (Thaler 2010) and Afro-futurist Fiction (Barr 2008; Nelson 2002a, 2002b; Rutledge 2001)—has done much to deepen the interrogation of the human and the posthuman, and to describe forms of affective relation that are more enabling and empowering for the currently oppressed. It is my intention to foreground Nalo Hopkinson's contribution to the creative imagining of a posthumanist future from non anthropocentric, non androcentric, but also feminist, anti-racist, and queer perspectives that are rooted in hybrid epistemological grounds. Starting with a review of the potential of speculative fiction to intervene in the philosophical discussion of political alternatives to patriarchal neoliberal humanism, the article will then examine the neocolonial structures of domination reproduced in Hopkinson's dystopian novel, and the new understandings of kinship and affective solidarity across species borders that her resilient protagonists develop.

SF Activism: The Politics of Genre

Hopkinson's essay "Report from the Planet Midnight" (2012) voices a political manifesto in defense of the transformative and empowering social function of the literary imagination, claiming that "at a very deep level, one of the things that fantasy and science fiction do is to use mythmaking to examine and explore socioeconomically configured ethnoracial power imbalances" (43). In this, she is in full allegiance with Braidotti's (2013) vision that

> The posthuman predicament, in both the post-humanist and the post-anthropocentric sense of the term, drives home the idea that the activity of thinking needs to be experimental and even transgressive in combining critique with creativity. As Deleuze and Guattari teach us, thinking is about the invention of new concepts and new productive ethical relations. (104)

Hopkinson's definition of speculative fiction as "fiction that starts from the principle of making the impossible possible" (in Nelson 2002b, 98) serves as an adequate and inspiring description of the potential usefulness of this tool for a critical posthumanist analysis of neocolonial necropolitics, which Achille Mbembe (2003) has sharply defined as "*the generalized instrumentalization of human existence and the material destruction of human bodies and populations*" (14; emphasis in the original). The novel critiques especially how such necropolitics operates on the bodies of women, instilling fear and vulnerability, and more dramatically on the disposable bodies of racialized women.

Midnight Robber is a good example of such critical thinking via the literary imagination because it situates, in a fictional future time and fictional extraterrestrial settings, pressing issues in the current decolonial feminist agenda. Its action is set two hundred years from now, in two mirror planets. On the one hand, Toussaint, which enjoys the materialist comforts of advanced technology and whose citizens are, for the most part, humanoid cyborgs; on the other, its "dub version" (Hopkinson 2000, 2), the New Half-Way Tree, an "underdeveloped" and "wild" planet that serves as prison to Toussaint's discarded and/or dissenting cyborgs.[3] Importantly for our discussion here, New Half-Way Tree is still the home of the indigenous populations that had been exterminated in the colonization of Toussaint. The two planets serve in a figurative way as representative of the consumerist and rich First World, and the exploited and "savage" Third World: "where Toussaint civilized,

New Half-Way Tree does be rough" (2). However, a crucial aspect that distinguishes *Midnight Robber* from common narratives of the affluent North/ impoverished South dichotomy is that Toussaint has been founded by descendants of Caribbean peoples who were searching for a new life "free from downpression and botheration…Taino Carib and Arawak; African; Asian; Indian; even the Euro, though some wasn't too happy to acknowledge that-there bloodline. All the bloods flowing into one river, making a new home" (18). By placing the Caribbean descendants in the extraterrestial space, Hopkinson conflates the two locales that Haraway (1999) critically identified as the (post)modern utopia in "The Promises of Monsters": "Space and the tropics are both utopian topical figures in Western imaginations, and their opposed properties dialectically signify origins and ends for the creature whose mundane life is supposedly outside both: modern or postmodern man" (339).

In contrast to the exoticizing perspective of the Western (post)modern man who is a stranger to both locations, Hopkinson's novel is focalized through a cross-dressing Black girl, Tan-Tan, in an extraterrestial Caribbean nation.[4] Her narrative thus subversively rewrites also the postcolonial utopia that Ralph Pordzik (2001) identifies at the core of colonial white settlement in the New World:

> In the era of colonialism this perception of utopia was reinforced by those who left their homes in order to find the promised land overseas, settling in faraway places which they intended to shape into a new world of their own making: the history of colonization and white settlement is inextricably linked to this secularized view of paradise cut to a heavenly pattern of social justice and material wealth. (55)

Toussaint thus represents "the postcolonial dream of a better world [where] Caribbean migrants have achieved their independence from Earth through the use of high technology and cyberspace" (Thaler 2010, 98). Though remembering the Middle Passage, the novel inverts the meanings of the diasporic journey by replacing the slave ship for the rocket ship, which "extends the maritime imaginary of the Black Atlantic to the emptiness of outer space" (99), in a trip towards the promised land "in which diaspora is free and voluntary" (Langer 2011, 67). However, as was the case in the European colonizing enterprise, the freedom and material comfort of the pioneers comes at the cost of enslavement of the subaltern classes, genocide of the indigenous inhabitants, and destruction of the native environment. As Jessica Langer (2011) has pointed out, "In *Midnight Robber*, the slave narrative has not been erased but rather *displaced*—the genocide on to the bodies of Toussaint's douen and other life forms, and the slavery on to the people sent to New Half-Way Tree" (67; emphasis in the original), that is, on to all infra-humans according to the standards of liberal Humanism.

Paradise Lost? Cyborgian Privilege

The critique of discriminatory humanism is carried out in the novel by the negative portrayal of high tech monitoring of citizens in the new nation of Toussaint. This society has been carefully engineered by the Marryshow Corporation to guarantee peaceful and prosperous social stability, enhancing human bodies with biotechnologies from the moment of birth that make of these "New Garveyites" (Hopkinson 2000, 18) posthuman cyborgs: a nanomite solution is syringed in the baby's ear to implant an artificial intelligence device called eshu (the name of an African god), a sort of personal assistant, educator, and house butler who communicates via this earbug and activates certain biotech devices that help minimize discomfort in their everyday life; for instance, the "nanomites swimming in the vitreous humour of her [Tan-Tan's] eyes polarised, dimming the light for her" on sunny days (55). Biotech enhancement thus exemplifies "the prosthetic coevolution of the human animal with the technicity of tools and external archival mechanisms (such as language and culture)" that Cary Wolfe (2010) finds a defining character of posthumanism (xv).

It is important in this respect, nevertheless, to resist the too frequent conflation of both "technological advancement" and "cyborg consciousness" with Western White modernity's idea of "progress" significantly present in discourses on transhumanism. According to Wolfe (2010), transhumanism is a project of improvement of the human that "derives directly from ideals of human perfectibility, rationality, and agency inherited from Renaissance humanism and the Enlightenment" (xiii), while posthumanism critiques this inheritance, an idea that is also defended by Haraway (1999) and Braidotti

(2013). Even more importantly, it is of crucial relevance to take into consideration the conceptualization of the cyborg stemming from other epistemologies and cultural traditions, including African and Amerindian ones. In relation to the first, we need to consider that

> African diasporic history contains a wealth of theoretical paradigms that turn the reified binary between blackness and technology on its head, readily lending themselves to the task of constructing adequate frames of reference for contemporary theories of technoculture. From the early model of fractured consciousness offered by W. E. B. Du-Bois to the fractal patterns found in West African architecture, examples of black cultural prefigurations of our contemporary moment abound. (Nelson 2002a, 6)

Elizabeth Boyle (2009) remarks this genealogy in her analysis of *Midnight Robber* when she claims that "the novel emphasises the mixed heritage of the African diaspora by deterritorialising the Du Boisian metaphor of the 'veil', representative of African American 'double-consciousness'" (179), an aspect to which I will return below when discussing Tan-Tan's fractured identity on exile. With respect to indigenous knowledges, and on a similar line of thought, Chela Sandoval (1999) insists that

> Colonised peoples of the Americas have already developed the cyborg skills required for survival under techno-human conditions as a requisite for survival under domination over the last three hundred years. Interestingly, however, the theorists of globalization engage with the introduction of an oppositional 'cyborg' politics as if these politics have emerged with the advent of electronic technology alone, and not as a requirement of consciousness in opposition developed under previous forms of domination. (248)

It is Sandoval's perspective that I think comes out vindicated in Hopkinson's novel, which engages with the development of Tan-Tan's "cyborg consciousness" from the practice of feminist posthumanist politics grounded on affective alliances of solidarity respectful of difference. Such intersectional politics are at the core of cyborg politics according to Sandoval: "cyborg consciousness can be understood as the technological embodiment of a particular and specific form of oppositional consciousness that I have elsewhere described as 'U.S. third world feminism'" (248); that is, in summary, the practice of looking at life from the "standpoint of the subjugated," in Haraway's (1999, 191) terms that Tan-Tan achieves in the novel.

The engineered social system of Toussaint brilliantly represents what Haraway (1991b) described in "A Cyborg Manifesto" as the "informatics of domination" characteristic of our "network society," as Manuel Castells (2000) has named it,[5] and it provides fertile grounds for the discussion of neoliberal Life manipulation and its concurrent necropolitics. The birth of the nation of Toussaint is a sort of in-vitro fertilization planned by the Marryshow Corporation that rephrases in techno-medical discourse its very colonial enterprise, an invasive mode that reiterates the colonial metaphor of the male explorers penetrating/raping the virgin lands: "New Half-Way Tree is how Toussaint planet did look before the Marryshow Corporation sink them Earth Engine Number 127 down into it like God entering he woman; plunging into the womb of soil to impregnate the planet with the seed of Granny Nanny" (Hopkinson 2000, 2), a metaphoric rape that will become real when Antonio, Tan-Tan's father, repeatedly rapes and impregnates her. It is relevant in relation to this that the rape and impregnation of Tan-Tan will take place in New Half-Way Tree, which is in the process of being colonized, given that the insidious persistence of the trope of the territory envisioned as a female body in order to facilitate its conquering and exploitation, extended into the nationalist metaphor of the motherland, has been widely analyzed as the ideological root for the recurrent use of rape as a war crime.

The specific Black Caribbean historical references invoked in the names of Marryshow, Toussaint, and Granny Nanny (also called 'Nansi, that is, Ananси) contest the post-race cyberspace myth that Alondra Nelson (2002a) has also criticized as utterly inadequate:

> The racialized digital divide narrative that circulates in the public sphere and the bodiless, color-blind mythotopias of cybertheory and commercial advertising have become the unacknowledged frames of reference for understanding race in the digital age. In these frameworks, the technologically enabled future is by its very nature unmoored from the past and from people of color. (6)

This is obviously not the case of Hopkinson's narrative. The Marryshevites—that is, those who are granted full citizenship in the new planet and enjoy its advanced technology—have discarded hard work and scorn those who prefer the old ways, just like contemporary consumers who cannot understand anti-capitalist ways that require more time and effort to achieve a sustainable economy that respects the environment, for instance. In the novel,

> pedicab runner communities…were a new sect, about fifty years old. They lived in group households and claimed that it was their religious right to use only headblind tools [that is, non-traceable by the web system]. People laughed at them, called them a ridiculous pappyshow. Why do hard labour when Marryshow had made that forever unnecessary? (Hopkinson 2000, 10)

Runners are dissidents of the utopia, because under the pretence of keeping the safety and good life of its citizens, they are in fact under permanent surveillance from Granny Nansi's Web's nanomites which "kept the Nation Worlds protected, guided and guarded its people. But a Marryshevite couldn't even self take a piss without the toilet analyzing the chemical composition of the urine and logging the data in the health records" (10), and for this reason, "Privacy [is] the most precious commodity of any Marryshevite" (10). This is a familiar context for most of us now, immersed as we are on debates on privacy and massive espionage via internet. Pedicab runners live in community, have organized into a co-operative and "even lived in headblind houses, no way for the 'Nansi Web to gather complete data on them" (9); they are a threat to the security of the system because they do not respect the authority of Antonio, the mayor, who is the most powerful man and defends the values of the Corporation. Antonio is abusive towards this dissenting group, whose criticism is voiced by a runner woman who manages to boycott his earbug connection to the web and complains: "I working ten more hours a week to pay your new tariff. Sometimes I don't see my pickney-them for days; sleeping when I leave home, sleeping when I come back. My baby father and my woman-them complaining how I don't spend time with them no more. Why you do this thing, Antonio?" (7). Antonio confesses the new tariff "Is a labour task. For the way allyou insist on using people when an a.i. could run a cab like this. You know it does bother citizens to see allyou doing manual labor so. Back-break ain't for people.' Blasted luddites" (8). His words elicit, on the one hand, the disgust of the rich towards the sweat of the manual worker that has to be hidden out of sight, as the word "sweatshop" so clearly denounces, and the penalizing regime of control on those who refuse to be monitored by the Marryshow Corporation's web-system. On the other, the reference to the Luddites invokes a history of worker's dissent and protest at the worsening of work conditions under the excuse of using more efficient technologies. The woman's response to Antonio, "Honest work is for people. Work you could see, could measure" (8), voices a criticism of the virtual speculative economy where the (post)human labour force has lost all power of negotiation and deems workers disposable. Their contrasting views on labour reflect Castell's (2000) description of "the new technological paradigm" (9):

> Labour is fundamentally divided in two categories: self-programmable labour, and generic labour. Self-programmable labour is equipped with the ability to retrain itself, and adapt to new tasks, new processes and new sources of information, as technology, demand, and management speed up their rate of change. Generic labour, by contrast, is exchangeable and disposable, and co-exists in the same circuits with machines and with unskilled labour from around the world. (12)

The euphemism employed in the novel for the subaltern workers at the service of the accommodated class—Nursie, Cookie, Gardener, etc—, is "artisans", although their "art" must always fulfill their masters' desires: "Cookie was an artisan too, had pledged his creations to whoever was living in the mayor home" (Hopkinson 2000, 26). Their subservience is not chosen but enforced, as suggested by the case of Aislin, Nursie's daughter, sent to the prison planet of New Half-Way Tree after Antonio gets her pregnant. The complicit silence about "the departed" (another euphemism, for the expelled) further proves how the necropolitics of this capitalist regime operate through the mobilization of fear in the population, who are unable to verbalize their terror of exclusion: "Is so it go; Toussaint people didn't talk too much about the criminals they had exiled to New Half-Way Tree" (19), an interested lack of curiosity

that can be made extensive to most "good citizens" of any Western democracy:

> you never hear of New Half-Way Tree, the planet of the lost people? You never wonder where them all does go, the drifters, the ragamuffins-them, the ones who think the world must be have something better for them, if them could only find which part it is? You never wonder is where we send the thieves-them, and the murderers? […] New Half-Way Tree is the place for the restless people. (2)

Considering the potential for catharsis in post-colonial utopian literature, Pordzik (2001) contends that

> Dystopian novels set in a colonial context often create the impression of simply reproducing the horror scenarios of imperialist expansion on an imaginative level that provides neither redemption nor resolution, but figures instead as an outlet for the self-accusations and the sense of guilt of those daily confronted with the consequences of their own passive involvement in the politics of repression and disenfranchisement. (55)

While there is an obvious criticism of the complicity of "normal"/normative citizens on the ongoing colonial enterprise in Hopkinson's novel, I will argue that the posthumanist feminist ethics guiding the protagonists' actions do offer an alternative resolution to humanist colonization, one where human and non human beings establish relationships of cooperation based on respect, negotiation, and openness to difference. As will be detailed and analyzed in the following section, these are best enacted in the dub planet of New Half-Way Tree.

Paradise Regained? The Affective Regimes of Inter-species Communities

A major critique to patriarchal affective regimes of female submission comes in the novel from the depiction of the heteronormative nuclear family represented by Antonio, his wife Ione, and Tan-Tan. Prior to their exile, adultery destroys the façade of familiar happiness and causes the expulsion of Antonio from the dubious paradise of Toussaint. The idyll of the perfect family had never in fact been real, as Tan-Tan has grown neglected in affective terms by both her mother and father, who try to compensate with materialistic presents their emotional self-interest. As is often the case with affluent children, it is the machines and subaltern caretakers who provide the affective nurturing to the little girl: Nursie, Ben, even the a.i. eshu are warmer and more caring than her parents from the very moment of her birth:

> From the first birth pangs hit Ione, it was as though she realised she didn't have the taste for hard labour, oui. As soon as she pushed the baby out of her, Ione took one look at it and shouted at Antonio to activate the wet-nurse, purchased to help Ione with the breastfeeding. The midwife Babsie took the baby, held it out for Ione to give it one dry kiss on the tiny cheek, and that was that for mother-love. (Hopkinson 2000, 46)

In contrast to such posthumanist ethics of love and care, for her parents, Tan-Tan is just a property: "She [Ione] reached out her two arms to claim her property. Antonio put the baby into them" (47). This view leads Antonio to kidnap "his" girl when divorce is imminent and, after having killed his wife's lover, he is expulsed to New Half-Way Tree. Tan-Tan is thus forced into exile by her father, who will abuse her sexually as a replacement for his betraying wife: he gives Tan-Tan her mother's wedding ring on her ninth birthday, symbolically making her his spouse and raping her for the first time that same night, and repeatedly in the following years.

As a strategy of survival in the line of Sandoval's cyborgian third world feminism and Du Bois' Black double consciousness invoked above, Tan-Tan splits her self into two performative characters: the submissive, silenced, and good Tan-Tan girl; and the empowering rebellious Midnight Robber, a transgender impersonation of the male hero of Caribbean Carnival: "She wasn't Tan-Tan, the bad Tan-Tan. She was Tan-Tan the Robber Queen, the terror of all Junjuh, the one who born on a far-away planet, who travel to this place to rob the rich in their idleness and help the poor in their humility" (140). Using Braidotti's (1994) concept of nomadic subjectivity, Wendy Knepper (2013) analyzes how

> Masquerading as the Midnight Robber, Tan-Tan travels across communities and worlds, reconfiguring her identi-

> ty through performance and performativity. […] Tan-Tan, the nomadic, cross-dressing hero(ine) serves as a kind of avatar for the narrative discourse itself, which moves through space and time as well as across disciplines of knowledge in order to reincarnate identity in a more pluralistic, experimental fashion […] to express alternative constructions of identity and community through a virtualized Caribbean queer imaginary. (140-41)

This pluralistic conceptualization of (post)identity fits well with current definitions of posthumanist subjectivity which, as is the case with Tan Tan's contingent performative enactments, is conceived of as always unfixed, situational, relational, embodied and embedded (Braidotti 2013, 51).

The outcasts, now downgraded to human status—the high-tech earbugs are out of range in New Half-Way Tree and the most advanced gadget is a car engine, which becomes an instrument of destruction later on—, are aggressively occupying the lands formerly inhabited by indigenous species such as the douen (another mythical Caribbean figure of in-betweeness). Despite this aggression, the posthuman douen's ethics of hospitality are more compassive and protective of the dispossessed than those of the exiled humans colonizing their planet. Chichibud is the co-protagonist douen, described as a becoming-animal figure[6] with a bird-like head, four-finger hands, goat-like feet, and "something looking like a pocket of flesh at its crotch" for genitalia (Hopkinson 2000, 92). He gives voice to a posthuman critique of the anthropocentric humanist obsession with hierarchical taxonomy; during his very first encounter with Tan-Tan and Antonio, when the latter refers to him as "the beast," Chichibud replies: "Beast that could talk and know it own mind. Oonuh tall people quick to name what is people and what is beast" (92). This first meeting of Chichibud with Antonio and Tan-Tan makes allusions to the encounter of European colonizers and indigenous peoples of the Americas through Chichibud's sarcastic criticism of the exchange of pens and beads for vital resources like water and food, or, his knowledge of the languages of 'the tallpeople'—"Anglopatwa, Francopatwa, Hispanopatwa, and Papiamento" (95)—, which the douens have learnt "for oonu don't learn we own" (95). Even the fact that the douens call themselves by that name because this is what the newcomers called them replicates the Europeans' labelling of the indigenous as "Indians" in the Caribbean.

After Tan-Tan kills her father while he is raping her, thus putting an end to the exploitation of filial duty, love, and fear on which incestuous abuse is based, Chichibud offers her shelter in the secret home of the douens, where they have kept themselves apart from 'the tallpeople' "[e]ven though we sharing the same soil, same water, same air" (Hopkinson 2000, 173). The interspecies hostility between "humans" and "beasts" is bridged in the act of hospitality offered by Chichibud despite the high risk for the future survival of the douens that this entails: "Come in peace to my home, Tan-Tan. And when you go, go in friendship" (179). Although the elder leader of the douen community is reluctant to accept Tan-Tan into their tree home, Chichibud argues in her favour and she is given shelter and introduced into their secret knowledges, which she swears not to disclose, on a basic agreement of reciprocity that Chichibud makes explicit: "Understand that I doing it to save your life, but you have to guard ours in return … When you take a life, you must give back two. You go keep douen secrets safe? You must swear" (174). Tan-Tan thus learns from the douen the skills to inhabit a new environment and contribute to the communal welfare. This is what Grace L. Dillon (2008) has described as "Indigenous and embedded knowledge of biological mutualism" (30); she becomes to all effects a new member of Chichibud's family. Thus, "Hopkinson extends the transformative potential of cross-dressing by introducing cross-species communities and relationhips, which further challenge notions of gender, family and community" (Knepper 2013, 147). Tan-Tan may at this point be seen as another becoming-animal figure, in her close affinity to the douens and hintes of her new family, which abounds in Hopkinson's critique of Eurocentric Humanism, as Madhu Dubey (2008) has signalled when contextualizing Hopkinson's works side by side Octavia E. Butler's:

> Afro-diasporic as well as Euro-American women's science fiction exploits the trope of becoming animal not only to explore the implications of (black people and women) being identified with animal nature, but also to call into question dualistic and overlapping oppositions between nature and culture, magic and science, animal and human, body and mind, female and male, European and African,

> and so forth. In common with other women writers of science fiction, Octavia E. Butler and Nalo Hopkinson use the trope of woman becoming animal in order to defamiliarize the modern Western discourse of the human. (35)

Commenting on the figure of the alien, Sara Ahmed (2000) contrasts the dominant use of the alien as a source of fear and danger with more positive uses, like the one in *Midnight Robber*:

> making friends with aliens, eating with aliens, or even eating one (up), might enable us to transcend the very limits and frailties of an all-too-human form. Or, by allowing some aliens to co-exist 'with us', we might expand our community: we might prove our advancement into or beyond the human; we might demonstrate our willingness to accept difference and to make it our own. Being hospitable to aliens might, in this way, allow us to become human. It could even allow us to become alien, to gain access to alien worlds, previously uncharted by other humans. (2)

This is of course the case of Tan-Tan, the posthuman-alien in the douen's indigenous territory. The interspecies positive affects developed in *Midnight Robber* reflect both Braidotti's (2006) and Haraway's (1999) similar understanding of affectivity, where

> the emphasis falls on a cognitive brand of empathy, or intense affinity: it is the capacity for compassion, which combines the power of understanding with the force to endure in sympathy with a people, all of humanity, the planet and civilization as a whole. It is an extra-personal and a trans-personal capacity, which should be driven away from any universalism and grounded instead in the radical immanence of a sense of belonging to and being accountable for a community, a people and a territory. (Braidotti 2006, 205)

This accountability explains why Tan-Tan is forced once more to exile, because she has transgressed the norms of trust by visiting human settlements, inadvertently disclosing her hiding place and bringing the destruction of the douen's home tree by humans, as Chichibud explains: "You cause harm to the whole community, cause the daddy tree to dead" (Hopkinson 2000, 281). On this new exile, Tan-Tan is accompanied by Chichibud's adolescent daughter Abitefa, culprit of covering Tan-Tan's lies, and later also by a rolling calf (another Caribbean myth), thus creating a new trans-species community of mutual support across differences that further reinforces the novel's feminist posthumanist affective politics.

Conclusions

Midnight Robber addresses two clashing aspects of the cyborg world as described by Donna Haraway (1991b): "A cyborg world is about the final imposition of a grid of control on the planet … From another perspective a cyborg world might be about lived social and bodily realities in which people are not afraid of their joint kinship with animals and machines, not afraid of permanently partial identities and contradictory standpoints" (154). The first one is reflected in the novel through the totalitarian control by the Grande Anansi Web in Toussaint. This is a controversial aspect, since Granny Nanny has been read in a very positive view by several critics, among them notably Elizabeth Boyle (2009), Jillana Enteen (2007), and Ingrid Thaler (2010), who view her in connection to the historical figure of Granny Nanny, as a role model of Black female empowerment that subverts patriarchal images of the enslaved Black woman. Though acknowledging some of the violent aspects of Hopkinson's Granny Nanny, they foreground her role as protector and guardian of the community. While I indeed value the potential for subversion in the representation of Granny Nanny as the ultimate form of power in Toussaint and the disruption of cliché representations of Black women in most cultural forms that it implies, her working within the structure of the corporation and the violent genocide of the indigenous populations this produces complicate, from my point of view, such a flattering reading of her values. The second aspect, that of new forms of kinship with machines and animals, is presented through Tan-Tan, whose double consciousness becomes acknowledged publicly at the end of the novel when she discloses her secret history of abusive incest. In the last pages, she gives birth to a son, Tubman, who though engendered with violence, is the first 'born' posthuman, since the fetus grows the techno connection to Granny Nanny just like any other limb: "By the time she get pregnant with you, Nanny…instruct the nanomites in you mamee blood to migrate into your growing tissue, to alter you as you grow so all of you could *feel* nannysong

…your whole body is one living connection with the Grande Anansi Nanotech Interface" (Hopkinson 2000, 328). The figure of this baby Tubman is, like that of Granny Nanny, therefore ambivalent, since, on the one hand, he may be considered "the first colonial agent of Granny Nanny on New Half-Way Tree" (Langer 2011, 69), while, on the other, he could also "use the power of Granny Nanny to build a non-colonial society: like his namesake, 'the human bridge from slavery to freedom', or, more adequately, the posthuman bridge" (69). This is the version favoured also by Thaler (2010) in her very positive reading of the novel's ending. For Wendy Knepper (2013), his name is another act of "transgender dubbing that recalls, repeats, and opens up its historical source in unexpected but highly resonant ways" (151). Her reading of baby Tubman is also a very positive one, as she considers that

> Tubman forges links between (post)colonial history and an alternative future through a hybrid embodiment of the transformative potential associated with processes of emancipation, cross-dressing, transgender naming, and cybernetic incorporation. […] The new 'Tubman' brings together multiple discourses that trouble a conventional understanding of human identity in terms of race, technology, and gender: the post-slavery body, the cyborg, and the transgendered body. (152)

Tubman's name claims the legacy of Harriet Tubman and the cultural memory of Black struggles for emancipation, though from a perspective critical of the complicity of freed Blacks in ongoing colonialism, which perfectly fits N. Katherine Hayles's (1999) description of the cyborg: "Standing at the threshold separating the human from the posthuman, the cyborg looks to the past as well as the future. It is precisely this double nature that allows cyborg stories to be imbricated within cultural narratives while still wrenching them in a new direction" (158).

In this article, I have proposed a critical posthumanist reading of *Midnight Robber* taking into account that, as Cary Wolfe (2010) has clarified, "the point is not to reject humanism tout court—indeed, there are many values and aspirations to admire in humanism—but rather to show how those aspirations are undercut by the philosophical and ethical frameworks used to conceptualize them" (xvi). Hopkinson's critique of the reproduction of violent patriarchal colonial patterns in the extraterrestial New-New Worlds that gave freedom to the oppressed Caribbeans warns us of the need to deeply challenge and transform the ideological tenets sustaining dominant epistemologies. I find particularly pertinent Chela Sandoval's (1999) reminder that "If cyborg consciousness is to be considered as anything other than that which replicates the dominant global world order, then cyborg consciousness must be developed out of a set of technologies that together comprise the methodology of the oppressed, a methodology that can provide the guides for survival and resistance under first world transnational cultural conditions" (248). I am convinced that in the twenty-first century, we may continue to find in literature the kind of critical thinking demanded by our new life conditions. Speculative fiction by TransCanadian queer feminist activists like Nalo Hopkinson, but also Larissa Lai or Hiromi Goto has notably contributed in exciting and innovative ways to the discussion by imagining new posthumanist feminist ethics and forms of affect that are most relevant to contemporary social justice struggle.

Endnotes

[1] For a survey of the posthuman agenda in science fiction, see "Literature as Lab" in Mads Rosendahl Thomsen's (2013) *The New Human in Literature*. Looking back to the origins of the genre, the monster in *Frankenstein* has been described as a paradigmatic figure of "an early cyborg" (Hayles 1999, 158), a posthuman figure so popular in contemporary culture that Hardt and Negri (2004) have come to affirm that "Frankenstein is now a member of the family" (196).

[2] In line with this, it is surprising that Atwood's (2011) study of the genre *In Other Worlds: SF and the Human Imaginations* does not mention even in passing the production of such a widely anthologized and influential TransCanadian author as Nalo Hopkinson; in fact, no reference at all appears in Atwood's book to contemporary Canadian SF apart from her own.

[3] Thaler (2010) explains this as a reference to Caribbean music: "A 'dub version' was originally the B-side of a Reggae record, which features the A-side song's bass and drums without the vocals" (103). See her extensive chapter on this novel in *Black Atlantic Speculative Fictions* for a detailed explanation of the Caribbean historical and cultural elements in the novel. Knepper (2013) also offers an interesting explanation of the relevance of dubbing in the novel, in her chapter "Cross-Dressing and the Caribbean Imagination in *Midnight Robber*."

[4] As Knepper (2013) explains, Tan-Tan is the name of a well known Carnival character in the Caribbean. Peter Minshall, the Carnival

artist who is mentioned as such in the novel (Hopkinson 2000, 29), created a mobile of Tan-Tan as Queen of the Carnival in 1990 (Knepper 2013, 142).

[5] Castells (1996) has extensively theorized on this concept in his famous trilogy *The Information Age: Economy, Society and Culture*, most especially in its first volume, *The Rise of the Network Society*. A concise summary and introduction to the concept may be found in his article "Materials for an Exploratory Theory of the Network Society" (2000).

[6] On the becoming-animal trope and its relation to diverse indigenous philosophies in Hopkinson's novels see Dubey (2008) and Dillon (2007, 2008).

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Épilogue : Désaffecté

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Abstract

By way of epilogue, a fictional essay, an excerpt from the book *Été 1965. Figures du hobo* soon to be published by Nota bene in the "Grise" collection. A way to dive headfirst into the world of affects. The hobo is a fantasized figure of the 1960s. An obsessive figure who has haunted the narrator since his childhood in the suburbs of Saint-Léonard: a railroad track, train convoys, men jumping onboard in search of adventures. It was the carefree summer of 1965, with dreams of sovereignty, desires of independence for a little eight-year-old boy. Now an adult, I wanted to understand how American literature had built this fantasy. How Quebec stood out, with Jean-Jules Richard's astonishing *Journal d'un hobo* (1965). How Cormac McCarthy's *The Road* (2006) extends this fantasy. But I also wanted to offer a more intimate understanding of its subject: thus, were born the fictions of the hobo.

Résumé

En guise d'épilogue, une fiction-essai, un extrait d'un ouvrage *Été 1965. Figures du hobo* à paraître chez l'Éditeur Nota bene dans la collection « Grise ». Une façon de plonger en apnée dans le monde des affects. Le hobo, c'est une figure fantasmée des années 1960. Une figure obsessionnelle qui hante le narrateur dès son enfance dans la banlieue de Saint-Léonard : une voie ferrée, des convois de trains, des hommes qui sautent dedans à la recherche d'aventures. C'était l'été 1965 de l'insouciance, des rêves de souveraineté, des désirs d'indépendance pour un petit gars de huit ans. Devenu adulte, j'ai voulu comprendre comment la littérature américaine a construit ce fantasme. Comment le Québec s'est singularisé, avec l'étonnant *Journal d'un hobo* (1965) de Jean-Jules Richard. Comment *La Route* (2006) de Cormac McCarthy prolonge ce fantasme. Mais j'ai eu aussi eu envie d'offrir une compréhension plus intime de son sujet : ainsi sont nées les fictions du hobo.

Dans les années 1960, en Amérique ou en Europe, il n'y avait pas d'itinérant. Le mot n'existait pas. Nous avons l'habitude aujourd'hui de créer des mots qui ont, selon toute apparence, la qualité de concepts. Que veut dire au juste être un itinérant ? Est-ce un destin convenable que d'« itinérer » ? La condition d'itinérant a l'apparence d'une trajectoire planifiée. On parle en effet d'itinérance à propos du changement de réseau de téléphonie mobile. Sous le couvert du propos technologique, en fait une manière commode de ne pas parler des sans-abris, tant ce dernier discours a toutes les apparences du stigmate, et une manière, sans doute, de remplacer un stéréotype par un autre : l'itinérance deviendrait une condition, un statut, une manière d'être, en somme, une éthique à saveur locale qui permettrait de prétendre à quelque utilité circonstanciée, socialement validée, dans le monde actuel. Il reste que cette rage du statut social ne m'intéressait pas dans l'univers banlieusard montréalais où j'ai fait mes premières armes. J'avais d'autres préoccupations et une vision de l'autre qui appartenait à l'époque.

Au cœur du Montréal des années 1960, la réserve canadienne-française, l'espace propre, les lieux où « nous » habitions, s'animaient par un désir de souveraineté encore en gestation. La manière dont cet imaginaire foisonnant de liberté et d'affirmation de soi se constitua en ces quartiers retranchés, à la périphérie des villes, est peu connue, sans doute parce qu'on n'accepte pas véritablement ce qu'on appelle communément un « esprit banlieusard ». Pourtant, nul doute que l'affirmation d'un éthos collectif, je parle de l'identité québécoise, se lia à ces périples suburbains. Quant à la banlieue rayonnante, elle n'était pas forcément le siège de la richesse, de la réussite. Il y avait, dans tout ce paysage, des zones d'ombre, des fractures, des failles qu'il me faut maintenant tenter de déceler.

§

Comprenons un peu mieux ce qui se joue durant ces années fastes : le béton n'est pas fissuré, les autoroutes sont à ce moment-là des œuvres d'art, des réalisations qui laissent pantois. L'échangeur Turcot est une merveille du monde, le métro ne se résume pas à la démarche poussive de wagons qui tombent en panne de manière systématique. Quant à l'île Sainte-Hélène, à laquelle s'est ajoutée l'île Notre-Dame en 1965, elle représente un joyau au cœur du fleuve.

L'esprit de la nouveauté se répand à la manière d'une bonne parole. Changement de ton, changement d'esprit. Aux communions, confirmations, recueillement collectif dans l'esprit d'une des églises de quartier, s'est substituée, sans même qu'on y prenne garde, la *religion du progrès*. Un jour, ont été créés des barrages, des échangeurs gigantesques, des autoroutes ; les tranchées ont permis la disposition d'un réseau de stations de métro dans les profondeurs de la ville. Tout cela est produit sans avertissement, à la manière d'une manne providentielle, ce en quoi la religion n'était pas très éloignée, dans nos esprits prompts à la fabulation, de ces épiphanies industrielles.

On emprunte l'autoroute 20, l'autoroute 40. On va vers l'Est ou vers l'Ouest. Place Versailles, amas de tours, de centres d'achats, de *Life Centers*. Centre Rockland, débauche d'Armani, de Gucci, de montres Cartier. Le système autoroutier est ce transit qui permet, avec une efficacité redoutable, d'impulser une circulation aux biens, aux sujets, aux marchandises (quelles qu'elles soient, ressources naturelles ou produits déjà transformés).

Oui, mais voilà : ma famille s'est établie à proximité d'une autoroute. C'est l'envers du décor, des joyaux et des œuvres d'art. Le discours d'ordre général vise cette fois le particulier et il change forcément : on rit souvent de ces gens qui se construisent une maison, un pavillon de banlieue à proximité d'un grand boulevard, voire d'une autoroute à six voies.

L'autoroute était notre nouvelle croix, un symbole de réconciliation avec le territoire, une manière de le scarifier, de le blesser, puis de le rehausser au nom de ce progrès dont nous constations les effets, plus que nous ne le conceptualisions. Pour des enfants de huit ans, qui voient quotidiennement la saillie de l'autoroute quarante, les motels en construction en prévision de l'exposition universelle de 1967, les bruits caverneux des moteurs V-8 qui équipent le moindre véhicule américain de l'époque, le progrès était décidément une abstraction. *Now*. Nous y étions ! Nous vivions au cœur d'un monde où la locomotion connaissait des développements accélérés. Alors que le discours présent met en valeur le principe bien bizarre d'une dématérialisation progressive du monde, comme s'il fallait s'effacer au prix d'une consécration de l'univers des réseaux et agoras électroniques, nous étions au cœur d'un univers des plus concrets. Métal, béton, plastique, asphalte.

Ville Saint-Michel, Anjou, Montréal-Nord, Saint-Léonard, en somme l'Est. Il ne s'agit donc pas de célébrer l'Est nouveau, le Plateau Mont-Royal des années 1970-80, on l'a bien compris. Non, l'Est dans lequel j'ai vécu était assez semblable à un fouillis impossible d'identifier sereinement. Et dans ma banlieue, les enfants de la classe moyenne en voie d'affirmation étaient tous en retrait, à la fois modernes et déclassés, alors que je savais déjà sans pouvoir le formuler (dans cette manie de la prédestination anxieuse qui ne m'a jamais quitté) que tout cela, politique de la terre brûlée oblige, disparaîtrait.

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Imaginons donc une réserve canadienne-française, l'émancipation récente de tout un petit peuple de classe moyenne qui, un jour, décide de migrer au nord de l'autoroute métropolitaine, puisque ma famille en faisait partie.

Sur les pourtours de cet espace propre, qui voyions-nous ? Les autres, des étrangers, dans le meilleur des cas, des êtres qui nous indifférent sinon des êtres bizarres ou hostiles. Une faune, dirais-je avec mes mots d'adulte. Eux-semblables, Italiens, *wops*[1], sales, pourritures, écraseurs de coquerelles, vieilles femmes qui puent, putes, Italie du malheur, femmes poilues, ginos : tout cela et pire encore, je l'entendais, je le répétais, je le pensais absolument. Sans le savoir, avec la prédestination des enfants qui jouent, comme on dit, des jeux dangereux, j'avais le sentiment que le pire était à venir, que le désir de souveraineté était une arnaque, une imposture bonne pour ces bourgeois qui habitaient d'autres quartiers, Outremont ou Westmount.

Je viens en effet d'un espace divisé, dissocié, comme si Montréal avait représenté une Babel linguistique, des paroisses de mots où chacun, avec quelle difficulté, tentait d'identifier son église. Il importait peu alors de demander à son voisin d'où il venait. Le monde était encore trop vaste, difficile à circonscrire. À vrai dire, notre connaissance de la géographie était limitée. L'Europe, c'était très loin. Quant à l'Italie, elle ne nous était certainement pas transmise, à ce moment, par les romans de Stendhal ou d'Alberto Moravia. Nous avions sous les yeux le spectacle d'une Italie prolétaire, de paysans calabrais qui, dès leur arrivée à Montréal, se cassaient le dos à travailler dans des carrières de pierres, des usines sans ventilation où l'on manipulait, le visage à découvert, des produits chimiques toxiques. Prolétariat de ces années, sans grande conscience de ce que voulait dire une classe sociale, le « nous » de ces années était déjà en proie à l'effacement, sous le coup de butoir de ce progrès qui masquait à peine, dans une violence apparemment feutrée, les inégalités, les expressions gênées de la pauvreté.

Durant mon enfance, Saint-Léonard était un repaire étrange d'individus que tout séparait. Des *hobos*, des vagabonds, des êtres bizarres, à l'identité sexuelle mal définie, des hommes et des femmes au faciès étrange, toute une bizarrerie de stéréotypes ethniques, raciaux, culturels et religieux qui faisaient du Montréal de cette époque une sorte de capharnaüm, un bazar. L'expression n'est pas choisie au hasard : dire un « bazar », c'est bien évidemment une façon de qualifier la culture d'autrui, de la ramener, à propos du fondement culturel arabisant de cette réalité du commerce, à quelque chose d'indistinct, d'enchevêtré, d'hétéroclite. C'est revenir à une façon de voir les choses qui « ne datent pas d'hier », comme on dit.

L'autre, c'était le *wop*, l'Italien aux mains sales. Il avait eu la mauvaise idée de venir s'installer là où nous habitions. De nous irriter, de provoquer ce désir de souveraineté, immense et indiscernable bien qu'il nous mobilisât dans l'instant ; nous étions les citoyens de l'autoroute, les sujets du progrès, les adeptes du transit, de l'efficacité industrielle.

Eux, les autres, les sales, les malpropres, les trous-de-culs habitaient la carrière, *là-bas*, à l'est, dans la poussière, le bruit incessant des camions qui chargeaient la pierre taillée de manière rudimentaire. *Là-bas*, c'était Jarry à l'intersection de la rue d'Iberville, le boulevard Saint-Michel, le boulevard Pie-IX. Dans ces avenues, qui n'avaient rien de boulevards, d'autoroutes, ces rues qui sentaient mauvais, qui mêlaient une odeur rance de friture, de sueur chaude, d'asphalte chauffée à blanc lors des journées de juillet, nous n'y allions pas, nous nous contentions de passer. Ainsi, mon père me disait : « Passe ton chemin, ne va pas en ces lieux. Ne te mêle pas aux malpropres, tu le paierais d'une saleté, d'une ordure que tu ramènerais au domicile familial ».

Ces rues, images de ghetto, nous les voyions cependant, à la même époque, dans les reportages de *Paris-Match*, à Los Angeles ou à Détroit. Quelle ironie, quel étrange et subit renversement de situation ! Nous aimions les Noirs des métropoles américaines. Offensés, humiliés, en proie au racisme de ces Américains qui

n'avaient de respect pour rien, même pas pour la lune, nous avions de ces personnages, objets de fabulation par les reportages dans les grands magazines français de l'époque, une image à peu près exacte pourtant de ce que nous méprisions souverainement chez le voisin, l'Italien du Sud. Est-ce pour cette raison que je me suis imaginé si longtemps vivre au cœur d'une clairière banlieusarde, d'un monde protégé ?

À l'abri dans mes tanières, dans mes camps retranchés, près des voies ferrées du boulevard des Prairies, au nord de la banlieue, j'épiais, avec toute l'attention de fantassins sur leurs gardes qui me fait repenser à ces soldats de *Commandos du désert*, les espions qui tenteraient de s'immiscer parmi nous, les délateurs qui provoqueraient, au moment le plus opportun, l'arrivée des forces ennemies, qui nous attaqueraient sans merci. Mes amis et moi étions libres mais assiégés, mis en cause d'une manière bien étrange puisque, à l'horizon, l'ennemi véritable ne pointait pas le nez. Certes, il y avait ces Italiens, ces sens-mauvais, ces enfants de femmes poilues, ces *blokies wops* aux souliers pointus, disait-on, qui marchaient dans la ville, plus à l'est encore. Nous ne les aimions pas, nous ne les connaissions pas, nous ne voulions rien savoir de leur existence, de leur installation, toute récente, dans ces appartements miteux, qui sentaient la cochonnerie, la sueur froide, le bain que l'on prenait une fois par semaine.

Fiers, nous l'étions, sans savoir pourquoi. Mes parents me l'avaient dit : « sois fier de ta race, de ce que tu es, du maître que tu deviens ». Ils disaient encore : « sois vigilant, ne t'oublie pas, regarde derrière toi, on pourrait t'attaquer ; un jour, si tu n'es pas prudent, l'ennemi t'anéantira ». Dans l'affirmation de ce désir de souveraineté, qui était le maître-mot de ma famille, de mon époque, il y avait, n'en doutons pas un seul instant, le racisme le plus insidieux, la rage la plus folle.

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Parfois le souvenir se fait plus dense, et je ne sais pas si une fiction ne se met pas en place, venant réécrire en partie certains épisodes de mon enfance. En effet, quand j'évoque des souvenirs d'enfance, me revient en mémoire le sentiment de faire corps, d'être concerté, uni avec les autres de ma banlieue contre un ennemi potentiel. J'aurais aimé mieux circonscrire ce désir de souveraineté qui représente toujours une aporie dans la mise à jour de mes délibérations narratives sur l'itinérance. L'interrogation est personnelle, mêlant à l'essai des fragments autobiographiques ; elle est le fruit d'une forme de divagation à relier à l'itinérance.

Ainsi, j'ai l'impression que mes amis, ma sœur et moi marchions sur les voies ferrées, les yeux fermés. Semblables à des funambules irrépressiblement attirés par le métal brûlant des rails. On a dû le faire en juillet, c'est certain, avec au-dessus de nous un ciel immense et sans nuages, on a dû marcher à la queue leu-leu. Dans l'apogée de l'enfance et les formes encore incertaines de la puberté, nous cheminions en un cortège pour lequel la mort était un vain mot. Nous marchions les bras étendus, semblables à des ballerines, indécis, graciles, fluides et agiles, dans notre quête d'éternité. Les yeux fermés, nous autres les garçons nous donnions l'impression de marcher dans le vide.

Nous rêvions aux lentes progressions des fil-déféristes suspendus entre ciel et terre, alors que nous étions à quelques centimètres des ballasts de gravier. Nos songes étaient trompeurs. Alors que nous avions la certitude de défier l'espace, le long convoi du train de marchandises s'était enfin assemblé, dans l'un des centres de triage près du port. Nous avions le temps pour nous. La locomotive tractrice ne s'était pas mise en route. Il fallait procéder aux dernières vérifications techniques, aux contrôles de sécurité. Surtout, il fallait s'assurer que la voie était libre.

Et nous continuions à marcher, les yeux fermés. Pour nous donner l'air de pirates ou de romanichels (d'où me vient cette expression ? Où l'ai-je apprise, moi l'enfant de cette « Terre Québec » dans laquelle vivaient les Indiens et les cowboys, mais certes pas les « gens du voyage » ?), nous avions décidé de nous bander les yeux. D'un commun accord, cette décision nous engageait à respecter notre serment. Que l'un d'entre nous ouvre les yeux et il serait jeté tout habillé dans les marais qui entouraient la voie ferrée. Le marais sentait mauvais, surtout à l'été, avec la chaleur écrasante. En son extrémité, près des zones industrielles qui accueillaient les premières usines (car ces banlieues connaissaient un développement accéléré), un tuyau de métal galvanisé déversait une matière rougeâtre.

Vite, nous adoptions la posture des pirates. Un mouchoir servait de bandeau. Il ne serait plus possible de feindre la cécité, de cligner de l'œil dans le ciel clair pour savoir où nous nous trouvions, si le danger tant désiré s'approchait de nous. Aveugles volontaires, nous continuions de marcher, au tout début en nous tenant

par la main, ce qui nous obligeait à toutes sortes d'acrobaties, car il ne fallait pas tomber.

Nous a-t-on vus, au loin, sur les rails ? A-t-on aperçu, sur la découpe de l'horizon, nos silhouettes à peine visibles, tant la brume de chaleur nous transformait en personnages qui, de loin, semblaient tout droit sortis d'un mirage ? Nous marchions, concentrés, persévérants, en une longue cohorte de réfugiés, à la porte du rêve : fildeféristes, vagabonds, hobos, parfois clochards, bien que nous n'ayons pas fait connaissance de ces êtres qui vivaient au cœur de la ville, nous qui étions des enfants de banlieue comme il existe des enfants de la balle.

Mais un jour, dans la cité, la banlieue verdoyante, quelqu'un a prononcé cette parole qui suscita l'effroi, même pour des enfants insouciants : « Disparaître ». Nous étions à l'abri, entre nous, heureux d'avoir de quoi à manger tous les jours, du pain, de la viande, des légumes. Papa avait une voiture, le voisin d'en face aussi. Plus loin, vers l'ouest, dans les quartiers nouvellement construits de triplex, on prenait l'autobus, on marchait, on salissait ses pieds sur des trottoirs qui sentaient mauvais. Or voilà, « disparaître », ce fut dit un jour, tout d'abord de manière détachée, débonnaire, comme s'il s'agissait des voisins que nous n'aimions pas, de l'autre côté de l'autoroute. Cela ne cadrait pas avec ce qu'on m'avait appris. Nous avions conquis, sans grande difficulté, les grandes places du nord-est de Montréal. Nous avions peu à peu envahi tous ces champs qui faisaient pousser courgettes, choux, carottes. Les vieux agriculteurs, qui tenaient bon, qui labouraient leur terre, s'étaient excusés, puis étaient partis avec un chèque, voire une enveloppe de dollars tout juste imprimés qui tenaient lieu de juste compensation pour leur vie maintenant périmée.

Disparaître ? Non, nous empièterons sur les territoires de ces bouseux qui viennent d'Europe, des vieux pays, qui s'obstinent à prier dans leur dialecte, les femmes, elles, portent des fichus le dimanche, mettent des gants blancs pour aller à la messe. S'il le faut, nous prendrons le maquis, nous tuerons les ennemis, les tailladerons un à un, sans une forme de culpabilité. Enfants guerriers, enfants de la balle, petits délinquants du pouvoir enfin conquis, nous avions la certitude d'avoir raison, ce qui dans nos têtes imposait une révolution. Maîtres chez nous, chez moi en tous les cas, disait mon père, disait ma mère, disait ma grand-mère, disait mon grand-père. Maître chez moi, dans la maison, mais aussi le nez dehors, dans le royaume gazonné, jusqu'au trottoir, les Italiens ne passeront pas. Guerre de partisans, d'idiots cantonnés sur leur position, dans l'espace apparemment dénué de toute tension de cette lointaine banlieue montréalaise, qui allait devenir la trame de tous les ensanglantements.

Le bref épisode que représenta, pour moi, le basculement de mon identité personnelle dans ces années 1960, le point de départ d'une enfance en voie de socialisation, était donc tout à la fois un nadir et un zénith. Point de compromission possible, en cet univers où il fallait être entier, où l'usage de la parole, bien que maniée avec soin, exigeait des réponses claires. L'époque que j'évoque est celle d'un tohubohu, un entrelacement de références absolument hétéroclites, de savoirs dispersés, de propos confus et savants, d'idéaux héroïques et de défaites définitives.

« Qui es-tu ? D'où viens-tu ? Que fais-tu ? » Énoncés brefs, militaires, coupants, ces phrases tenaient lieu d'interrogation à propos de l'état civil, n'avaient rien à voir, évidemment, avec la manière compliquée dont nous autres encore Canadiens français pas encore renommés Québécois francophones nous représentons aujourd'hui les conflits de genre, de sexe, d'appartenance de classe, de représentation de l'ethnicité, d'identification raciale…Dans ces énoncés clairs, qui voulaient circonscrire avec exactitude ce que l'on faisait, d'où l'on venait, nos appartenances, nos descendances, voire nos projets, il était question d'efficacité. Il était certainement aussi question de normalité.

Parler franc, net, être affirmatif, dire ce que l'on est, cela relevait de connaissances usuelles, d'un pacte que l'on nouait avec la parole, de cette volonté de ressembler, dans le domaine des discours, à l'efficacité de ces chaînes de montage qui, encore à cette époque, dans la suite de la seconde guerre mondiale, représentaient des manières utiles de réfléchir à ce qu'est la pensée.

Note

[1] « Wops » ou « woops » : cette insulte, sous l'influence anglophone, est raciste. Peut-être est-elle née de l'abréviation « without passports » appliquée aux immigrés italiens de la Première Guerre mondiale. Durant mon enfance, elle était couramment en usage à Montréal. Elle avait valeur générale, tandis que le terme « ginos » était réservé aux séducteurs machos.

L'album multicolore (extrait) Montréal, Héliotrope, 2014, 11-17.

Louise Dupré a publié une vingtaine de titres, qui lui ont mérité de nombreux prix et distinctions. Parmi ses derniers livres, notons les recueils de poésie *Plus haut que les flammes* (2010) et *La main hantée* (2016), parus aux Éditions du Noroît, ainsi que le récit *L'album multicolore* (2014), publié chez Héliotrope. Le texte théâtral *Tout comme elle* (Québec Amérique, 2006) avait été mis en scène par Brigitte Haentjens en 2006. Plusieurs de ses livres ont été traduits. Elle est professeure associée au département d'Études littéraires de l'Université du Québec à Montréal. Elle est également membre de l'Académie des lettres du Québec et de la Société royale du Canada. En 2014, elle a reçu l'Ordre du Canada « pour son apport à la littérature québécoise en tant que poète, romancière, dramaturge, essayiste et professeure ».

Abstract

Chapter 1 of the book *L'Album multicolore* published by Éditions Héliotrope in 2014.

Résumé

Chapitre 1 de l'ouvrage *L'Album multicolore* paru aux Éditions Héliotrope en 2014.

Chapitre 1

Je la regarde dans son lit, blanche, aussi blanche que le drap. Elle vient de mourir, ma mère, et je ne le crois pas. À côté de moi, l'infirmier, incrédule lui aussi. Il y a une heure à peine, il m'a parlé d'un protocole qui s'imposerait bientôt, durant la phase de détresse respiratoire. *Détresse,* j'ai reçu le mot comme un coup de poing. *Détresse.* Au fond de son sommeil, peut-être a-t-elle entendu, peut-être a-t-elle décidé de nous quitter avant. Je suis soulagée, c'est le sentiment que j'éprouve devant ma mère, le visage apaisé, encore tiède, comme si elle était plongée dans un rêve heureux.

Durant la soirée, la douleur s'était jetée sur elle telle une bête, elle s'était mise à lui dévorer les viscères. J'avais demandé à l'infirmière d'appeler le médecin. Il avait consenti à augmenter la dose de morphine, on ne laisse pas une femme de quatre-vingt-dix-sept ans mourir dans la souffrance. Elle avait fini par s'assoupir. Debout à son chevet, j'ai pleuré sur elle, pleuré sur les milliards d'être vivants, humains de toutes les races, animaux de toutes les espèces qui, depuis que le monde est monde, sont morts au bout de la douleur. Qui est ce Dieu qu'on suppose infiniment bon et aimable ?

Je caresse le visage de ma mère. Il faut parler aux personnes qui viennent de mourir, ai-je entendu dire. La conscience n'est pas comme le cœur qui tout à coup s'arrête, elle s'efface doucement. Cette croyance a-t-elle des fondements ? Je l'ignore, mais je parle à ma mère, je lui dis que je l'aime, c'est plus facile pour moi que quand elle était vivante, elle n'a jamais apprécié les grandes effusions. Sauf ces dernières semaines. Elle arrivait plus mal à se contenir, elle souriait lorsque je la serrais dans mes bras, elle se laissait border le soir, au moment du coucher.

J'attends mes deux frères, ils ne devraient pas tarder. Il y a quelques minutes, je les ai réveillés. Je n'ai pas eu à leur donner d'explications, la sonnerie du téléphone a suffi. L'infirmier me demande s'il doit replacer ma mère dans le lit. Non, pas de mise en scène. Qu'elle conserve sa position, que mes frères la voient telle que

je l'ai vue. Il sort et la chambre retourne à son silence. Je peux enfin penser à ma mère, je peux penser à sa mort. Longtemps j'ai imaginé un scénario théâtral. Elle me regarde, je lui tiens la main, c'est dans une conscience absolue qu'elle pousse son dernier soupir. Je n'aurais jamais cru que la mort puisse être d'une telle banalité. On reçoit une injection de morphine et on s'endort, comme après une rude journée.

Après, qui est-on ? Une âme, un fantôme, un corps dépossédé, une ombre, un portrait qui se brouille peu à peu, un souvenir, un nom inscrit sur une pierre tombale ? Je ne peux détacher mes yeux du visage maintenant sans rides de ma mère. Les traces du temps vivant se sont effacées. À la faveur de la nuit glaciale, je me laisse glisser avec elle dans un temps parfaitement lisse. Statufié.

Je veille ma mère morte, suis-je la seule à veiller ici ? Tout à l'heure, au moment de la morphine, en remontant le corridor noir jusqu'au poste de garde, j'ai aperçu une jeune femme par une porte entrouverte, elle écrivait dans son lit. On pouvait donc écrire ici, dans le silence lourd de ce département postopératoire. J'ai apporté cette image avec moi, comme si elle pouvait me donner du courage.

L'étape du courage est maintenant terminée. Ne plus voir ma mère souffrir comme elle a souffert dans la soirée, c'est la seule réalité qui me fait accepter sa mort, c'est ma consolation. À la fin de l'après-midi, le médecin avait prédit une péritonite, voilà sans doute ce qui est arrivé. Mais nous n'en aurons pas l'assurance, il n'y aura pas d'autopsie. Son corps se décomposera en paix, au cimetière, près de celui de mon père. Toute notre enfance sous une même pierre tombale.

Je pense à nous, les enfants de ma mère, comme à un bloc indivisible. *Les enfants*, avait-elle l'habitude de dire, même quand nous sommes devenus grands, en nous réunissant tous les trois dans une même image. Elle nous a aimés d'un amour de femme qui avait ardemment désiré des enfants. Et nous avons passionnément aimé notre mère, c'est ce qui importe dans la lumière blafarde de notre dernière intimité. Les irritations, les malentendus, les petites colères, les impatiences que j'ai pu avoir à son égard, au fil des ans, ont disparu, comme les rides de son visage. C'est une mère parfaite qui refroidit peu à peu dans le lit blanc.

Je voudrais que mes frères n'arrivent pas, je voudrais qu'on ne vienne pas chercher ma mère. Rester seule près d'elle pour l'éternité. Je ne pleure plus, je suis dans la stupeur. Ce n'est pas l'absence, ma mère est là, bien présente dans cette mort que j'ai appelée toute la soirée. L'absence, elle s'installera peu à peu, sournoisement, quand le corps de ma mère me sera enlevé. Je m'y attends. Depuis novembre, je m'y prépare pour éviter le pire. La maladie, par exemple. Tant de femmes tombent malades après la mort de leur mère. Mon corps sera-t-il capable d'absorber le deuil ?

Un grincement tout à coup, on pousse la porte. Mes frères, la pièce reprend vie. Nous sommes ensemble, de nouveau, comme il y a cinquante ans, ma mère au milieu de nous. Peut-être nous entend-elle, peut-être nos voix lui arrivent-elles de très loin, dans un brouillard. Nous la veillerons jusqu'à ce qu'on vienne nous la prendre. Il faut laisser les cadavres dans la chambre deux heures après le constat de décès, la loi l'impose. Au cas où ils ne seraient pas vraiment morts ? Au cas où ils ressusciteraient ? Le médecin n'est pas encore passé. Tant mieux, nous aurons notre mère à nous jusqu'à l'aube.

Pas un bruit sur l'étage, les patients semblent tous dormir, nous parlons d'elle à voix basse, nous nous rappelons des souvenirs. Puis nous en venons à discuter des funérailles, faut-il opter pour un service religieux ou une cérémonie laïque, voulait-elle être enterrée ? Incinérée? Ses dernières volontés, nous ne les connaissons pas. Durant les longues journées que j'avais passées avec elle les semaines précédentes, j'avais essayé de savoir. Je n'avais rien appris, mes propos étaient sans doute restés trop vagues, mais est-ce qu'on peut poser des questions directes à quelqu'un qui déjà n'est plus qu'une ombre ? Pas moi, pas moi à cette mère-là.

Comme si elle avait lu dans mes pensées, elle affirmait en prenant son thé, *Dans moins de trois ans, je serai centenaire.* Et je hochais la tête, j'essayais de le croire moi aussi. Mais bien vite ma foi laissait place à l'inquiétude. Depuis l'été, elle déclinait rapidement, comment serait-elle dans quelques mois ? Vivrait-elle jusqu'à plus de cent ans, comme ces mortes-vivantes à la une des journaux ?

Mes frères semblent soulagés eux aussi. Désirer que la mort vienne est parfois un acte d'amour. Nous racontons des anecdotes de l'époque lointaine où elle était notre mère toute-puissante, puis nous nous approchons à tour de rôle du lit, nous la caressons, nous l'embrassons. Nous sommes redevenus sa nichée, ses oisillons attendant la becquée quotidienne. Pas pour longtemps.

Le médecin vient nous arracher à notre enfance, il nous demande de sortir, il veut procéder au constat de décès.

Notre mère est bel et bien morte, le médecin confirme ce que nous savons. Il remet son alliance à l'un de mes frères, qui me la tend. Je la glisse à mon doigt et je serre le poing. L'impression qu'une autre vie vient de pénétrer dans mes veines. Je me sens prête à affronter seule la réalité. Pour la première fois, j'entrevois ma propre mort dans un lit d'hôpital par une nuit glaciale de décembre. Mais aucun vertige chez moi, aucune tristesse. Je demande simplement de la force, la force nécessaire pour faire face à la cassure du temps.

This Fold Dreams and Undreams Until a Last Dream Which is an I

Erín Moure's latest books are translations of François Turcot's *My Dinosaur* (BookThug, 2016) from French, and Chus Pato's *Flesh of Leviathan* (Omnidawn, 2016) from Galician. *Planetary Noise: Selected Poetry of Erín Moure*, edited by Shannon Maguire, was published in 2017.

The author who disdains words must still arrive at sentences.
Blanchot

things, emotions, vegetation, passions, gaze, humidity

what writing does: performs on paper and in mouths of voiced words and on digital bands or (tattooed) on the skin of animals (human). Muteness, humidity, gaze, pleasure. What translation does: transmutes the same vegetation and passions to a place where a different humidity does imbue. Lucidity, vegetation, herbs, wind. We drive out to the desert or more officially the shrub-steppe at Osoyoos and climb the hill on Syilx'tsn lands in the rented car, stopping partway to the top to clamber out of seats and unfold ourselves in the high wind to gaze at sunset in the west: Vancouver, we say, over those mountains

there is no water here, no rains, no this is not Galicia, has no green textility of foliage and damp, yet in English I recite in this shrub-steppe or desert: the poetry of Chus Pato

Translation ("the poetry of Chus Pato") is a way of bringing—into the secession or cut—another voice, her human voice, markings in words from a culture across a far border, to mark these words (her words) into new ears and onto new bodies, just under new skin (leopards, fish). A word, skin (marten), a word, a mouth or tongue, a membrane (upright): Vancouver, we say, over those mountains.

we climb out on the desert shelf or overhang of rock until we can see the lakes spread clear below, the narrowing of their waters into two lakes, their surface a kind of glass. There's not another place this dry in all of our history on this side of these mountains, in this elongated primordial trench or valley between furrows, in the Uk^{w}naqín or, as we say, Okanagan.

Who we are:

you and me:

sheltered beings:

skin pockets:

We duck back into the rented sedan which is made for our folding and unfolding and descend again the hill through the town and then up into other hills to the winery restaurant perched over the valley, where we eat a repast of two courses with a glass of wine, the kindness of the waitress, looking out to the valley illuminated by the full moon through the glass, looking east, our first anniversary: Montréal, we say, over those mountains, home

there is the matter of choice or intention in any setting, which prevails here too; some details are called forth, but most are elided, although there is no plan to elide. But the nature of affect is aleatory, and why would I pick this scene over any other? It doesn't seem to echo Chus Pato at all. The word that writes, the word from another language, from Galician or Dane-z̲aa, for insects, for butterfly: in Galician the word is *bolboreta,* seemingly like Algerian Arabic *bofertoto,* or Old English *buttorfleoge* but no, not like Dane-z̲aa, *wąlále.*

Skin membrane:

Translating this:

Grey darkness. "We only see what we look at," wrote John Berger. "To look is an act of choice." Choice, what is choice, and how is it driven by emotions, vegetation, passions, gaze, humidity? Neural mappings too are an incidence of inflected cultural particularity; thus we choose, and how can translation work here? I look down at the page and see curved darker markings against a white ground. I drink lemon and rinse with salt, eat carrot and potato boiled together yesterday with a little cumin and garlic: a shabbat meal. Today. An deep incision, the hip opened

Skin tents and the clandestine circulation of the blood in arteries, ropey walls that the earliest cells of the body have differentiated from the cells of blood or mucin, the spindle fibres of muscle. There is something in us that cannot be untangled with ease. We take for granted so often (too often) the respiratory membranes and the transfer of oxygen into molecules necessary to the blood and, in fact, *in* the blood, when once the molecules were outside the body, in the air. It is difficult to duplicate or ignore this process, as it is difficult (breathing) to ignore the relation with the friend, the one outside the skin tent (breathing) but similar, she who disagrees and looks differently, and contributes this different seeing to the texture of space-time, to an afternoon, for example.

We have an argument, briefly, over words and sentences.

Who we are:

You and then me:

Me along with you:

What do I/we mean by me/you here?

Poetry, it is said by this me which is not *me*, is a conversation, or a texture like a shawl and each one of us weaves our own particular corner, or the bit where we gently hold its edge, aware that others are pulling gently as well on the surface of the textile, contributing their own gesture to the whole. And none of us produce this whole, not on our own, not with our friends alone. None of us are this whole nor can any of us speak for this whole that is poetry, we can only bring our hands' work into the conversation, and raise not just our voice but our ears to it, to listen,

as listening affects the bones inside the ear and the balance of fluids inside certain membranes

listening alters the cells.

Translation is about this too, this listening. it is a hearing and transferral into the pen of rhythms and an exactitude of meaning whereby "distinct" in French cannot be translated into English as "various" since its meaning is closer to "different" for "distinct" emphasizes differences in a group, emphasizes what pulls the group apart, while the English word "various" leans on what it is that pulls different parts together, they are various but they are together, or they are different and it is hard to keep the group in one piece

as we walk out on the rock ledge of the desert, the flat tablet of sedimentary lakeshore outcropped over softer sand and water-riddled limestone eroded beneath, I think of this conversation and movement, the difference of translation, the fibres of any given word that upon micrological analysis extend and contract best in one or another way

How do we know, translators, that we are really reading, how do we introduce the innocence of reading into our work again? Is the transfer of language subject to an ecology? To endogamous markings? To allow translation to go somewhere fecund, the oceans, the way we once believed we would be fed from these oceans, and now they are empty, sonic, nearly empty, nearly sonic, we know we won't eat from those waters forever, humans won't, people won't, women won't

And so what if poems are cryptic, this protest just annoys me, poems activate more areas of the human cortex than do non-ambiguous speech, they bring excedent light and hormonal energy into the dark matter of the frontal cortex; when we read literature we equip our brains to deal with "ambiguous speech." We realize the ambiguity of all speech, all mouths opening, and where in the mouth the accent is. Location, fear, passions, humidity

I address you:

You see me:

We turn to speak

Light. Morning illuminates the towers and buildings where I write these words. Noise of roofing on the church (which is still leaking). Small torques of light. Medium fibres of light. Lengthy spindle-cell bundles of light.

You are sleeping in another city.

I see you:

We don't speak

"what we see is affected by what we already know or believe"

"Will I never again muster the joy and impudence to take in my stride the distortions and falsifications that inevitably arise during the conversion of experience into written sentences…" wrote Christa Wolf (a question that arose while she brushed her teeth). These words written not by Christa Wolf but by her translator Jan van Heurck. "Using my false name as a shield," she/he writes, "I will advance again into the fray."

As for ambiguous speech and the cells, that the speech or sonorous note of poetry lights up more of our neurons, over a wider area of the frontal cortex, this has been shown by experiments with electrodes, with transfers via electrodes of information between brains in remote locations, between remote areas and rat brains, and rats are like us, surely, though did we need these experiments? For their result is the same as when someone says (I forget who) that difficult writing ("the poetry of Chus Pato") makes us more glad. It is literature itself posing the question of literature, of who reads, of for whom marks are made, for no one, they are invisible and made for no one. They transfer between bodies and the tissue of neurons, the bundles and flat maps of fibres, via which we dream, our writing dreams,

writing itself dreams.

(…)

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Excerpt from Erín Moure, *Insecession*, published by BookThug (2014) in one volume with Moure's translation of *Secession* by Chus Pato. Republished by permission of BookThug.ca and the author.

Amoureux

Kim Thúy est une écrivaine québécoise d'origine vietnamienne. Elle est l'auteure de *Ru* (2009), récit pour lequel elle a reçu, notamment, le Prix du Gouverneur général et le grand prix RTL-Lire 2010 du Salon du livre de Paris. Elle a aussi fait paraître *Mãn* (2013), *À toi,* un échange épistolaire avec Pascal Janovjak (2011), et *Vi* (2016). Son œuvre a été traduite dans plus de vingt-cinq langues.

Lorsqu'il m'a chuchoté à l'oreille « Puis-je vous aider? », il ne se doutait pas encore que nous serions pris à notre propre jeu. Ce soir-là, nous cherchions tous les deux à nous enfuir de la clameur de la salle bondée de clients affamés et impatients. J'avais prétendu aider les serveurs débordés et dépassés en allant chercher les paniers de pain placés sur le comptoir de service dans le fond du restaurant. La discussion sur la dernière rencontre avec les banquiers et les changements récents de la procédure de la FDA m'ennuyait soudainement, même si j'en avais fait mon métier, devenu ma vie presque tout entière.

Je ne lui ai jamais demandé pourquoi il se trouvait dans ce coin obscur du restaurant. Je ne lui ai jamais posé la question probablement parce que les évidences trouvent rarement une réponse satisfaisante. Il était seulement là en même temps, au même moment que moi, dans le même souffle. Je me souviens de sa respiration au-dessus de moi comme une brise de début d'automne, encore chargée de la chaleur estivale mais déjà, messagère des temps froids.

Il m'a présentée à ses collègues assis au bar. Par la suite, je l'ai invité à se joindre à ma table. Des conversations ont circulé autour de nous, à travers nous. Une jeune femme a raconté sa prochaine course dans le désert et une autre, son escalade du Kilimandjaro. En écho, un homme plus âgé préférait relire Monte Christo en ouvrant une bouteille de vin sur la terrasse d'une villa en Toscane. Chacun planifiait son rêve avec la précision d'un plan d'affaires: la meilleure ligne aérienne, une pilule pour dormir dans l'avion et une autre pour combattre le décalage pendant le jour, le poids exact d'une couverture, le degré d'efficacité d'une crème solaire, l'heure du coucher du soleil…Je me reconnaissais en eux, car je suis de ceux qui peuvent localiser dans le noir une bobépine dans leur valise en y plongeant uniquement la main. Chacun des morceaux de vêtement est assigné à une journée ou un événement précis. Aucun objet inutile n'est toléré. Ma valise ne devait jamais dépasser 8,7 kg incluant les roues et le tube de dentifrice.

Je me sentais victorieuse lorsque je réussissais à faire partie des dix premières personnes à sortir de l'avion ou encore, à passer la sécurité en moins de deux minutes. Je regardais avec reproche et dédain les désorganisés qui devaient retraverser le scanner et retarder les autres passagers en raison de la boucle de leur ceinture ou encore des pièces de monnaie dans leurs poches.

Je me considère extrêmement mobile et peut-être volatile puisqu'il m'arrive souvent de dormir dans trois villes différentes en cinq jours ou de retourner dans le même aéroport à l'intérieur de 24 heures. Mon ancrage se trouve dans mes petits déjeuners qui se ressemblent toujours, peu importe le lieu où je me réveille dans le monde. Je vivais dans cette stabilité jusqu'à ce que cet homme me donne rendez-vous dans une gare en laissant à la réception de l'hôtel le livre *Exercices de style* de Raymond Queneau.

Il avait quitté la soirée de notre rencontre sans me demander mon numéro de chambre, sans me raccompagner, sans faire de promesse d'un éventuel rendez-vous. Il m'avait tout simplement embrassée sur la joue droite avant de glisser ses lèvres vers mon oreille afin que les deux mots « Revenez-moi » laissent leur marque tout délicatement sur mon tympan et dans mon imaginaire. Il est parti sans un deuxième baiser sur la joue gauche. J'ai donc reçu le livre de Queneau des mains du concierge avec grand étonnement et confusion, car aucune identification n'apparaissait sur l'enveloppe. C'est seulement à la 53e page que j'ai trouvé le nom de la gare de Göteborg en Suède, discrètement noté entre les lignes, en plus d'une date, d'une heure et d'un numéro de wagon éparpillés au hasard des pages suivantes.

Il était debout sur le quai portant un chapeau de feutre entouré d'un ruban en cuir et un imperméable auquel il manquait un bouton, à la manière du personnage principal de Queneau. Il a tendu sa main gauche pour saisir ma valise et sa main droite a servi de point d'appui à ma descente de la marche du wagon. Nous avons très peu échangé pendant notre marche vers l'hôtel qui se situait juste au-dessus de la gare. Il m'a remis une clé dans l'ascenseur, qui nous amenait vers les chambres placées en rangées dans le sens des quais de la gare. La mienne se situait tout au bout: dernière chambre de la dernière rangée au dernier étage. Je me suis aperçue rapidement qu'il occupait la dernière chambre de l'avant-dernière rangée, car ma fenêtre donnait sur la sienne. Malgré la distance qui séparait les rangées de chambres, nous pouvions nous voir tout entiers, comme des mannequins dans une grande vitrine.

D'un geste lent et posé, il a pris le téléphone de la table de chevet et presque simultanément, celui de ma chambre a sonné. Il m'a demandé de mettre le téléphone sur main-libre. C'est ainsi que nos corps se sont révélés l'un à l'autre. À tour de rôle, chacun prononçait un mot: manteau, épingle, foulard, boucles d'oreille, cravate, chapeau, collier, bouton, ceinture, bracelet, veste, montre, chaussettes, blouse, boutons de manchette…Nous nous sommes entendus qu'au dernier morceau de vêtement, nous éteignions la lumière en comptant ensemble à rebours : 3.2.1.

Le lendemain, à mon départ, la réceptionniste m'a remis une copie du *Musée de l'innocence* d'Orhan Pamuk. L'adresse du rendez-vous était griffonnée à côté de la description de l'appartement où le personnage principal du livre gardait en secret tous les objets reliés à sa maîtresse, d'une boucle d'oreille égarée pendant les ébats à un mégot de cigarette avec la trace de son rouge à lèvre sur le filtre, en passant par un cheveu emprisonné dans un savon. La chambre où il m'a reçue se situait au-dessus d'un bar minuscule qui servait uniquement des mojitos. Nous avons fait l'amour au rythme du bruit des pilons écrasant la menthe mélangée au sucre dans le fond des verres. Les conversations et déroutes des convives sirotant leurs cocktails sur le trottoir traversaient les fentes des persiennes en bois pour venir jusqu'à nous, jusqu'à notre propre ivresse. Nous avons veillé presque toute la nuit en compagnie des jeunes en quête d'un possible amour. Vingt-quatre heures plus tard, j'ai quitté le « musée » de notre nuit en laissant une copie de *Soie* d'Alessandro Barrico sur le comptoir du lavabo, tout près de son savon à barbe.

Je ne connaissais ni le pays de sa résidence ni son âge et encore moins sa profession. Or, j'avais la certitude qu'il répondrait à mon invitation au Japon.

Il est arrivé vers la fin de l'après-midi à Kyoto. Les cerisiers entourant le ryokan où je séjourne régulièrement coloraient le sol du jardin de pétales roses. Je l'attendais dans le silence des tatamis, habillée d'un kimono en coton, drapé d'un deuxième en soie rouge. Comme la femme du livre de Barrico, j'étais allongée vers le fond de la pièce sous cette vague de tissu riche et ample qui me recouvrait tout entière. Je suivais chacun des gestes des deux femmes qui le déshabillaient et le rhabill-

aient avec lenteur et précision. Dès que la première s'est agenouillée pour détacher la boucle de sa ceinture et la retirer des ganses, la deuxième a tendu les mains. Elle a saisi la ceinture pliée en deux avec grand soin comme s'il s'agissait d'un objet précieux. Aucun mot n'avait été prononcé et pourtant, pas un seul mouvement n'était superflu ni gaspillé. D'une main ferme, l'une tirait sur le pan de kimono et l'autre sur les manches afin d'empêcher tout pli indésirable de se former. Je l'ai regardé boire sa première gorgée de thé avant de sortir ma main droite de la manche du kimono pour saisir sa tasse, la faire pivoter lentement afin de déposer mes lèvres sur la trace des siennes, comme dans *Soie*.

Depuis le partage de ce thé et du bain si chaud que nos corps le croyaient froid, nous avons échangé cinq autres romans. Nous planifions nos voyages d'affaires selon les villes où les histoires prennent place. Il y a deux semaines, lorsque nous avons quitté le cimetière du Père-Lachaise, il m'a chuchoté qu'il existait suffisamment de livres pour se donner rendez-vous jusqu'à la fin de nous. Ou de notre propre histoire.

C'est ainsi qu'il est monté dans le taxi avec un exemplaire de *L'Amant* de Marguerite Duras. C'est ainsi que je l'attends, aujourd'hui, sur un traversier du Mékong.

One of My Thin Friends and Other Poems

Lucas Crawford is Assistant Professor of English at the University of New Brunswick. Lucas is the author of *Sideshow Concessions* (poetry, Invisible Press 2015) and *Transgender Architectonics* (monograph, Routledge 2016). Lucas is from rural Nova Scotia.

One of My Thin Friends

You don't know embarrassment until somebody has tried to fuck you in one of your fat folds, and of course I mean embarrassment for the other party and not myself. I felt bad for that person, but only because we were on camera. Can you imagine being documented for life as someone who couldn't find the cunt of a morbid o-beast? Wouldn't you just DIE? Wouldn't you just curl up under a fat comforter with a fat teddy bear and watch some fat porn in order to study up and to shame-masturbate while you cry over your thin-minded folly? As for the person who truly did lose their dignity thus, I believe the half-rotten zucchinis helped their case somewhat. Yes, they could blame it on the produce: *hey, YOU try getting it in the right place when the fucking implement you are using in that particular moment is neither sentient nor firm!* Indeed, I think much of the debacle can be blamed on agriculture, like many bad fucks or even medium-quality fucks. The frat boys don't call it getting corn-holed for nothing. It's because corn is a fucking disgusting food. Oh, my professor friend teaches some dumb article about frat boys—how they tell jokes about how to find fat women's vaginas. The joke has something to do with coating them in flour, or breading them—something that reminded me of fried chicken, anyhow. All I took from it is that guys secretly love fucking fat people, but only in secret. Like, I had a skinny roommate who said his favourite dinner was a tie between *coquilles St. Jacques* and a deconstructed Steak Oscar with rapeseed-oil aioli even though I once walked in on him at night because I thought he was having a nightmare but he was just tummy-down on his bed gnashing his face into a bag of Cheetos and grunting. Now, that metaphor doesn't quite work, so don't quote me, because it implies that fat people are of lower nutritional value or whatever the sex equivalent of that would be. That is untrue. Some of us are so highly nutritious that we fuck and eat zucchinis, you know. Or was it a cucumber? What I wouldn't do for some tzatziki

and grilled meats right now. There was no meat at the party where the fold-fucking faux pas occurred, only very small oranges and a bottle of maple syrup that was eventually poured atop someone from England, as per her request. Nobody asked if she was a crepe or a crumpet. But as for my thin friend, my fat-fucking strumpet, well, I loved that person so. We remain the best of buddies. But I'll never ask that friend over for crudités. That would just be cruel.

Please Don't Bury Me Down in that Cold Cold Ground

No, I'd rather have 'em cut me up
and pass me all around
-John Prine

Use my tripe for dental floss;
Transgender women can have my tits.
Braise my ribs in honey-garlic sauce;
Burn my slick pits, zits, and clit.

Use my temper to dispense with folks
Who've always got stuck in your craw.
Daddy-dutch, don't you ditch my yolks –
The finest hollandaise you ever saw

Duck duck goose, get my liver to Quebec;
Chefs, it's almost foie gras.
Tartar my tongue; make a broth with my neck;
Then, baby, choke me down raw.

Use my calluses to sand down your edges;
Use my butt to make some soap.
If you're hungry for change, then dredge,
Batter, fry, and eat my cunt for hope.

Puree my asshole into wieners;
You know people love that shit.
When the bread's broken, be catholic keeners
And consecrate a whole vat of my spit.

Salvage my piercings and store in a Ziploc bag;
Give them away to someone unsuspecting for free.
Wring out my favourite shorts for my guerrilla rag
And institute a bloody archive of mouldy me.

Take my off-beat heart to the clock shop;
Throw 'em all off for years.
Tenderize my loins; shellac my chops;
Donate my funhouse mirrors to my queers.

Feed my yeast to brew your beers
(At least something is still alive).
Rub my grease on a few good steers;
Remember rosemary, thyme, and chive.

Grind my milk-bones for *Titus Andronicus* pie.
Serve with crumpets and a spot of pee.
Tan and treat my thick-skin hide;
Quill my blood to write your new treaty.

Play your soundtrack on my vertebrate xylophone
(To hell with cell-phone style).
Ignite my gas before a zealot's home;
Extinguish it with my pool of black bile.

My feet were made for more than walking;
Don't waste the years I spent on that gut.
Repurpose my chins as makeshift caulking
To seal this casket shut.

But, please don't bury me
Down in that cold cold ground.
I'd rather have 'em cut me up
And pass me all around.

Airplane Lavatory Algebra

If X = My Ass
and My Ass is 100 feet behind First Class,
then let Y be the compression required
to have X in the airplane lavatory –
I am the reluctant engineer of the Mile Wide club.

If V = the volume of the airplane lavatory
and C = the circumference of my thighs,
then let B be the rotational axis around which I must pivot to P(ee).
Like Superman, this booth transforms me –
into the lead contortionist of the Cirque de So-Gay.

If my buzzcut seatmate's hair = A^2

it remains unfair, this space between our chairs,
where the armrest is owned
by the acute-angled elbow he digs into me
while my flabby forearm hovers (rather non-aerodynamically).
My god, dude, would touching elbows be like butt-fucking me?
(Am *I* the first-ever fat flight attendant of Flight AC 693?)

If H = the height of the lady attendant's bangs

then P = her hunger pangs this year.

If my queer chest, uni-boobed, may be called Q^3
then my bad mood will be visited upon all the rubes
who own the airplane seatbelt-making factory. They need to think
bigger. Because, at this height, I can't summon Houdini's powers
to extend the length of this bruising constraint.

Inner monologue: *don't worry, you'll be fine, you'll be fine, you'll be fine—*
The PA: *return to your seats, as the captain has switched on the Fasten Seatbelt sign.*
Inner monologue: *you're still fine, you're still fine—*
Seatmate: *the armrest is mine, it's mine, it's mine… It's mine!*

F = my fear that *in the unlikely event of an emergency landing over water*
the others will grab me to float.
I'll kick them off with aqua-fit quads;
let the rich drown with their lead-rod lean bods.
Unlike the airlines, my policy is no-fuss:
Noah saved pairs and I'll save 2XLs and plus.

I'm flying to a city where Fat ≥ just one. It has a street of strip clubs
flanked by Addition Elles, where
XXX meets XXXL.

Hell, I'm a regular Fat Elvis
entering my Graceland
bananas in pockets
peanut butter in hand.

Urologist

Your head is an old Body Shop
My body is an old head shop

Your Satsuma sneeze makes me gag each time. I'm
weed-weak in the kneeling pulse of my fag-niche prime

The plywood of your skull leaks Oceania
oil, but you never moved with a current

We were: ripened patchouli sweaters
sopping up spilt swill – white musk

you straightened out like corn
you mistook me for your husk

but I'm in cyan silk and
will not attend your crop.

Your head is a boarded-up Body Shop
My body is not quite an old head shop

Just one year had me cabbing to the
clinic at West 4th and Burrard

trying to roll one up with an onion-leaf page
torn from my unabridged works of the Bard

But there were other dank years of stolen phones and unlucky coins
That I wouldn't scrub with strawberry soap for new bones or new joints.

Did you ever have a bilingual gay lap dance to a
Cranberries ballad? Break your finger at a party

in a condemned house filled with Clementines?
Do you know how to vanish? Why Montreal is a verb?

Are you still perturbed
if a friend comes up queer?

Oh, MD.
You never could see me.

In your sterile soap dystopia of white things

I'd slow-gait evaporate – smoke rings, fat sweat

Soon I may get un-scandalous surgery, then take a long rest.
I'll host no more neighbours for the organs you play best.

On your bony back I heard a primate hiss
behind your unhung earlobe:

You shall not be moved; tea tree oil sacrament
You shall not be moved; body butter for all self-flagellants

My nostrils remember your priss-stink bliss.
But "my" body, this body, now takes and

gives and takes the piss out of you
and your rat-run Body Shop mind.

Don't look for my chopped body.
There'd be "nothing to be gained."

You stay up late, king.
Me, I'll be in Maine.

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"One of My Thin Friends," "Please Don't Bury Me," and "Airplane Lavatory Algebra" are from *Sideshow Concessions* by Lucas Crawford, published by Invisible Publishing (2015). Republished by permission of Invisible Publishing and the author.

"WHOOPS I AM A LADY ON THE INTERNET": Digital Feminist Counter-Publics

Cluster Editors

Clare Mulcahy is a recent graduate of the English and Film Studies doctoral program at University of Alberta, and is a full-time instructor at Northern Alberta Institute of Technology. Her research focuses on African American women journalists' negotiations of professional legitimacy through their turn-of-the-century writing in the African American press.

Hannah McGregor is an Assistant Professor of Publishing at Simon Fraser University, where her research and teaching focus on the histories and futures of print and digital media in Canada. She is the co-creator of *Witch, Please*, a feminist podcast on the Harry Potter world, and the creator of the podcast *Secret Feminist Agenda*.

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("Internet Lady" by Kate Beaton, harkavagrant.com/index.php?id=103)

May 2015, when we organized the panel upon which this essay cluster is based, now seems like a different world—a world in which it still needed to be said that the Internet is a dangerous place for women, but one in which the public conversations *about* that gendered danger led us to feel hopeful. We wrote, at the time, of *Al Jazeera* columnist Sarah Kendzior, who publicly addressed the "rape threats and constant harassment" she has received online from "people who describe themselves as leftists or communists, and apparently want to rape their way to revolution" (Kendzior 2014). These days, however, Kendzior has been moved to educate her readers about anti-fascist resistance strategies. In 2015, we discussed the open misogyny of the online gaming community, before the people behind GamerGate had become the primary platform of the alt-right (Bernstein 2015). Now, more than two years later, the truism that the Internet is a dangerous place for women is so pat-

ently obvious as to be banal, yet its urgency as a tool of organization for politicized counterpublics is anything but.

The essays and interviews gathered here are, due to the speed of both Internet discourse and contemporary politics, instantly dated. And yet, the concerns they voice—about the Internet as a series of overlapping publics that women, especially women of colour, build and negotiate in complex, fraught, sometimes empowering and sometimes dangerous ways—are as timely as ever. In fact, narratives of negotiating these spaces have become a genre unto themselves, appearing, for example, in both Lindy West's *Shrill: Notes From a Loud Woman* (2016) and Scaachi Koul's *One Day We'll All Be Dead and None Of This Will Matter* (2017). These essays, a personal accounting of the abuse these prominent public intellectuals have endured and a justification of why they nevertheless continue to write publicly, position rape threats as the price women pay for, as Erin Wunker writes in her contribution in this issue, "being a woman who writes about feminism and social justice in public forums." This genre, into which we might add Wunker's own "Sweating in Public: Some Thoughts About Writing on the Internet While Being a Woman," reminds us that rape culture is a deliberate means of keeping women out of the public sphere, of denying women access to public speech.

One of the urgent questions of these essays and interviews became: what kinds of digital counterpublics can women find, or produce, online, in an environment that is deliberately and fundamentally violent to us? In our use of the term *counterpublic* we are of course indebted to Michael Warner (2005), who defines the counterpublic as a politicized public marked by both its "subordinate status" and its oppositionality to a dominant "cultural horizon" (119). The essays and interviews gathered here attend both to the spaces women build, like *GUTS Magazine*, and the ones we learn to negotiate.

Erin Wunker's essay opens this cluster with a consideration of the university as a liminal space between the public and the private, drawing on a range of examples: her own purposefully non-anonymous writing on the academic blog *Hook & Eye*; the humanities classroom as a space that is at once highly intimate and constantly available to public critique; and the campus dorm room as at once private home and public signifier, as explored in Emma Sulkowicz's performance piece *Carry That Weight* (2014-2015). The university is somehow intensely subject to public scrutiny and, yet, as the need for a blog like *Hook & Eye* reminds us, always inadequately public when it comes to how we circulate our ideas. Traditional scholarly publication venues, even as (like this journal) they move toward Open Access, often continue to prohibitively exclude the kinds of affectively charged and embodied personal speech that characterizes women's experience and navigation of the university as an institution.

As a counterpoint to Wunker's consideration of academic publics, cluster co-editor Hannah McGregor's interview with activist and public intellectual Virgie Tovar included in this cluster focuses on the activism that happens beyond the borders of the university, and the radical online work women can do without the restrictions of the university. "I was always unwilling to do the work of showing that every single thought I have has a genealogy that begins with white masculinity," Tovar explains. "And there's just no way to succeed in the academy if you're not willing to do that. So I decided we're not compatible." Tovar's activist work instead explores the possibilities for radical thought built into the Internet, from public accessibility (which she defines as part of her feminist praxis) to the visuality of platforms like Instagram that are being strategically used for the organizing of fat, queer, and Black, Indigenous, people of colour femmes.

It is the radical possibilities of the Internet that co-editor Marcelle Kosman's interview with members of the *GUTS Magazine* editorial collective addresses, shedding light on the challenges and opportunities of applying anti-oppressive intersectional feminism to a digital publishing business model. Focusing on the practical rather than the theoretical dimensions of digital feminist counterpublics, they emphasize how their feminist praxis rejects hierarchical relationships between editors and authors as well as universalizing notions of what constitutes feminist activism: "just as forms of oppression are not uniform, forms of feminism are not uniform, so *GUTS* strives for intersectional feminisms that can speak to one another."

In "The Difference a Gender Makes," self-identified "geek, artist and author" Marceline Cook (mjcook.org) writes of her own experiences as a trans woman online. Her contribution considers not only how our

gender presentation influences the ways others interact with us, but also how profoundly *feminine* gender informs women's behaviour online. Drawing on her personal experience as an intellectual, activist, and artist whose career requires her online presence, she demonstrates that, in spite of the opportunities the Internet affords, it remains far from a safe space for women.

In "The Digitization of Neurodiversity: Real Cyborgs and Virtual Bodies," contributor Isla Ng explores digital identity politics through the lens of disability studies. The article brings disability studies and neurodiversity into the framework of Donna Haraway's (2000 [1984]) "A Cyborg Manifesto," refusing the mainstream gendering of neurodiversity as masculine within the supposedly disembodied and abstract realm of the Internet. As a case study, she focuses on Melissa Broder's Twitter account @SoSadToday in order to "advocate for the centering of disability studies within digital feminist discourse both because the experiences of people with disabilities matter and deserve far more support and attention than they currently receive, and because disability theory helps us to break past the dichotomous gendered boundaries within the politics of digital technology. This means rejecting the notion that women of color and/or with disabilities have to compromise the realism of their bodies and identities when entering digital spaces." By centring disability in her own analysis, Ng models some of the possibilities that accompany just such an intervention into digital feminist discourse.

This thematic cluster concludes with co-editor Clare Mulcahy's interview with writer, activist, and organizer Alicia Garza about Black Lives Matter (of which she was a co-founder) and the relationship between traditional and digital activism. Garza focuses on the Internet's capacity to galvanize and radicalize those who are new to activism, alongside its limitations for long-term activism due to the ephemerality of online relationships. Even more pressingly, she recognizes that the state also actively polices #BLM and other activists through social media. "Even when social movements are using technology and the Internet specifically to further our aims," she points out, "it's also being used to surveil what activists are doing…to disrupt and criminalize activity that is critical of the state," Critiques of the Internet as an organizing tool are both necessary, emphasizing the need for localized activism and the dangers of state surveillance, and insufficient, as any rejection of the Internet becomes a rejection of the urgent forms of organization it has facilitated.

Through the multiple frames of gender, sexuality, race, and disability, these essays and interviews contemplate what it means to be "a lady on the Internet" at a moment when this work is at once necessary and more dangerous than ever.

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Sweating in Public: Some Thoughts About Writing on the Internet While Being a Woman

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Abstract
This paper uses autho-theory and affect to think through the repercussions of writing from a gendered perspective in public spaces and on social media.

Résumé
Cet article se sert de la théorie de l'auteur et de la théorie des affects pour réfléchir aux répercussions du fait d'écrire selon une perspective sexospécifique dans les espaces publics et sur les médias sociaux.

I think surely some percentage of women hasn't been raped. I don't know though, really. Perhaps this is the kind of thing I could find out on Google. (Rankine 2004, 72)

When I use the concept of 'sweaty concepts' I am also trying to say we can generate new understandings by describing the difficulty of inhabiting a body that is not at home in a world. (Ahmed 2014)

I remember the first time I received a rape threat on Twitter. I was at a conference on the past and future of avant-gardism in Canadian literary culture and I was sitting in the back row with a colleague. We were waiting for the keynote panel to begin and, being the modern multi-tasker that I am, I checked my phone. There it was in 140 characters or less. A tweet from a stranger saying something to the effect of *I hope you get raped*, or *you deserve to get raped.*

My first response was to think *lol, already happened. Get a new angle?*

My second response was to start sweating.

I can't remember now what the precise wording of the tweet. I didn't even bother to take a screen shot (rookie mistake). I do remember showing my colleague who was sitting beside me. She was more upset and shocked than I was. I also remember posting the following on Facebook: *I just got my first rape threat on Twitter. So there's that.*

§

Why can I remember the feeling of resignation—aha, it has finally happened—and not the text of the threat itself?

§

Sarah Ahmed's notion of "sweaty concepts" is my guide here, as I try to think being a woman who writes about feminism and social justice in public forums. For Ahmed, the phrase "sweaty concepts" is a way of

demonstrating how the work of description and exploration is labour.

Here is Ahmed:

> A concept is worldly but it is also a reorientation to a world, a way of turning things around, a different slant on the same thing. More specifically a 'sweaty concept' is one that comes out of a description of a body that is not at home in the world. By this I mean description as angle or point of view: a description of how it feels not to be at home in the world, or a description of the world from the point of view of not being at home in it…
>
> When I use the concept of 'sweaty concepts' I am also trying to say we can generate new understandings by describing the difficulty of inhabiting a body that is not at home in a world.
>
> Sweat is bodily; we might sweat more during more strenuous activity. A 'sweaty concept' might be one that comes out of a bodily experience that is difficult, one that is 'trying,' and where the aim is to keep exploring and exposing this difficulty, which means also aiming not to eliminate the effort or labour from the writing…(Ahmed 2014)

Trying to write about living in rape culture is exhausting. It makes me sweat and shake. Trying to write in public—especially on digital platforms—as a way of witnessing is, as Ahmed articulates, *difficult*. For every brilliant piece of writing about rape culture I read, I wonder what it cost the person who wrote it.

How much sweat?

How much shaking?

§

I received a lot of responses to my post about receiving a rape threat online. The ones I remember best, though, were from women who had *also* received online rape threats. Their advice was often two-pronged: they acknowledged how awful it was to receive these threats, and then they offered concrete advice for how to deal with it.

I was comforted by how many women I know who have received rape threats or other misogynistic attacks online.

Comforted. What a word.

§

The Internet is a complicated space for women. That's obvious, right? As Catherine Buni and Soraya Chemaly (2014) detail in "The Unsafety Net: How Social Media Turned Against Women," while the net is ideally a series of neutral platforms for interacting and sharing information, it is in fact not neutral at all. "If, as the communications philosopher Marshall McLuhan famously said, television brought the brutality of war into people's living rooms, the Internet today is bringing violence against women out of it," write Buni and Chemaly. What concerns them most is not the proliferation of violence against women on social media, but the fact that violence is a symptom of the larger, more pervasive effects of rape culture and patriarchy. In 2013, the World Health Organization (WHO) wrote a report that stated violence against women was at an all-time high (WHO 2013). For Buni and Chemaly, the WHO brief gives concrete numbers to anecdotal evidence: women are experiencing more violence, and the Internet—especially social media—is facilitating a great deal of that violence.

§

It's tempting to think about that song from childhood, isn't it? You know the one I mean: *sticks and stones can break my bones, but names will never hurt me*.

But here's the thing: verbal abuse *does* hurt. It hurts a lot. And it can do real damage. Moreover, verbal abuse and harassment are outlines as methods of discrimination that can be punishable offences (Canadian Human Rights Commission 2017). We have too many specific examples of how verbal harassment of women in digital space has devastating effects in real life. After showing her breasts to a man masquerading as her peer on line Amanda Todd was harassed relentlessly. She eventually took her own life. After photos circulated of her being sexually assaulted while incapacitated, Retheah Parsons also took her own life. After starting a Kickstarter campaign to fund her web series *Tropes vs. Women*, which unpacks gender stereotypes in video games, Anita Sarkeesian received such voracious abuse that she has to leave her house with police escorts as well as cancel a public talk at a university in Utah because of credible threats of gun violence against her. And in August of 2016, renowned feminist activist and educator Jessica

Valenti deactivated all her social media accounts after receiving multiple rape threats against her five-year-old daughter.

These are just a few examples.

This kind of gendered online harassment is on the rise according to the Pew Research Centre. According to their findings, young women between the ages of 18 and 24 "experience certain severe types of harassment at disproportionately high levels: 26% of these young women have been stalked online, and 25% were the target of online sexual harassment. In addition, they do not escape the heightened rates of physical threats and sustained harassment common to their male peers and young people in general" (Duggan 2014).

I'm struck by that language of evasion and escape. Young women are being harassed, stalked, and threatened with physical and sexual assault *as well as* not being able to escape "heightened rates of physical threats and sustained harassment common to their male peers and young people in general."

§

Still tempted to suggest that *names will never hurt me*?

§

Despite what we know about how gender (not to mention race, sexuality, and ability) are taken up in digital space, many of us still do it. Further, many of us do it under our own names.

Why?

When Heather Zwicker, Aimée Morrison, and I first started the feminist academic blog *Hook & Eye: Fast Feminism, Slow Academe*, we made a conscious decision to blog under our own names. No pseudonyms, no anonymity, we agreed. Not from us, not from guest bloggers. Our reasoning here was careful and deliberate: we were trying to create a space on the Internet for women and women-identified people to talk about feminist work and living in gendered bodies while laboring in academic institutions. It was important, we agreed, to have real live people talking from identifiable places and spaces about our own experiences. Some of the blogs we liked best—*Tenured Radical*, *Tenure, She Wrote*—were written with care to conceal the author. We felt that knowing who we were and where we were located mattered. A lot.

I still believe it matters that I sign my own name to my blog posts. I believe it matters because I have experienced how powerful it can be for people to identify with me. I know it matters because I have experienced how being public on the Internet can (has) been used against me.

§

I get heart palpitations every time I hit "post."

§

Does everyone? I doubt it (though the numbers from the Pew Research Centre suggest many of us *do*).

What does it cost me physically to have those heart palpitations? I think about that. I think about whether writing publicly as a woman is bad for my health. I think about whether the risks are necessary. Usually, I decide they are. Still, it is exhausting sometimes. *So* exhausting.

§

An Open Letter to Rex Murphy and the *National Post*

Dear Mr. Murphy:

I am an assistant professor at [redacted] where I teach in the Department of English. Some of my colleagues are trained as Shakespeareans or Victorianists. Others are trained in Modernist literatures, or American literatures, or post-colonial literatures. I myself am a Canadianist, which means I study, research, and teach literatures of Canada. I also teach my students about Canada's colonial legacy, about the violences of Canada's historic and contemporary relationships with First Peoples. For example, I strive to teach my students about what an ongoing national failure to meaningfully acknowledge and address the ongoing crisis of Murdered and Missing Indigenous Women has to do with early narrative representations of First Nations peoples in settler-colonial literature. Oh yes, and I teach my students from a feminist and anti-racist perspective.

I wanted to tell you some of the places from which I teach so that you can be very clear about my deep concern with your article "Institutes of Lower Education."

Here's the thing: it is easy to the point of being banal

and boring to take uncritical potshots at university curriculums and especially at the arts and humanities. Moreover, given that this country is in the midst of an election campaign, taking cheap shots at the humanities is a thinly veiled partisan trick at best. And you can bet that students who have been taught to close read and think critically will have seen this. It irks me that another national newspaper is willing to thoughtlessly toss humanities education out the window, but that isn't what has enraged me enough to take time away from preparing my lectures to write to you here.

No. What enrages me, Mr. Murphy, is your seemingly blithe attitude towards gender inequity, rape culture, violence against women, and, frankly, real rape. Add to that your willingness to dismiss outright creative modes of consciousness-raising, analysis, and collaborative learning and you have me not only angry, you have me deeply concerned. If you haven't noticed, Canada is in crisis. There are many facets of this crisis, but the one I want to draw your attention to is our national crisis of violence against women. Let me explain how your article undermines the severity of this crisis.

You begin your article asking "Who can be considered a highly educated person in today's world?" After making reference to a few touchstone pop culture icons you quickly move from sounding like an angry old man shaking his fist at the clouds to simply being hateful. You poke fun at crucial interventions into heteronormative language as a means of undermining university education. Just in case we're not clear, what you've done is denigrate linguistic attempts to make space for trans identities and denigrate the spaces and classrooms where some of those discussions take place. All in the name of suggesting that university education isn't what it used to be back in the day with Mr. Darcy.

Are you kidding me, Mr. Murphy?

And then, despite your attempts to hinge your hateful tirade on a public figure's woeful historic ignorance, you slut shame a young woman who was allegedly raped. In fact, you more than slut shame her. You put Emma Sulkowizc's rape in quotation marks. You make her experience of physical violation ironic and mockable. And then you take her thesis project which, by the way, operates in a genre called endurance performance, and you mock her. You mock this young woman, her bravery, and her attempt to translate her experience of violence into both art and activism. You mock her in a national newspaper. Shame on you.

Let me tell you a bit about Ms. Sulkowicz's project, because it isn't clear to me that you did your research.

In the fall of 2014, an art student at Columbia University by the name of Emma Sulkowicz began carrying her mattress with her to class. This act of endurance performance entitled *Carry That Weight* was her senior thesis project for her Fine Arts Degree. It was also a public acknowledgement of her experience of sexual assault on campus. Sulkowicz was sexually assaulted in her dorm room at the beginning of her second year of university. She began carrying her fifty-pound mattress with her around campus—to class, to lunch, to study—as a visual and physical statement both of her assault and of the fact that her rapist was still a student at Columbia. He was unpunished despite several complaints of assault from Sulkowicz and other women. She, meanwhile, was carrying the weight of her assault as she moved through the same space as her assailant.

Here's the thing, Mr. Murphy: we—by which I mean culture at large—don't know how to talk about rape. We don't know how to differentiate between different experiences of rape which, by the way, can require a shifting use of pronouns. We don't know how to address the perniciousness of rape in history as a calculated tool for violence and subordination any more than we know how to discuss rape as a sometimes-facet of consensual sexual relationships. And we *certainly* do not know how, as a culture, to talk about rape culture on campuses.

You wrote this article nearly a year to the day that the Jian Ghomeshi scandal broke. You published this article nearly a year after the Dalhousie Dentistry Scandal Broke. And let's not forget that nearly a year ago the hashtag #BeenRapedNeverReported trended to such a degree that it became the opening page of the *Huffington Post*. You published this article less than a week after three women were murdered in Ontario by a man they all knew. And you pretended that this article was about the failure of humanities classrooms specif-

ically and university curriculums more generally. That is not just reprehensible journalism, it is faulty rhetoric.

There will be some readers, I'm sure, who will tell me I shouldn't have read your opinion, that I should have known what I was in for. But here's the thing: when a national newspaper chooses to publish openly misogynistic opinions, it tells us something about our cultural climate. As my students and I discuss in our classes the historical and cultural context out of which a text is produced can tell us as much about a cultural moment as the text itself. We have incredible discussions about how language reveals systemic injustice and inequity. You're welcome to join us if you'd like to do some research for your next article on what actually happens in humanities classrooms.

*

In the fall of 2015, I wrote that open letter to Rex Murphy and the *National Post*. It was in response to Murphy's (2015) editorial "Institutes of Lower Education," which was a diatribe on the ways that cultural studies and other critical sites of inquiry have lowered the value of formerly prestigious institutions. Murphy is a Canadian media personality known, I think it is fair to say, for favouring polarizing viewpoints. In this particular editorial, he laments the devaluing of university degrees from institutions because institutions, *and, in particular, some humanities departments—have, over the last few decades, wandered far from the primary purpose of what these institutions were designed for: to teach what is worth knowing; to train the intellect; to acquaint students with, and help them appreciate, the glories of the human mind and its finest achievements.* Putting aside for the moment the tired argument that a degree in the humanities has no value, let's instead think about how Murphy unfolds his argument. What examples does a national figure in Canadian social and political news use to make his point?

Emma Sulkowicz's final project.

Furthermore, Murphy uses Sulkowicz's rape as a theoretical point from which to speculate about her intellectual capabilities.

Let's think about that for a moment. Older white man with (presumably) a well-paying job mocks young racialized woman for enduring rape. Older white man builds his entire argument on this mockery of young, racialized woman who—wait for it—had the gall to want to study Fine Arts. For credit! And just in case you're thinking, *hey, [redacted], calm down. It's just Rex Murphy. You should know what you're in for*, please pause with me for a moment.

His editors approved this.

The newspaper published it.

Further, the newspaper published it nearly a year to the day that the Jian Ghomeshi scandal *and* the Dalhousie Dentistry Scandal broke. The Dalhousie Dentistry Scandal became a public scandal because a young man decided to blow the whistle on his fellow colleagues who had built a long-standing, private social media "club" where they discussed sexually assaulting their female colleagues as well as future patients. Using anesthesia. Because they will be dentists. Oh yes, and the Dalhousie Dentistry Scandal? The so-called "Dalhousie Gentlemen's Club" started on the anniversary of the Montreal Polytechnique Massacre of fourteen women (Halsall 2015). And it started with this question to its members: *who would you hate fuck?*

§

Over a hundred people commented on Murphy's editorial, most to say some horrifying version of *hear, hear*! Why? Because we live in a rape culture where women's experiences of violence are mocked for an editorial point. Further, the ease and anonymity with which people can comment in online forums facilitates the ease and speed with which hate can proliferate. We know this. Even the *Toronto Star* has acknowledged the hot mess of hate that is the comments section. The *Star* has closed online commenting sections "partly because of the negative tone of many comments" (Bradshaw 2016).

§

So I wrote this open letter and published it on the feminist academic blog *Hook & Eye: Fast Feminism, Slow Academe*. I wanted to put it in a public place, because that's part of being a feminist killjoy. We have to call out the so-called joys of patriarchal culture to people who exist outside of our circles of shared politics.

The result of my letter was not wholly unexpected, I sup-

pose. I was written up in *Frank Magazine* as "Halifax's newest lunatic feminist." In the quintessentially *Frank* piece, the writer relies on classic *ad hominam* attacks to sketch out his "satiric" engagement with my writing (Douglas 2016).

And why mention the *Frank* piece, really, save for the fact it illustrates a few points I am trying to make: women have to fight to have their experiences of sexualized violence recognized as such. This is especially true for women of colour, Indigenous women, queer, trans, or differently abled women. Women's experiences are made strange, again and again, in mainstream media, in small "satiric" publications, and, indeed, in everyday life.

§

Have you seen the advertisement created by the podcast Just Not Sports? In it, men—presumably sports fans, but it is never explicit—are paired with women who work in sports journalism. The point of the interaction is to get men to read aloud comments that have been made about the women on social media. It's an uncomfortable, kind of funny, highly orchestrated environment. The viewer can tell right away that these men and women don't know each other, and we are told that the men have not read the tweets prior to this interaction. The women, on the other hand, have.

The women and men face each other for this staged reading. The women stare straight ahead as the men read from their scripts of hate-tweets. The interactions between these two strangers start out awkward and jokey. They shake hands. Some of the men ask if they are just meant to read everything on the paper out loud.

The first few tweets are subtle in their misogyny seeming, at first listen, to be critiquing the women's abilities as sports reporters.

"She's not good, not bad, just mediocre, just there," reads one.

"She's just a scrub-muffin," reads another. "What's a scrub-muffin?" the man asks, "I love muffins."

The atmosphere palpably changes when the tweets become more violent.

"I hope you get raped again," one male participant whispers, holding back tears.

"I hope your boyfriend beats you," another says, struggling to keep eye contact with the woman across from him.

"I hope your dog dies."

As the men read the increasingly violent texts, they become shaken. Some resist reading until they are told they must, and then they do it in a rush, or with shaking voices, or with tones of disbelief.

Each one of them apologizes to the women when they finish.

The advertisement ends with the statement that "we wouldn't say this to them in real life, so why say it on the Internet?" and flashes the hashtag #MoreThanMean (Just Not Sports 2016).

While I do know that these kinds of statements get uttered to women in real life, I still genuinely appreciate this ad. It makes me sad. It makes me uncomfortable. It makes me angry. It reminds me of the depth of vitriol and hate that anonymity facilitates.

It makes me wonder why any woman would take to the Internet and try to speak to issues of inequity at all, much less under how own name.

§

It makes me wonder why I write under my own name.

§

My first book was published in November 2016. It is a collection of non-fiction essays about the importance of feminism. Specifically, it is about the importance of Sara Ahmed's figure of the feminist killjoy: the feminist who kills the so-called "joys" of patriarchal culture. In the collection, I talk about rape culture, among other things.

In preparation for the book's release I started scrubbing my online presence. Photos of me and my daughter? Gone, or untagged. Photos of me and my partner? Ditto. And I shifted the settings on my Twitter account to require that followers request permission.

Is this paranoia or self-preservation?

§

"When I use the concept of 'sweaty concepts,'" writes Ahmed (2014), "I am also trying to say we can generate new understandings by describing the difficulty of inhabiting a body that is not at home in a world."

I'm still writing under my own name and in public spaces and places because for me there's still generative possibility in using my own vulnerabilities as a site from which to think about how we understand the ways that heteronormative and patriarchal assumptions about gender structure how a body is able to be, at home in the world. It is uncomfortable work. It is difficult work. It is work I don't want to do forever.

But I am doing it, for now. For you. With you, whomever you may be.

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"I Needed to See the Politic Being Lived": Virgie Tovar on Fat Activism and Digital Platforms

Virgie Tovar is an author and activist who speaks and writes on the topics of fat discrimination and its intersection with gender, race, and sexuality. She is the editor of the anthology *Hot & Heavy: Fierce Fat Girls on Life, Love & Fashion* (Seal Press, 2012), the organizer of Babecamp, and publishes extensively with online forums, including *Ravishly*, *BuzzFeed*, the *New York Times*, and *Cosmopolitan*.

Hannah McGregor (interviewer) is an Assistant Professor of Publishing at Simon Fraser University, where her research and teaching focus on the histories and futures of print and digital media in Canada. She is the co-creator of *Witch, Please*, a feminist podcast on the Harry Potter world, and the creator of the podcast *Secret Feminist Agenda*.

Could you start off by explaining to the reader what you do? How would you define your work?

I primarily identify as a public intellectual working around issues of fat politics and fat liberation. I'm a fat activist, but my primary contribution to the movement is theoretically unpacking fatphobia. I use the academic training that I have in order to deconstruct and intersectionally approach issues like fatphobia and fat-shaming. Surprisingly, I've ended up professionalizing my activism, and now I lecture at universities, as well as teach a four-week online class that offers a crash course in fat positive feminism [Babecamp].

And what led you to this surprising career path?

I grew up a fat kid, I come from a fat family, and there was pretty much no way I wasn't going to be fat, with the exception of really extreme intervention of some kind. That means, in this modern age, that I grew up being taught to feel ashamed of my body and to feel a sense of worthlessness. I deeply internalized that education that I think a lot of fat women, and even not so fat women, receive, and for years and years I played out that internalization through self harm, through extreme dieting and exercise.

Through a series of happy coincidences, I ended up getting taken off that path. One of the very first interventions in my education in fatphobia was actually dating men. It wasn't a particularly radical act, to date straight dudes, but they were able to disrupt this narrative that I'd been taught: that I was completely undesirable, that no one would ever want to date me or sleep with me. Then I was introduced to feminism at university, and ultimately went to grad school, where I researched fat women. That became the final intervention, when I was introduced through the research to a community of fat activists—fat-positive queer people in the Bay area. Being introduced to that community became the coup-de-grâce; I needed to see the politic being lived, and that was what this group of activists gave to me.

I wouldn't have come to the research without these really personal, touchstone moments, but through the research I was able to meet all of these people. And it became really clear that I wanted to write a book about them that introduced them to the world. Before I went to grad school, I had pitched a single-authored manifesto called *Fatties of the World, Unite*. At the time—this was 2008 or 2009—there was no market for that kind of work at all. You know, there had not been an anthology published on the topic since *Shadow on a Tightrope* [a 1995 collection of essays edited by Lisa Schoenfielder and Barb Wieser]. Even though the editor really liked the work, really liked my voice, the marketing team ultimately decided that it was not ready for the market—or the market was not ready for it.

As I was completing my Master's degree, I started to hear and see the rumblings of fat activism, and I was like "oh my god, this thing is about to explode." And so I reached out to the editor again and said 'hey, this thing is about to blow up; I don't know if you're seeing what I'm seeing, but y'all need to get on this train now if you want to publish this book, because it's a ground-breaking book and the world needs to meet these women who are doing this fucking incredible work.' The idea of the anthology had really emerged alongside some of my own maturity around writing. The problem with a single authored work is that it's so easy for somebody to read it and think 'this person is special, this person just has some strange thing about her that makes her able to stop dieting forever, but I can't. I felt that, with the anthology, you can have thirty people who are telling you a story. Thirty people is a lot of people! That makes the work they're doing feel more tenable, when there's a lot of people talking about it. So anyway, the anthology emerged [*Hot & Heavy: Fierce Fat Girls on Life, Love & Fashion* (2012)], and even before the book was published, I was getting invited to speak at universities on the topic. It was through the anthology that my work became organically professionalized.

You stepped into the public as somebody who could talk about this thing that people wanted to talk about.

And who could talk about it in an intersectional and a "non-intimidating" way, that wasn't academic in nature. That's why I'm so bad a being an academic. I have the training, but the aesthetic is so deeply repugnant to most people, including myself.

Inside and outside the academy, it seems like we all hate it!

Yes. And I was always unwilling to do the work of showing that every single thought I have has a genealogy that begins with white masculinity. I refuse to do that. And there's just no way to succeed in the academy if you're not willing to do that. So I decided we're not compatible.

So let's talk intersectionality. The keywords of this special issue are *feminism*, *publics*, and the *digital*. Let's start with feminism. I wanted to begin by asking if you define your work as feminist, but you already have. So now I'm wondering if you could define the feminism of your praxis. What does feminism mean to you?

That's such a good question, gosh. I actually see feminism as almost an aesthetic more so than an ideology, if that makes any sense. Of course, I'm certainly familiar with traditional definitions of feminism, but when we talk about things like closing the wage gap, we leave out some very important parts of the conversation. There's kind of a silent understanding that we just need to make edits to the system as it exists now, that it's largely a good system. And I don't know that I'm willing to concede that. I was recently asked to do a talk at a historically all-dude college, and the students there were talking about the limitations of the feminism they saw on campus. They were like, 'we only ever talk about the wage gap,' and I was like, 'yeah, I guess the problem with that is it completely obscures the fact that capitalism and misogyny are BFF's!' You cannot interrogate gender inequality without looking at all these systems upon which those inequalities pivot. I think of feminism as an aesthetic because there are types of feminism that are emerging now, that will emerge, that cannot be encapsulated by a definition. And that's what's exciting to me about it.

I think that my feminism manifests in my work in myriad ways. Let's work this from top to bottom. To begin, I have taken my academic training and refused to accept the privilege of being entrenched in the academy. I'm sharing this information and making it accessible to the public on the Internet. I think of that as feminism. The Internet, which at one point in its inception was about nerds and people at the periphery getting together and mobilizing, has become a commoditizable space.

But I still think that even the use of cyber feminism, the use of the Internet as a tool to convey ideas and to demand justice, is a feminist act.

I also think about things like my outfits as feminism. I think of fashion as a deeply feminist battleground. Even something like my nails—my choice of how long to keep them, what colour. What am I conveying with my fashion? Who am I speaking to when I'm wearing certain outfits? To me, that's feminism.

And then, politically, the work itself is ultimately about feminism, it's ultimately about women's liberation, because fat is a women's issue. Yes, absolutely, all genders experience fatphobia, but we're really talking about the second-class citizenship of femininity. Discussing this work in the way that I do is so deeply tied to the liberation of women. Almost all my professional work is with women; specifically, a lot of my work is in conversation with women of colour and queers because my work comes from a queer tradition. I'm a straight lady who was like, hey guess what, queers know everything. Queers are creating some of the best theory in the world, and so let's listen to them. I'm a social justice oriented person, but if I weren't, I think that just based on an objective assessment I would come to the same conclusion: that queer people and people of colour are creating some of the best theory in existence. So I think that conversing with that work, insisting on centring that work, is also deeply feminist.

Those are a lot of things.

And that's wonderful, because feminism is messy like that. But I love your definition of feminism as an aesthetic. I'd like to return to that point when we speak later about Instagram. But first, I want to ask you about your self-identification as a public intellectual. I'm interested in hearing more about how you define your public. When we speak publicly, we generally have an addressee, or an audience, in mind. We know who we *think* we're talking to—and who we think we're *not* talking to, right? You've already framed your public as being non-academic (which immediately means a much larger public). So how else would you define your public? Who are you talking to?

I'm talking to women. You know, this is a bit personal, but I grew up in a dysfunctional home, where I was the hero child, the golden child, and it was my job to save everyone. And I feel like I bring in this deep sense of needing to protect people into my work. I was also raised by Mexican immigrants who I watched getting humiliated every day; I watched them and I felt it, even before I understood the language of what was happening. So in a lot of ways the people who I'm talking to are the people like me; I'm talking to women, I'm talking to people of colour, I'm talking to fat people. I'm trying to encourage the people who feel they have to apologize.

One of my own critiques of my work is that sometimes the people I want to be speaking to don't actually need to hear what I have to say. They may not be benefiting from it in the same way that people who are less well versed in all of these issues might. In my mind, I'm speaking to the group of people who are the victims of the things that I'm talking about, like sexism and racism and fatphobia and xenophobia. I understand that other people see my work, but I'm not necessarily talking to them. You can sit at the table, you can listen, but you're not my primary audience, I'm not as invested in discussion with you. Last night, for example, I gave a lecture [as part of the Berkeley Public Library's 2016 Fat Positive Summer Festival] to a room full of women and queer people and people of colour. In those moments, when the room is exactly what you want the room to look like, I think, I did something right in advertising this. I don't know what I did that was special, but this is exactly the room that I wanted.

It's like your community has heard you.

Yeah! Totally! There are so many cultural forces that seek to gaslight marginalized people into believing that we're overstating things or that we're being paranoid or that we're just not understanding reality as it actually exists. For me to be able to get up there and, I think quite articulately and succinctly, convey that there's evidence to back up people's experiences – that means a lot to me. In that way, the work is deeply therapeutic for me and also, I hope, for others.

This is an aside, but have you by any chance listened to the most recent episode of *This American Life*? [589: Tell Me I'm Fat]

Yeah, I just wrote an article about the whole thing! [http://www.ravishly.com/2016/06/23/take-cake-american-life-really-bad-talking-about-fat]

Did you? I found it really moving, and I'm trying to figure out how to send it to my parents because I think it will help them to understand me better. But what struck me was the lack of space that they gave to gaslighting. It seemed to be justifying of the experiences of living in a fat body, to be saying, 'you're not imagining it, it is happening.'

Well, I'm biased against the episode because I feel like *This American Life* has wasted a lot of my time. I literally got an email from Sarai Walker [author of *Dietland*] just a few minutes ago, and she was like 'they wasted my time too!' They just keep pre-interviewing a few people. And for me, those are billable hours. You got two interviews, NPR, you're never getting another one for free. But I think my issue—and this is what I say in the article—is that I was troubled by the position of Elna Baker's story as the central narrative. Of course, I understand that it's NPR and the personal story was always going to be the central narrative. But they end up repeating this framework that I find deeply sexist in which the marginalized person—the woman—is the one on trial; they're the one whose privacy is always presumed as non-existent. The result—and this is a big problem I have with NPR in general—is this kind of white male voyeurism, this idea that there's an invisible listener who's not actually being indicted even though it's their complicity that's primarily responsible for the suffering being described. My boyfriend is an NPR-listener, and I often ask him: what is it about this violence and poverty porn that you enjoy so much? Because there's no call to action. It's just you, listening to marginalized people talk about their lives so you can discuss it over dinner. This is sociopathic to me!

And of course then you feel good about yourself for listening. It's the catharsis of the middlebrow reading experience.

Yeah! So to expect, or even encourage, this woman who I think is a producer of the show [Baker], in the name of truth or in the name of justice, to humiliate herself—that's horrifying to me. I know about political strategy, how people will choose these really moving narratives of victimization because they're affecting, but NPR doesn't intend to act on this in any way! It's not like there's going to be legislation now, or a demand for human rights! That's not what's happening!

The listeners just get to move on. I keep thinking of a Roxane Gay quote: "the only thing women are allowed to be experts on is themselves." Women's voices are framed as only ever speaking autobiographically. And yet! NPR produces texts that I can send to my middle-class white parents!

Yes!

Alright, sorry, we got off script. But this topic of gaslighting brings me to my next question. The Internet is both an amazing space that allows us to do things we wouldn't be able to do otherwise, and a garbage pile. Let's start with the garbage. I'm interested in hearing you speak about the kinds of resistance that you might have encountered to your activism, specifically in online spaces.

In general, I would say I don't have to deal with a lot of it online. I do have a dedicated Reddit hate-page, which I never really thought I'd have! I have a theory that being a woman of colour, a cyberfeminist of colour, is actually a protective factor. I find that most of the people who are extremely awful online are actually white men, and there's kind of this idea that women of colour don't matter. The culture already understands women of colour as always already marginal and disinteresting and dehumanized. White men are particularly invested in policing and engaging with white femininity. So honestly, I was shocked that I got on the Reddit radar, because I assumed I was like a proto-human, even lower than a white woman to them.

As an analytical person who always brings a scholarly lens to things, I find the mechanism they're activating on Reddit really interesting. They got really mad at me for a blog post I wrote about deciding to block an old friend of mine. I'd met him when I was living in New York when I was very young, like 22, and it was clear that we were interested in each other, but also that he was holding back. And then, a decade later, he ended up with this thin, white, upper middle-class woman who does marathons and has made him thinner and all these kinds of things. And I thought: I've sensed you since I was 22 and now I get to see you! So I wrote about the decision to bet on my intuition about what the fuck happened instead of betting on the possibility that this was a nice guy and I was interpreting it incorrectly; I decided to act on my intuition rather than gaslighting myself. So I wrote about the decision to block

this guy for what I called stealth bigotry. And that was what broke the camel's back for Reddit.

The mechanism they used to attack me wasn't based on my looks; they actually attacked me based on my interpretation of reality. They tried to collectively gaslight me. It wasn't comments about whether or not they found me attractive, whether or not they felt like they could fuck me, or whatever the typical male method of policing women is, which when you're a fat woman is usually about you being ugly or disgusting. This was more sophisticated. It was literally the desire to undermine my interpretation of facts; they used words like 'delusional.' My moniker on Reddit is 'The Queen of Delusion.' From a linguistic standpoint, I found that super interesting, to be honest. But of course Reddit is a space that's for bratty white boys with privilege, so I don't think it's any coincidence that they activate this particular kind of sexist tactic. It's a tactic that men of influence, white men of influence, have often used. The psychological has long been the battleground that white masculinity has fought against the feminine.

It's reminiscent of accusations of hysteria.

Yes, exactly. So, that's one example of the garbage online. In general, I haven't dealt with a whole lot of stuff. In part, that's just because my platform isn't as big as other people's. I think that, if I was dealing with a volume of 100,000 people versus my 10,000, that would be different. And also, as I mentioned, I think being a woman of colour on some level grants me this kind of stealth status because white dudes aren't as invested in policing women of colour's femininity, I think. Anyway, I've deeply internalized the idea, at this point in my life, that other people's bigotry is their problem.

For example, recently Fox News did a story on me in which they claimed that I'd said something that I didn't in fact say. I was doing a telecommuted lecture with another person for a university—she had a medical background, and was an academic, and was like a white, thin, straight woman. And Fox News said that I talked about thin privilege. I actually didn't even use the phrase 'thin privilege,' it was the other woman who did, and they didn't even mention her. I'm not that invested in discussing thin privilege. I don't discuss thin people in my work, it's not of interest to me. But I think for her, as a thin person, she was able to discuss this in a way that was very personal to her. So they used her words and said that I said them, and this created this incredible deluge of intense misogyny and hatred on Twitter. It was fascinating because I was just like, whoa, you look really foolish, sirs! That was my reaction—all I can do is sit back and be amused and horrified. I don't need to substantiate or deny anything you have to say because you're clearly a sociopath, and I don't have to do the labour of exposing you as one because you've already done it.

I feel like that's generally my attitude: just sit back and watch the crazy theatre, because there's nothing else to be done. What's hard is that a lot of fat activists, a lot of fat people are encouraged to deeply internalize the idea that we're inferior, and we behave sometimes out of that sense of inferiority rather than just being like 'you're a bigot, and that's your problem, and I'm sorry that you exist, I'm sorry that you're a bigot.' You know, there's nothing to be done about it.

The last thing I'm going to say is that, because I'm on more 'feminine' platforms—Instagram is probably my favourite platform—and these men are such misogynists, they wouldn't dare post anything because it would threaten their sexuality or something. They wouldn't post something on Instagram because it's a feminized platform. I actually don't like Twitter because I have to be terse, and that's totally not a feminine thing! I am a highly superlatively ridiculously feminine person, so I have no interest in a platform that seeks to limit my ability to speak to 140 characters. I see Twitter as a coded masculine space. I know a lot of feminists are on Twitter, and I'm not trying to belittle their work. But for me, I interpret the medium or the platform as very masculine, and the idea that you have to convey thoughts in a short, quippy way is a very masculine thing to me. It smacks of utility and all that fucking masculinist bullshit that I don't care for. And the fact that I don't like Twitter is a protective factor because these men are such homophobes, they're unwilling to actually come to me, in my house.

So tell me more about the platforms that you *do* like to engage on. What platforms do you use a lot?

I use Instagram and Facebook almost exclusively, but I'm starting to feel a little bit out of fashion! Like everybody is on Snapchat now, but I'm kind of slow to change platforms.

And what has drawn you to those platforms?

Well, Instagram is visual, and I love to tell stories with photographs. I'm very image driven. It's also a platform that, perhaps because it's visually driven and not verbally driven, has become less of a forum for opposing opinions. I feel like I can more easily find the community that I'm interested in creating and watching. Facebook, on the other hand, I treat like a microblogging platform. Most of the time at this point, I can't afford to microblog because in general I have so many writing deadlines that, if I have an idea, I need to turn it into a 500-word essay. But I like that I can have this not-all-the-way half-baked analysis, or instead of having an argument driven or nuanced discussion, I can just vent in all caps. For example, I was just venting about the Brock Turner case in all caps. Especially considering the specificity of the work I do, and what people have come to expect of me writing-wise, I'm not gonna write a piece on Brock Turner, because I'm not in the best position to do it. There are plenty of other feminists who should be writing about it and who could do it better than I do. And yet, I would like to discuss it, I would like to discuss how it endangers me, and the specific ways in which it does so. So Facebook has become a platform where I can experiment with ideas that have not been fully developed; I use it as a sounding board in general. If I need advice, I go to Facebook and I ask people what they think I should do. It's also great as a dissemination tool. I would say like almost every person who's taken Babecamp found out about it through Facebook.

I find your comments on Instagram really intriguing, because I've noticed something similar about it. There seems to be a greater possibility for creating communities on there. Even though, logically, it should work in a way very similar to Twitter, it really doesn't. I would like to talk a little bit about your interest in visual platforms. When we look at the history of the Internet, we see that it wasn't always a visual medium, and it wasn't inevitable that it turned out to be so driven by images. I'm wondering if that aspect of the way that the Internet looks in 2016 might account, in part, for the acceleration of body positive activism online. Is there a link between the visual and this particular kind of activism? How has Instagram as a platform been connected to the rise of a more mainstream fat activism?

This goes back to something I mentioned at the beginning of this interview. For me, the coup-de-grâce of getting involved in fat activism was meeting people who were doing the thing I was interested in doing that had only been theoretical before that point. It's the embodiment element, it's the witnessing element. When someone has a body that is like yours, or close enough to yours, and you see it doing things that you've been told you cannot do, that bodies like that *do not do*, it becomes part of a body of evidence. The embodiment itself is so important: seeing people in amazing outfits, seeing how people use jewellery or use makeup, those kinds of things, are extremely important. As somebody who has watched this newest, Internet-focused iteration of fat politics emerge from nearly the inception to now—and again, fat politics isn't new at all—what's so neat is that, when it first started, there were a lot of women who didn't know any single human being, as a friend or in their community, who did that kind of activism. But when we go to the Internet and we see women, they become part of our community. I can be emboldened through their behaviour because I know that somebody else is doing it, and if I forget that, I can go back to the Internet and look, and see, and remind myself. That lone person who didn't know a single other fat girl who wore short shorts or whatever, I think that that is changing. I think that a lot of it is because people can look to somebody else and get inspiration. And to return to the feminism conversation, I think it's this deep act of intimacy between women, often, or between feminine people, that you can get inspiration from what they're doing or wearing, and make meaning for yourself.

There has also been some critique levelled against the fat activist communities on Instagram. Of course, there have been critiques from outside the community that I'm not interested in, but there have been critiques from within the community, particularly from queer women and people of colour, saying that the form that body positivity takes on Instagram is overly focused on consumerism and normative gender presentations. Many fat celebrities, as public figures, still play into a lot of traditional notions of gender performance. Do you agree that that is a face that body positivity has taken on Instagram? Or do you take issue with that critique?

I see the validity of the critique. I have problems with the consumerism argument because I don't think that consumerism and the deployment of fashion as a political tool are the same thing. Certainly, queers of colour know this. Queers of colour know that fashion has long been deployed as a political tool, especially within queer communities. In some ways, though not exclusively, queers are one of the communities that have most proactively and through necessity created codes and gestures through fashion.

I'm actually about to write about this for a journal, so this is like the preview of it: I did a very small content analysis looking at fat dyke literature in the late 1980s and the 90s and comparing it to some of the representation of largely straight white cisgender women in the fat movement now, and fascinatingly enough, these women are deploying the some kinds of aesthetics as fat dykes from the 80s and 90s. They're deploying this unapologetic use of food as a way of conveying anti-assimilation, the insistence upon sex positivity, an open sexuality, and the use of clothing—short clothing, loud clothing—except that they've de-queered it. It's funny to me, but when I look at some of the visible fat straight white women online, I see a look that is wholesale coopted from queer high femininity, and I think that a lot of people are doing it without any understanding of the political lineage of the look. This is all part of the history of straight people misinterpreting queer gestures. We know the history of that, that's a thing. And I don't think that it's done with malice; it's done with complete ignorance of the gesture.

But I thought you were gonna ask me about the homogeneity of the size of the people who have become the face of the fat movement. I have some things to say about that: it's fucked up, and it's cyclical.

Yes, it's like the body positive movement has sort of expanded acceptable bodies by one or two steps only; you can be fat, but you can be *this* fat and no fatter. It reminds me of what you were saying earlier on about the wage gap, as in, if we continue with the system of 'some bodies are okay and some bodies are not' and just slightly expand the circle of what bodies are okay, we haven't actually done anything to the system.

Right! And I think that's what's so hard—there's almost a depoliticization of fat politics that's happening. When something that had been deeply political becomes unseated from that politic, becomes something you can take on or take off like a garment, that's when things become really scary. What I've noticed getting a lot of traction specifically within fat visibility is a focus on beauty. For example, I was tracking different hashtags and I was fascinated to find that #effyourbeautystandards has over a million tags on Instagram. It's interesting to linguistically break down the phrase "eff your beauty standards," like the choice of the infantilized "eff" rather than "fuck," which is kind of this weird nod to respectability, and then "your"—it's talking to somebody outside the movement, I guess. And then this invocation of beauty. If you're trying to get justice and your vehicle is beauty, then that's not going to work out for you.

On the one hand, I'm *not* surprised that the beauty thing is happening. On the other hand, I sort of see this as part of an ideological progression. I think there are some people who will always be obsessed with the beauty thing, and they're not going to move past that. And they're always going to be the ones who get the most traction, because they're activating a tenet of our current society that's very powerful. But the people who really resonate with that beauty message for a few years might become the people who ultimately identify more as open feminists later on.

I just wanted to tease open, at least to some degree, the fact that even within the community of body positivity on a platform like Instagram, there are still forms of conflict and resistance. There are politicized debates within the community about what it means to be fat positive or what it means to be fat or what it means to fuck with beauty standards. So, my last question is: is there anything that you think is pertinent to this topic that I haven't brought up?

One of the things that I found really cool, when I really looked at what fat activism was doing online: from the most assimilationist gestures to the most radical, they all had one thing in common, which is that they demanded the fat body is permanent. And I found that really surprising! I was kind of amazed. It's arguable that they're saying that but they're conveying a different thing visually. I could buy into that argument or be convinced. But largely, it's a big deal that all the way from the top to the bottom, they're all saying that fatness is a thing that's not going away. That's a thing that just kind of struck me. I think we've hit a pivotal tipping

point in fat politics now; where there had been maybe a few traceable ideologies I think there's going to become even more and I'm a little excited and a little scared to see what's next.

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The Unpaid Labour of Love: Rebecca Blakey, Natalie Childs, KL, and Cynthia Spring on behalf of *GUTS CANADIAN FEMINIST MAGAZINE*

GUTS is a digital, volunteer-run Canadian feminist magazine and blog. Its biannual magazine publishes literary essays and reviews, long-form journalism, interviews, fiction, and new media to further feminist discourse, criticism, and community engagement in Canada. The blog regularly posts informal and accessible content featuring up-and-coming feminist projects and persons of interest, short essays, prose, letters, reviews, updates, and rants.

Interview by Rebecca Blakey (Senior Editor), Natalie Childs (Senior Editor and Managing Blog Editor), KL (Editor), Cynthia Spring (C-Founding Editor and Managing Editor) with Marcelle Kosman (University of Alberta)

Rebecca Blakey: Do you want us to ask the questions and then answer them? I can ask KL the first question.

Kosman: You know what, why not?

RB: Who are you, what do you do, and why do you do it?

KL: We are *GUTS*, an open-access, volunteer-run Canadian feminist magazine and blog. Our editorial collective is comprised of ten people with varying levels of responsibilities from social media to copy-editing, editorial managing, and blog. Representing that collective during this interview are: Rebecca Blakey (Senior Editor), Cynthia Spring (Co-Founding Editor and Managing Editor), Natalie Childs (Senior Editor and Managing Blog Editor), and me, KL (Editor). We all use she/her pronouns.

We produce a bi-annual online magazine and a blog. We are involved with *GUTS* because we are inspired by the wide range of thought and experience that exists within the young so-called Canadian feminist movement and we want to create and maintain an accessible forum for these feminisms to correspond with one another. We also want to support and work with *emerging* writers and artists and make space for those stories, perspectives, and theoretical approaches that are not being published in mainstream media. Speaking personally, that platform—making space for the voices excluded from mainstream media—is what brings me to *GUTS* and it's something that *GUTS* does really well. Like everything, media is unevenly distributed and what we do is give a megaphone to voices that are urgent and important to current discourses on feminism.

As a magazine we create a public; because it's online, it is publicly available and as such is open to the kinds of interactions that take place in public settings. It's important to *GUTS* to be interactive and to have our readership engaged with us—and us with them. It's a discursive space; a space of writing, of thoughtfulness; a platform in which our contributors can really take

up space that might otherwise be unavailable to them. Since oppression is unevenly distributed and can be really generalized, having a discursive form gives our writers a place to parse terms like 'systemic' and 'institutionalized,' demonstrating for readers the ways these oppressions are uneven, and our adversaries various. And, just as forms of oppression are not uniform, forms of feminism are not uniform, so *GUTS* strives for intersectional feminisms that can speak to one another.

Kosman: I really like this non-hierarchical approach to interviewing. KL, do you want to ask the next question?

KL: Natalie, what is the connection between the magazine and the blog? Why are they separate, and what does having them separated allow *GUTS* to do?
NC: What connects them is fairly straightforward, but has and will continue to change over time; *GUTS* has the same vision for the kinds of work being published on both the blog and in the magazine, even though the genres and forms of those works varies. The separation of the blog and magazine is the subject of ongoing conversations, but currently there are two main reasons: for editorial purposes, the first reason we keep them separate so that we can publish longer-form work on focused topics in the magazine, allowing the pieces in each issue to speak to one another; the blog, on the other hand, allows us more flexibility to publish shorter, topical pieces that wouldn't necessarily relate to one another, but could respond to current events. The second reason is financial. The granting bodies that help fund us restrict the allocation of funds to the work of 'magazines' (they're magazine grants) and are specific about not funding 'blog' content, so none of that money can go towards blog pieces. As a result, we've had to draw a stronger line between them; since we have fewer resources for the blog, the selection and editing processes for those pieces are slightly less rigorous. We're often curious, though, about whether our readers draw the lines between the two as clearly as we do.

KL: Rebecca, can you describe how *GUTS* understands its feminism, or what our feminist praxis is?
RB: As a collective, I understand *GUTS*'s feminism to be anti-oppressive, which is to say that it is anti-white supremacist, anti-cissupremacist, anti-heterosupremacist, anti-misogynist, anti-ableist, anti-colonial, and anti-capitalist. Its mission statement is also a feminist one in that *GUTS* hopes to provide insight into the systemic forces and intersecting oppressions that isolate and endanger women and trans people in so-called Canada.

Our feminist praxis functions as both the theory behind the magazine and how we do business *as* a magazine in that we prioritize soliciting authors who write on these forces and oppressions from lived experiences. This praxis is also present in our editorial model of actively eschewing 'cultivation,' which we understand to mean the superseding of editors' agency or 'expertise' over that of the authors, and we actively resist the erasures implicit in such a power arrangement. We instead adopt a model of peer- or co-editing to help the author's voice and ideas to come through as clearly as possible, in all of their complexity, nuance, and strength rather than dictate our expectations for that piece onto that writer.

KL: Rebecca, what kinds of resistance has *GUTS* encountered to its presence online? How have you negotiated that resistance?
RB: We are very lucky in that we have encountered little to no resistance to our presence online. On our website, we have control over what comments are approved or not approved, and the editors have the power to close comments on articles where moderating is too demanding. On Twitter, we tend not to engage with inflammatory egg accounts or people just trying to be funny. On Facebook and Instagram, because those comments are potentially permanent to visitors of the page, *GUTS* editors tend to engage with trolling in kind, either from the magazine's account or from our individual accounts. For example, on Facebook we had posted an interview with this person doing cool stuff related to gender equity at the University of Waterloo, and a dude commented: 'Think I figured out why these articles sound so vacant…[the interviewee in the article] sounds like a hipster talking about hipster shit.' I replied: 'thanks for ur contribution! perhaps u can leverage ur deep understanding of vacancy into a successful career as a landlord :)' and he didn't answer because I was just being cunty in kind.

Another great example occurred recently on Instagram where a dude commented on an article about white supremacy in the cosplaying community, writing: 'Masculinity is a pillar of western (European/White)

culture, that's just the way we are. Stop oppressing me shitlord.' Natalie responded: 'thanks for your insight :)' and, like the previous example, he didn't answer.
Our priority is always that we'll engage with something if it demonstrates to our readers and authors that we have your back. We never want a situation where an author feels like they don't have our support. We stand behind our authors one hundred per cent.

Now I have a question for KL!

KL: OK!

RB: KL, who do you understand to be included in the *GUTS* community? How has *GUTS* actively worked to shape that community?
KL: We believe our community to include any current or former reader, writer, supporter, editor—anyone who has contributed to *GUTS* in any way. We shape and grow our community by soliciting work from authors and artists we love, linking to them and saying thank you publically in link roundups.

RB: Every Sunday we publish a list of links to exciting feminist shit happening on the Internet, and when we tweet about the list, we include the Twitter handles of those authors and creators, and we thank them for their work. When they respond, it gives us the opportunity to tell them we love their work and invite them to contribute to *GUTS*. At the discretion of the editors involved, we'll also engage kindly with people who take earnest umbrage with something we need to clarify or defend, or with those who genuinely want to learn.

KL: We choose topics for the magazine that we think would be of interest to the publics we want included in our community, so our calls for submissions and our issues also shape the community. Similarly, we foster communication and discourse by engaging online with like- minded publications. We really see that as expanding our community, even if we're only connected to them by shared politics.

RB: That's a super good point. We're really good Internet-friends with *cléo*; we're tight with *Briarpatch*…

KL: We've been linked to by *Bitch* and *The Toast*…

Natalie Childs: And we see all these publications as collaborators, not as competitors. We're excited about venues publishing good work.

KL: Cynthia, does *GUTS* have a public or audience that extends beyond its community? How do you negotiate that public?
Cynthia Spring: We're still negotiating our relationship with those who, as a result of their life experiences, have a complicated relationship to feminism. Members of this public might be people who care about feminist issues, but don't feel knowledgeable enough to join the conversation or are unsure if they themselves are in fact feminists; they might also be cis men, or people who are negotiating their own masculinity, or people who very reasonably don't identify as 'feminists' per se.

As a magazine, we're dedicated to thinking through how patriarchy and misogyny are systemic and, along with other systems of oppression, affect *everyone*, and we hope to have more engaging interactions with these audiences online. A successful example of this is the advice column, 'Dear BB,' that responded to a reader's question about how to fight rape culture as a cis man. These types of 'how to' resources are well received and we think provide an entry point into both the conversation and the rest of the content we publish. In exchange, we expect these audiences to take the time to learn how to listen to the complicated and personal stories that we publish, communicating these very lessons. As a result, we are not terribly patient with people who come to *GUTS* for explanations, but are not willing to actually hear what our contributors are saying.

RB: That happened in the comments thread for both 'That Guy Who Isn't You' and 'Dear BB: Dudes in Rape Culture.' Both of these articles have closed comment sections because they filled up with disingenuous questions from dudes wanting tailored advice for every possible situation they might find themselves in. Like, maybe one day, they'll get to a place where they can handle a systemic critique, but we can't take on the personal responsibility of educating them until they do. We all support and encourage each other to have solid boundaries when it comes to doing this work, especially when that work is so exhausting and entirely unremunerated.

CS: We recognize that marginalized people are often

expected to provide proof of their oppression or to offer resources on how to be good allies, and we want to resist those expectations.

RB: And similarly there are numerous authors whose experiences we do not share and therefore we are unable to answer on their behalf—but that doesn't mean *they* are responsible for further educating readers. We often append to our articles a list of relevant titles for further reading. You read the piece; you can do your own education.

NC: A lot of the pieces we publish ask readers to do some work in coming to and understanding the article.

RB: Cynthia, what are the affordances and restrictions of working online?
CS: Working online allows us to produce content quickly; it's less expensive than printing, which makes it possible to pay our writers and artists an honorarium; and it allows us to work from anywhere.

Working online also affords us the ability to participate in an online conversation that many people are contributing to right now. But, at the same time, we are aware that we live in an era where readers expect a high level of content for free and without advertising. This requires us to be constantly thinking up creative solutions for remaining open-access, ad-free, and independent, while continuing to be able to pay our writers—and, maybe one day, pay ourselves.

We currently get all our money from grants and donations, and this allows us to pay our writers and cover basic costs, but we're still unable to pay the editors for their work. While this is a problem faced by a lot of independent online magazines (the problems are different for print), it's incredibly important to us, as a feminist magazine, to pay our editors and contributors fairly for their work because that labour is feminized and precarious and under-valued. So far, a universal basic living wage appears to be the best solution.

RB: We tweet at Prime Minister Justin Trudeau regularly.

CS: Natalie, what is the role of digital technology in *GUTS*? What tools, platforms, sites, etc. do you work with?

NC: Something that's really important to the *GUTS* origin story is that the founders, Nadine Adelaar and Cynthia Spring, built the *GUTS* website in 2013 using WordPress Content management system. Nadine and Cynthia spent a lot of time developing the design and structure of the website and now, in addition to managing it, Nadine is in the process of building us a new one to address the evolving needs of the blog and magazine.

As a digital magazine, everything we do is implicated in digital technology. We rely heavily on social media platforms to promote our content because overwhelmingly that's where we see new readers learning about *GUTS*. Facebook is the main platform we use, but TinyLetter, Instagram, Slack, and Twitter are all tools we use in building our brand and getting readers to the site and accessing content.

Kosman: What's TinyLetter? It sounds very hip and I'm very old.

NC: It's a way of sending newsletters. Right now, we're primarily using it for calls for submissions, not so much for distributing content (but that's something we might do in the future). As a far-flung editorial collective, we also rely a lot on Slack, which is a group chat app that allows us to discuss and keep organized a range of topics despite our geographic distance.

RB: Natalie, can you describe your collective editorial practice? Why is collectivity important to *GUTS*?
NC: Collectivity is hugely important for the sustainability of this project—specifically our ability to continue doing this work—and for maintaining the quality of the magazine and blog. We aren't a non-hierarchical organization; we have different roles and responsibilities, and we trust one another in those roles to make decisions. At the same time, we're always there for each other when one of us needs help with or is unsure about something.

In practical terms, the editorial collective process for each issue entails discussing and choosing the topic together, and then we write a call for submissions. After the submission deadline, we each review every submission and then, through an extensive process, we narrow them down to the ones for the issue. Each accepted piece is assigned an editor who collaborates one on one with the writer thereafter. Cynthia has been our

managing editor for the last few issues, which means she coordinates between editors and writers, copy-editors, and artists to get everyone in on deadline.

Supporting one another is crucial to working collectively, and a lot of that is providing one another with emotional support. The editorial process can be extremely draining, especially when we're dealing with triggering or sensitive issues, so having peers who understand what you're working on and its importance means that they can assist you in both technical and emotional ways. Support also means challenging assumptions that we hold and helping each other work through those preconceptions.

It's important to acknowledge that our respective abilities to participate in the production of the magazine and the blog change over the years because *GUTS* is a volunteer project. On a practical level, then, working in a collective allows us to shift roles—new people come in, others step back—in order to accommodate the changes happening in other parts of our lives.

RB: The insatiable demand for labour, energy, and resources is just misogyny. Feminized people are expected to work for free and love it, so it's very complicated to exist at this intersection where I love the work that I do for *GUTS*—I love the work that we *all* do for *GUTS*—but I understand that this unpaid labour is complicit in a misogynist system. As long as people are willing to do the work unpaid, people will continue to insist that that work be done for free.

I also want to acknowledge that we're very lucky to have the support of our community. We had a massively successful Patreon campaign, and now we can afford an increase in the rate we pay our writers! I was floored by how quickly people committed to funding *GUTS*.

KL: And the rate that we pay our writers is tops. $100 per article is more than a lot of literary magazines—if you get paid anything—so we're really proud of that.

Kosman: I have to say that it has been an absolute pleasure for me to watch the four of you interview yourselves. Thank you all for the opportunity to learn more about *GUTS* and your feminist praxis.

The Difference a Gender Makes

Marcy Cook Is a writer of short stories, articles, and comics. She's also a transgender advocate and diversity advisor. When not randomly slapping words together, she's a semi-professional cat wrangler with an insatiable lust for Lego, a sci-fi geek, comic book fan, and avid reader. Her work has appeared in *The Mary Sue*, *Panels*, *Fresh Romance*, and more. Follow her on Twitter: @marcyjcook.

Abstract

This article demonstrates the different ways men and women are treated online and the consequences of coming under social media attack. Through numerous examples and personal experience from the unique perspective of a transgender woman who has experienced the Internet as a man and a woman.

Résumé

Cet article démontre les différentes façons dont les hommes et les femmes sont traités en ligne et les conséquences des attaques subies dans les médias sociaux. Il le fait au travers de nombreux exemples et d'expériences personnelles, selon la perspective unique d'une femme transgenre qui a fait l'expérience de l'Internet en tant qu'homme et en tant que femme.

We were on a weekend away and I was walking hand in hand on a beach with my spouse when my phone twittered at me, then again, and again. When I finally found my phone in my bag, I was already dreading what would be on the screen as nothing positive was likely to elicit this flurry of tweets. My fear was confirmed as I looked at the screen and realised that an article I'd written had been picked up by a men's rights group and my Twitter feed was filled with homophobia, misogyny, and transmisogyny.

My gender is central to who I am; as a transgender woman, I've spent so much of my life fighting for it. Transgender people who transition from across the gender spectrum have more insight on the social impact of gender than cisgender people do, as our lived experience shows us how society interacts with gender presentation. Many transgender people don't adhere to normative gender roles, but those who do have experience vital to understanding how gender is lived in society. In my case, I transitioned from assigned male at birth to living life as a woman. The difference in how I was treated before and after transitioning is what I refer to as *social whiplash*.

How the world interacts with you depends on the gender you present to it. When you change that presentation, everything shifts and transgender people are assumed to be magically able to understand and navigate the societal impacts of these changes. We can't, of course. This is the social whiplash of changing something so fundamental as how society as a whole perceives you. We have to go through a period of floundering while we learn how to interact with the world from our new position. It's incredibly difficult and affects every aspect of our lives.

When I shattered society's perceptions and presented as the real me, an openly bisexual transgender woman, I realised I was no longer a member of the shoal. Watching them swim away, suddenly I was in a much smaller group eyed hungrily by predators. In these situations, re-learning how to interact online can

very literally be a case of life and death. Once my appearance became central to how men judged me, perceiving me and my views circumspect and dismissable due to my gender, I found that my online safety moved from something I'd never had to consider to my main priority. How I was able to use the Internet had changed; what I did, said, and presented all had a different consequence with higher stakes.

The Internet is an amphitheatre of the grotesque where perceived anonymity, if not actual anonymity, turns otherwise merely obnoxious boys and men into something highly toxic and dangerous. Minorities have to face this toxicity without fail and without choice. When people assumed I was a heteronormative male, I could do anything online and never worry too much about the consequences. Uploading my photo was something I could do on a whim; correcting or critiquing a man was never a problem. I was viewed as part of the majority, unknowingly swimming safe within the shoal.

Social media has become an abuse enabler that enhances the emotions of its users through the formation of opinion bubbles. Anyone disagreeing with the groupthink within the bubble is open to attack. This behaviour creates an echo chamber feedback loop that reinforces and amplifies the groupthink, regardless of facts or social decency. An example of this is the 2016 United States election: Donald Trump's supporter base used emotion to process information with no regard for facts. Fuelled by Twitter's famed inability to police its product, the bigots on Twitter grew loud and dangerous.

As a woman, my views no longer held the same weight they used to—a shift that many transgender women have experienced. It can work the other way too; after neurobiologist Ben Barres transitioned to male, he discovered some surprising reactions to his work, as shown in his interview published in the *Washington Post* (Vedantam 2006). After a presentation and a discussion, he heard another scientist remark: "Ben Barnes gave a great seminar today, but then his work is much better than his sister's." Ben does not have a sister; the other scientist was talking about Ben before he transitioned. Ben's skills as a scientist hadn't changed, but his gender presentation had become male, which in turn shifted the perception of his work. A study by Corinne Moss-Racusin et al. (2012) published in *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America* (*PNAS*) produced similar results. The study sent out duplicate resumes to potential employers and only changed the gender of the name (Carroll 2012). The resume that had a feminine name on it always scored lower than the masculine one. Society suffers from an inherent cultural bias where men are seen as inherently more valuable than women.

This is also shown by the rise of the online phenomenon of mansplaining, which I only experienced after my transition. Suddenly, men thought that I couldn't possibly be an expert on any subject and, regardless of their level of knowledge compared to mine, I needed them to explain the topic to me. I experienced other changes in behaviour too: if I expressed anger, it was more readily dismissed and deemed infantile, or joked about as 'that time of the month,' even though I don't have a period and never will. It was as though I had discarded my perceived value in society alongside my masculinity.

Outspoken women, and especially transgender women, have become targets online and these attacks can have life changing consequences. A number of women have been doxed (meaning their personal details are released online, usually including an address) for speaking out in favour of feminism or against online abuse, even for voicing an opinion about a movie or video game. Sexual and physical threats follow and frequently include death threats. In May 2017, a Canadian transgender cartoonist, Sophie Labelle, was forced to leave her home after she was doxed during an attack fuelled by transmisogyny, for no reason other than she draws an online comic about a transgender girl (Colley 2017).

The severity of abuse increases with intersections and those who are at the most risk of online and physical abuse are transgender women of colour. Other common types of abuse faced by transgender women include cissexism, homophobia, ableism, and fatphobia. The transphobia towards transgender women in particular is remarkable because of what it says about patriarchal culture. Transgender women who have rejected masculinity bring into question the perceived value of manhood. Some men take this rejection of masculinity as a slight against it, and their fragile masculinity leads them to become abusive.

I've experienced attacks in response to my on-

line articles and it's shocking how often abuse from men is peppered with threats; I had a half hour hate video made about me, which Google has steadfastly refused to remove from YouTube. When you're a cisgender heteronormative white male, putting your opinion online is a simple matter, done without thought because the odds of suffering from society's perception of you are slight. When you're a woman, particularly a woman from a minority, to be outspoken online is an act of rebellion and bravery.

I went through a period of four years when I never used a picture of myself online due to the fear of being attacked online or in person. I only broke this rule when I started raising money to help cover my surgery costs here in Canada. I became more careful with what I said online, yet no matter what I say, my words are policed. It is a truism for all transgender people online that having an audience means anything you say can be analysed and used against you.

It remains the case that many police forces are ignorant in dealing with online hate crime. Laws are frequently fragmented or just not enforced, leading to an investigation rate of just 9% of online hate crimes reported in the UK in 2016 (Laville 2016). No recent data is available for Canada. I was on a committee whose goals included fostering better relations between the police and the LGBTQ2 community and I asked how our local police would respond to swatting (which is a fake call to emergency services to get the police to arrive at your house with guns drawn). My local police had never heard of the term and seemed very confused as to why I'd be worried about this.

Social media companies need to start enforcing the terms of service we all sign up to; Facebook, Twitter and Google have pretty strict guidelines against sexual or gender based abuse, but they are rarely (if ever) enforced. I've reported many instances of abuse across all three social media behemoths and almost never succeeded in getting explicit abuse removed from the Internet. It seems that only in the most blatant cases of abuse is action taken, and this is usually when the abuse targets a celebrity and the news media get involved.

The most privileged group of men, white heteronormative cis-men, need to speak out against online abuse against women wherever they see it. Online bros are perpetuating abuse and rape culture and it has to stop. Women are the most frequent victims of online abuse and it's women who are leading the pushback against it. It may seem a gargantuan task, but remember that King Kong was tamed by Fay Ray, a woman who achieved what men couldn't do; women change the world.

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How It Feels to Be Wired In: On the Digital Cyborg Politics of Mental Disability

Isla Ng earned her BA in philosophy from Hamilton College in 2016. Her senior capstone project *The Meaning of Community Online: Applying Wittgensteinian Feminism to Online Identity* was selected to be presented at the First Women's Philosophy Conference at MSU Denver. She currently works at Oxford University Press as assistant to the Executive Editor of Philosophy.

Abstract

This article explores the ways dominant theories of the online self depend on ableist assumptions about mind and embodiment. By drawing from disability studies critiques of Cyborg Manifesto, I suggest that the oft-romanticized notion of digital hybridity assumes a non-disabled subject, and consequently renders the relationship between mentally disabled people and digital technology problematic.

Résumé

Cet article explore la manière dont les théories dominantes de l'identité électronique dépendent d'hypothèses fondées sur les capacités physiques par rapport à l'esprit et à l'incarnation. En m'inspirant de critiques d'études sur les handicaps portant sur le Manifeste cyborg, je suggère que la notion d'hybridité numérique, souvent romancée, suppose un sujet non handicapé et rend par conséquent problématique la relation entre les personnes ayant une déficience mentale et la technologie numérique.

> The cyborg is always more than human—and never risks to be seen as subhuman. To put it simply, the cyborg is not disabled.
>
> –Tobin Siebers (2008, 63)

Introduction

In a 2010 TED Talk titled "We are all cyborgs now" anthropologist Amber Case addresses concerns surrounding the increasing use of cellphones and social media, arguing against the notion that the rise of digital technology use over the last ten years signals the domination of technology over humanity. She argues that humanity still survives as it always has, but that now it simply functions with the help of digital tools. "And so this is the important point that I like to study," she says, "that things are beautiful, that it's still a human connection—it's just done in a different way." Case describes communication tools as distinct from tools that came before in that "now what we're looking at is not an extension of the physical self, but an extension of the *mental self*, and because of that, we're able to travel faster, communicate differently" [my emphasis]. The image of the internet as a highway for the extended human mind promises many undeniably positive outcomes, particularly the extension of social consciousness across geographic space. These positive outcomes, as Case rightly wants us to understand, are not invalidated by the artificial digital nature of the technology that allows them. In this paper however, I seek to focus on and interrogate the theoretical process that must take place for minds to, as we tend to conceptualize it, extend across digital space.

How exactly does the human mind, if we chose to understand it in this way, get transported via digital vehicles? Does this occur naturally and seamlessly or is this process subject to malfunction? If so, are some minds better suited to it than others? If we are to think of, as Case (2010) says, the digital self as an "extension" of

the mind, I want to bring to light those minds that have already been rendered brittle and fragile within their social and rhetorical contexts. This article explores the ways dominant theories of digital life depend on ableist assumptions about mind and embodiment. I argue that the oft-romanticized notion of digital hybridity assumes a non-disabled subject and consequently renders the relationship between mentally disabled people and digital technology problematic. The overall goal of this article is to explore how mentally disabled people's embodied knowledge can provide new models of digital life that allow for fluidity as well as self-preservation and self-determination. I suggest that an acceptance of diverse minds allows for a more inclusive internet, one that does not force its users to compromise their real identities.

Although this article is about mental disability, the crux of my analysis draws primarily from the writings of disability studies scholars Tobin Siebers (2008) and Alison Kafer (2013) who have written primarily about physical disability. Throughout this paper, I draw from their work without making this distinction, in part because I believe their political conclusions are universal and also because mental and physical disability are intertwined. I use the term "mental disability" for the reasons disability studies scholar Margaret Price (2011) does in her book *Mad at School:*

> …this term can include not only madness, but also cognitive and intellectual dis/abilities of various kinds. I would add that it might also include 'physical' illnesses accompanied by mental effects (for example, the 'brain fog' that attends many autoimmune diseases, chronic pain, and chronic fatigue)…We should keep in mind its potential congruence with sensory and other kinds of disabilities—that is, its commonalities with 'people for whom access to human interaction is problematic.' (19)

Like Price, I use the term mental *disability* to reflect a political affinity with all people with disabilities and to reflect the ways in which I see mental disability as an embodied experience rather than as a set of symptoms or qualia. "Mental disability" acts as an umbrella term for all mental disorders, including those that might in other contexts be referred to as neurodiverse or neuro-atypical. I contend that the central tenets of disability theory, which laid the groundwork for abolishing the concept of minds and bodies as possessing flaws or deficits in favor of framing human variation as a political and cultural identity and/or experience, have much to offer contemporary discourse on mental disability and identity more broadly.

This article is divided into roughly two parts. In the first half, I present disability theory critiques of the cyborg figure and assert that these critiques also map onto the abstract fetishization of some forms of mental disorders. Here I focus primarily on the idea that mental disability has been appropriated as an analogy by which to rationalize digitally-saturated life, usually in a way that reinforces normative ideas about the separations between mind, self, and technology. I argue that this rhetorical practice has concrete political consequences for people with mental disabilities and also bypasses disability as a potential source of knowledge. The second half of the article discusses the fundamentals of the public theory of mental disability that allow for it to be appropriated in the first place and what a new theory would have to do into order to mitigate appropriation. By drawing on a philosophical affinity between Siebers' (2008) and Linda Martín Alcoff's (2006) work on embodiment, I maintain that a new theory of mental disability must, in part by taking the lead from people with physical disabilities, emphasize the body as a source of knowledge. This also dovetails with feminist media scholarship that has problematized the liberal humanist ideal of post-race, post-gender online anonymity. While this article does not provide extensive solutions to the ideological mistreatment of mental disability in practice, it seeks to critically inject mental disability into the discourse on online identity.

The Problem with Cyborgs

In her chapter, "The Cyborg and the Crip: Critical Encounters," Kafer (2013) traces the rhetorical relationship between disability theory and Donna Haraway's (2000) "Cyborg Manifesto" and its philosophical legacy. Kafer highlights how people with disabilities often take on the role as the ultimate exemplar of cyborgism, yet their personal accounts and political activism are strangely absent in the vast deployments of the cyborg figure. In "Cyborg Manifesto," Haraway, Kafer points out, raises the subject of disability herself. "Perhaps paraplegics and other severely handicapped [sic] people can (and sometimes do) have the most intense experiences of complex hybridization with other communication devices" (Haraway 2000, 313). Yet this

reference to people with disabilities does not signal a turn in Haraway's essay, but an aside. "Once Haraway moves into discussions about political identification, or shifting affinities, or future formations, disability and the disabled figure drop away altogether" (Kafer 2013, 115). Kafer argues that the figure of the cyborg from the manifesto rhetorically depends on an idealized, depoliticized treatment of disability. "Disability may be a site of 'complex hybridization,' and disabled bodies may exemplify the cyborg, but their cyborgization appears as a type set apart from the rest of the cyborg politics discussed here" (113). Kafer sees potential for the cyborg figure, which has undergone extensive and constructive critique since the manifesto's publication and she credits it as being one of the first entry points of disability theory into critical theory. Her critique, which I seek to build on, is powerful because it shows that metaphors about disability are taken for granted even in the most critical texts.

Kafer's (2013), as well as Tobin Sieber's (2008) disability studies critiques of the cyborg, have led me to question the inclusivity of the narrative of digital hybridization, typified by Case's 2010 TED Talk that is casually taken for granted in progressive discourse on digitally-saturated life. This critique encourages us to consider how the blending of technology and the human body becomes problematized if we choose to broaden our understanding of what bodies looks like and how they function. Kafer (2013) asserts that, while cyborg narratives often may seem to celebrate difference, they tend to reproduce the cyborg/non-cyborg dichotomy, which stand respectively for disabled and nondisabled. "In news stories, 'cyborg' represents the melding of pure body and pure machine; there is an original purity that, thanks to assistive technology, has only now been mixed, hybridized, blurred" (108). Kafer argues persuasively that there exists an intrinsic rhetorical link between disability and popular cyborg myths. "Cyborg qualities become markers of difference, suggesting an essential difference between disabled people and nondisabled people" (110). While not all cyborg myths allude to disability, and not all disabled people are considered cyborgs, there exists an overlapping set of beliefs about the human relationship with technology between cyborgs and the "ideology of ability" (Siebers 2008, 9). Not the least among these is the belief that some bodies are pure, normal, and whole while others are not and that assistive technology should be viewed as prosthesis for some and not others. I believe Kafer's analysis cuts to some very fundamental truths about the figure of the cyborg, which also apply to the social construction of mental disability in digital space.

I argue that insofar it has been integrated into the mainstream rhetoric of online identity, mental disability has been represented as a set of metaphors divorced from the experiences of mentally disabled people. To explore this hypothesis, I analyze the media portrayal of Attention Deficit Hyperactive Disorder (ADHD) and Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). The public perception of both of these disorders over the last two decades has often been wrapped up in contemporaneous public concern over digital technology's impact on the human condition. As a result, ADHD and ASD have been used as mythologies through which to rationalize a changing and unsettling social environment. I see this as an analog to the use of physically disabled people in the construction of the cyborg figure both in Haraway's (2000) essay and more broadly. Kafer's (2013) analysis lays the groundwork for thinking about how images of disability often fill in the conceptual gaps that persist in cultural and philosophical analysis. Disability theory asks us to recognize how often we rely on images of people with disabilities to conceptualize post-modern fragmentation and self-contradiction. I want to explore what happens to our concept of digital life when we refuse to do this.

While other theorists have pointed out that ADHD and ASD have been used as explanations or scapegoats for cultural shifts in the digital age, I choose to focus on the more existential reasons for the preoccupation with mental disability. I argue that changes in digital culture have destabilized the liberal humanist concept of self (Smith and Watson 2014), resulting in existential anxiety and insecurity. The tokenistic mainstream acceptance of high functioning and otherwise privileged people with mental disabilities, combined with the indeterminacy of diagnosis, has allowed some forms of mental disability to exit the political and/or medical realm and enter the allegorical realm. I suggest that this aestheticization of mental disability misappropriates the real alienation from conventional selfhood experienced by people with mental disabilities. While the rhetoric that tells mentally disabled people that they cannot perform

selfhood and rationality correctly stems from systemic, institutionalized ableism, the subsequent appropriation of mental disability removes it from the political realm. As Kafer's (2013) critique argues, this kind of depoliticization fetishizes and erases people with disabilities and has concrete political consequences. While the same is true of mental disability, for the purposes of this paper, I am more interested in the nuances of how mental disability gets appropriated by the ideology of digital technology. Subsequently, I ask what consequences this has for the online experience.

ADHD and the Mental Experience of Digital Media

In a *Washington Post* article titled "Is the Internet Giving Us All ADHD?," Caitlin Dewey (2015) discusses psychological theories that posit that "otherwise healthy" peoples' use of the internet might be causing them to "experience symptoms of ADHD":

> After all, when you think about it, the Internet essentially promises two things: instant gratification and an endless, varied, hyper-stimulating buffet of entertainment and information options. If you don't like one thing within the first five seconds, you can…jump to something else. The Internet, it turns out, incentivizes the exact types of behaviors and thought processes that characterize ADHD. (n.p.)

Much coverage of ADHD since 2010 has hovered around the question of whether the internet and cellphones have increased the prominence of the disorder, despite the fact that scientific research strongly suggests that ADHD is neurobiological, innate, and genetically-linked (Solden 2012). While most writers do not go so far as to claim that digital technology causes the disorder, they nonetheless fixate on the idea that cellphones and the internet cause "ADHD-like" symptoms in adults and adolescents. Dewey's (2015) article and others like it, including "Researchers Say That Smartphones Are Causing ADHD-Like Symptoms in Adults" in *Vice* (Kivanc 2016), "ADHD and the relentless internet—is there a connection?" in *The Guardian* (Kiss 2015), and "ADHD: Is Our Information Culture the Cause?" in *Huffington Post* (Poldrack 2010), implicitly or explicitly insist that engagement with ADHD is a preferable framework through which to understand technology's social impact, despite admitting that there is no evidence of an empirical link between the disorder and these technologies.

Even when pressed to find different ways to explain new digital experiences, some writers hold steadfast to ADHD as the explanation. In response to a *New York Times* article titled "Untangling the Myths of Attention Disorder" by pediatrician Perri Klass M.D. (2010) that attempted to clarify that ADHD is not learned, but neurobiological, Russell Poldrack (2010) of *Huffington Post* retorted that we still need to consider "cultural ADHD":

> What about 'cultural ADHD?' It's clear (at least to me) that the inability to focus that is being driven by the speed and richness of our informational environment bears at least some resemblance to the inattention that marks ADHD. For example, some of the diagnostic markers for ADHD in the DSM-IV…include 'often has trouble keeping attention on tasks,' 'often avoids, dislikes, or doesn't want to do things that take a lot of mental effort for a long period,' and 'is often easily distracted.' Sound familiar? (n.p.)

Writers such as these do not claim to be talking about the disorder per se, but still insist on playing with the idea of the disorder to discuss the character and behaviors of the people around them. Given that each of these writers must clarify that they do not mean *actual* ADHD, but rather "cultural ADHD" or "something like ADHD," it raises the question of why they would find it expedient to refer to the disorder at all. This preoccupation with ADHD also seems to extend beyond the desire for clinical diagnosis. The media fixation on ADHD in recent years does not necessarily resemble a diagnostic, positivistic scavenger hunt in which ADHD and ADHDers are put under a telescope. The focus on the disorder persists *in spite of* the acceptance that ADHD has existed far before it was named and that it has more to do with brain chemistry and genetics than culture (Solden 2012). Rather than positing technology as the explanation for the rise ADHD, I would argue that, inversely, this discussion employs this non-psychiatric cultural specter of ADHD as an explanation for our experiences with and in technology.

The preference for ADHD as the lens through which to discuss digitally-mediated subjectivity seems to reveal a desire to describe that subjectivity not just in terms of culture or place, but as a mental experience. These articles imply that the internet does not just allow for increased information, but it also shapes how we experience the world and how our minds function on a fundamental level. Intriguingly, the multimedia and

the dynamic and rapidly changing nature of the internet is, to at least some people, most aptly described as the experience of a mentally disabled person. While it is important that journalists recognize that actual ADHD is not merely a learned behavior caused by video games and social media, this distinction between ADHD and "something like ADHD" does relatively little to mitigate harm to people with ADHD. This is one, because it allows anyone who thinks they understand what ADHD is to speak on it with authority, decentering the voices of ADHDers, and two, because they frame inattention and hyperactivity as inherent flaws that symbolize the ills of contemporary society, making it difficult for ADHDers to describe their symptoms on their own terms.

I would argue that on a deeper level this presentation of ADHD diverts attention (ironically) from the destabilizing and existentially troubling effects of digital immersion. The relegation of digital experiences to the language of diagnosis and/or pathology avoids the need to construct a detailed cultural theory of digital technology and the role it plays in life. As Tobin Siebers (2008) puts it, "disability has served throughout history to symbolize other problems in society. Oedipus's clubfoot signifies his hubris and overreaching. Tiresias's blindness symbolizes his gift of prophecy" (48). Here, ADHD provides a myth, even if we do not believe it to be factual, by which to rationalize a new form of life. As I will also explore in the next section, the fetishization of mental disability in the public sphere does not always mean the direct stereotyping of people with a given disorder. Mental disorders seem to lend themselves to being cast as moral archetypes that can act out the complex themes of contemporary life. But they can only do so when it is taken for granted that disability has nothing political at stake and that people with mental disabilities do not adequately know and understand their own experiences.

The invocation of the cyborg becomes dangerous for people with disabilities when it sensationalizes the fluidly symbolic nature of the human-technology relationship. The assumption is that, while it may at times map on to metaphors of cyborgism and hybridization, the (presumably non-disabled) mind will always maintain fundamental autonomy from the machine. This assumption requires that, conversely, the involuntary experience of digital chaos signifies a malfunction. When used in the way I have described, ADHD provides a threshold between cognitive chaos and control by setting a conceptual limit on the existential consequences of digital hybridity. When the uncomfortable intimacy with the machine can be named by something clinical, outside of mundane human experience, it need not be interrogated or confronted. The lingering possibility that our relationship with technology is nothing more than a bug rather than a feature of our cognitive functioning, elides the possibility that technology radically changes the way we think. But this, again, does not speak to a desire to use actual ADHD diagnoses as a proxy for cultural analysis, but a desire to outsource existential dread out of culture and into the language of diagnosis. I am not primarily interested in suggesting that those who subscribe to the idea of "cultural ADHD" are in denial about the nature of their digital lives; rather, I simply seek to highlight the peculiarity of using mental disability as a metaphor for something other than itself.

The "Male Computer Geek" and the Problem with Cyborgs

In a scene in *The Social Network* (2010), the fictionalized Mark Zuckerberg (played by Jesse Eisenberg) describes the experience of writing code in a way that suggests cyborg-like, hyper-focused hybridity with computer technology. When Sean Parker (Justin Timberlake) attempts to introduce himself to one of the programmers at work at the preliminary Facebook headquarters in Silicon Valley, the programmer vaguely waves him off as Zuckerberg quickly interjects "—he's wired in!" The phrase "wired in" almost likens distracting the coders to disconnecting a hard drive before ejecting. Although playfully, it suggests that the programmer's use of the computer is best understood as a type of fusion. Jordynn Jack (2014) writes that the Zuckerberg appearing in *The Social Network*, as well as the one portrayed in mainstream news media, exemplifies what she calls the autistic-coded "male computer geek" trope (106). Zuckerberg, along with Bill Gates and other tech industry figures, have been encoded into what Jack, and Majia Nadesan (2005), have described as a cultural obsession with the relationship between people with autism and computer technology (Jack 2014, 106).

Jack's rhetorical analysis of the "male computer geek" deconstructs the myths and psychological misinformation that have allowed for the widely held

public assumption that Zuckerberg and Gates have ASD. Similar to ADHD, the mainstream media persistently looks to ASD as a parable for the rise of the tech industry, despite there being no conclusive evidence to support a fundamental link between the two. Jack (2014) points out, for example, that numerous mainstream news outlets have liberally engaged in public diagnoses of tech industry figures. "In 1994, the same year Asperger's syndrome was first added to the DSM, Microsoft CEO Bill Gates was popularly diagnosed as autistic in a *Time* magazine article titled 'Diagnosing Bill Gates'" (112). In addition, "In 2012, an article in the online blog *Gawker* 'diagnosed' the real-life Zuckerberg as autistic, mainly on the basis of secondhand accounts of his behavior and analysis of a video interview" (105). The public figure of the "male computer geek," who is often explicitly coded as autistic, is typically portrayed as being more at home with codes and computers than with people. Jack notes that these men are often represented as geniuses who lack social skills and even lack "concern for the human condition" (106).

While Jack's analysis rightly understands this scapegoating as being driven by a desire to maintain the value of traditional masculinity and a changing economic environment, I would also argue that the male computer geek exemplifies the disabled cyborg trope to which Kafer (2013) refers. Kafer's critique of the cyborg as a reinforcement of the artificial/natural dichotomy resonates with Jack's writing on the cultural alignment between computer technology and ASD. Many of the texts Jack analyzes seem to suggest that there is something characteristically autistic about Silicon Valley and digital technology by extension. If we take seriously the hypothesis that the "cyborg is linked more directly to disabled bodies than to able-bodied ones" (Kafer 2013, 110), we can see that advancing digital technology and ASD, two things that stand to unsettle traditional notions of the mind and self, get paired in a way that protects those traditional notions. That is, as in the case of ADHD, the disturbing aspects of digital life become associated with eccentric characters and marked as red herrings.

Today, the trope of the male computer geek who has an affinity with computer technology stands to allow people to conceptualize not just the rise of the tech industry at large, but their own individual relationship with technology. Jack (2014) opens her chapter with a series of quotations from liberal publications praising Mark Zuckerberg as the unlikely hero of *The Social Network*: "The *Wall Street Journal*'s reviewer wrote that the character 'combines a borderline autistic affect with a single-minded focus on a beautifully simple idea'" (105). *The Social Network* as a whole, I would argue, does not simply treat Zuckerberg as a freak or scapegoat, but also invites identification with him. The implication is that, at times, we all feel that we are so single-mindedly focused on our goals, typing away on our laptops, that we become machines, cyborgs. But we are never in danger of actually becoming Zuckerberg. He is a fiction, a metaphor detached from real life. These tropes provide a narrative by which the relationship between technology and minds can be known, classified, and delineated, eliding the possibility that mind and technology have entered into a chaotic, unpredictable relationship.

These kinds of problematic ASD tropes, for one, "risk presenting autism via stock characters that turn into stereotypes, deflecting attention away from a wider range of actual autistic individuals, not all of whom are computer geeks" (Jack 2014, 114). Jack's analysis clearly articulates that public myths about mental disorders are harmful to their subjects, yet they remain powerful and convincing to many. These myths maintain dominance because of the way mental disability provides a buffer between the conventionally held rational self and the flux of technological advancement and obsolescence. I want to think about the representation of mental disability in terms of how it breaks the fall of the existential deficit of the liberal humanist self. My point runs parallel to what Rob Cover (2014) describes as "a push and pull of multiple demands: the Enlightenment demand that one articulate oneself as a rational, reasonable, coherent, and intelligible subject and a decentered and fragmented subjectivity which fulfills the demand that we express identity in fleeting ways through forms of consumption that emerge at the nexus of late capitalism and post modernism" (61). Cover explains that the popularity of Facebook stems from its ability to assuage the tension between the permanent and impermanent self in a stage of late capitalism in which data and media are flowing more rapidly and unpredictably than ever. What Cover does not sufficiently explore is the shame and stereotyping that surrounds the relationship between the human mind/body and technology and how this

causes some people to experience that flux in ways that differ along lines of political marginalization.

Mental disability complexly embodied

In the rest of this article, I want to explore the theoretical steps that might be taken to reverse both the aestheticization and depoliticization of mental disability. Primarily, to return to my definition of mental disability in my introduction, I argue in favor of a theory of mental disability that understands it as an embodied experience. In the previous sections, I maintain that the objectification of digital cyborgs and hybridization rhetorically depends on the ableist misappropriation of mental disability. Jack's (2014) and my analysis of ASD and ADHD respectively point out the use of stereotyping and cultural myths that make up these rhetorics. I suggest that the solution to these falsities should not primarily involve directly disproving them, but rather centering the standpoint of mentally disabled people through attention to what Siebers (2008) calls "complex embodiment" (25). For Siebers, the concept of complex embodiment arises as a resolution to two competing models of disability theory—the medical and the social model: "The medical model has a biological orientation, focusing almost exclusively on disability as embodiment. The social model opposes the medical model by defining disability relative to the social and built environment" (25). Siebers writes that some theorists complain that the medical model focuses too much on embodiment while the social model leaves it out of the picture all together. Complex embodiment, by contrast, "views the economy between social representations and the body not as unidirectional as in the social model, nor non-existent as in the medical model, but as reciprocal" (25).

When I posit the complex embodiment of mental disability, I refer to that which cannot be captured by a universal archetype of any given disorder. The public narratives I described in the previous sections stress the idea of the disorder first and those who experience it second. The embodied knowledge of mental disability might include everything from the social rejection that comes with trying to navigate a space or institution built for neurotypical people, to one's personal, familial, or romantic relationships, to one's relationship with psychiatric medication. I would also argue that the embodied knowledge of mental disability speaks to its intersectional aspects. For example, the ways in which women and girls experience ADHD differently than men and boys often comes down to a lifetime of micro-instances that constitute a way of moving through the world. Because young girls with ADHD less often exhibit hyperactive behaviors in the classroom, their struggle to focus often goes unnoticed, misinterpreted, and/or undiagnosed. In *Women with Attention Deficit Disorder*, Sari Solden (2012) writes about how this results in a distinct self-image for girls with ADHD who tend to internalize their failures as personal or ethical shortcomings and experience anxiety and depression at higher rates than their non-ADHD counterparts.

On the treatment of the relationship between body and identity in Western philosophy, Alcoff (2006), from whom Siebers (2008) draws inspiration for his theory of complex embodiment, wrote: "Although hermeneutic approaches maintain that the subject's location in any analysis of knowledge and experience cannot be eliminated, that location is conceptualized abstractly, without attention to any of its physical features. But 'location' is a mere metaphor here for the body, the real locus of horizon" (Alcoff 2006, 103). Complex embodiment resists the description of people in terms of mere location and demands attention to the specificity of how bodies carry knowledge and emotion within any given social or physical space at any given time. The Western concept of the mind independent from the body, which has been reincarnated in the neoliberal idea of the digital self, cannot be true at the same time as, if we are to understand ourselves as equally human, the notion that mentally disabled people's pathologies reducible to neurobiological malfunctions. Therefore, centering mentally disabled people as full, insightful human subjects stands to break the logic of the rational independent self alongside its self-contradiction. It is the disregard of embodied knowledge, I would argue, that results in inaccurate metaphors about identity, such as the notion that people who use prosthetics emblematize the contradictions of late capitalism or that mental disorders provide useful analogies by which to understand a changing technological environment.

When I refer to the embodied experiences of people with mental disabilities, I mean this to be analogous to feminist media scholarship that has problematized digital disembodiment of race and gender. In the earlier years of theorizing the internet,

some media scholars embraced the idea of anonymity to suspend the one-to-one association between identity and the physical body. This utopic vision, criticized by media scholars such as Lisa Nakamura (2014) who identifies this idea with the rise of neoliberalism in the 1990s, was conceived with the hope that, if human life could move into digital space, the dissolution of the body as a marker of identity could theoretically mitigate racist and misogynistic acts. However, scholars have pointed out that this optimism has not resulted in improvements for marginalized people on the internet, but rather has perpetuated a school of thought that favors the erasure of marginalized identities. "Further, by enabling anonymous communications, [the internet] allegedly freed users from the limitations of their bodies, particularly the limitations stemming from their race, class, and sex…" (Chun 2006, 2). As these feminist digital scholars have argued, an approach to online life that encourages representation of identity in isolation from the body dangerously ignores the ways in which historical, structural, and political oppression are tied to bodies. An anti-ableist political model of mental disability, informed by the experiences of all mentally disabled people, pushes back against the (digital) abstraction I have discussed and rejects the project of digital disembodiment. The ideas behind this disembodiment project falsely assume that racism, for example, only occurs as the result of conscious, rationally articulable prejudice, which, perhaps in a digital space, might be eliminated in the absence of racial markers. In reality, as a disability theory perspective encourages us to remember, oppression also takes place in the mundane ways bodies interact in social and physical space.

The issue of under-diagnoses occurs along racial lines as well as gender, multiplying the invisibility of women and girls of color. The link between racialized bodies and mental disability might be most obviously observed in the role it plays in police brutality. The death of Stephon Watts, a black American fifteen-year-old with ASD who was killed by a Camulet City police officer in 2012 demonstrates that ASD takes on entirely different connotations when viewed through a racialized lens. On the day of his death, Stephon was having an emotional meltdown, as he had many times in the past, because he did not want to go to school. As advised by his counselor, Stephon's parents called the police to help to get him under control. Stephon, who happened to be holding a butter knife, reflexively lunged at the armed police officers when they appeared. "Police say they drew their weapons and yelled for Stephon to drop the butter knife. He didn't. Moments later, two officers ended Stephon's life" (Fanning 2012). In this moment, the consideration that his ASD might cause Stephon to act in unexpected ways was snuffed out by the police's anti-blackness, which had already been ingrained into how they have been taught to use their bodies. When I speak about the embodied aspect of mental disability, I mean to capture those effects that take place unpredictably in space and time, but which constitute a way of being in the world sometimes with fatal results. I would argue that attention to these effects is essential to a politically just approach to mental disability.

As I alluded in my introduction, one way to think about this in the context of digital culture is to consider how people with mental disabilities experience online spaces differently. I became motivated to explore the intersections of mental disability and online experience in part because communities of mentally disabled people often form on the internet. For many mentally ill and neurodiverse people, the internet is the only social space in which they can connect with others who understand them and/or share similar experiences. While many scholars have rightfully focused on validating the positive impact of the internet on marginalized groups, I want to conclude this article by considering the limits of digital counterpublics from the perspective of complex embodiment.

Presenting the (Disembodied) Mentally Sisabled Self Online

Today, as media scholar Nancy Baym (2006) notes, "the Internet is woven into the fabric of the rest of life" (79). The internet is no longer subaltern. It is now arguably the site of the official public sphere. Therefore, the relegation of some identities and discourses to online spaces that are felt and experienced as marginal and removed from the rest of life does not speak to an arbitrary effect of internet technology, but rather to the internet's structural, ideological preferences for some identities over others. In her book of auto-fictional personal essays *So Sad Today*, popular Twitter blogger Melissa Broder (2016) (@SoSadToday on Twitter)

articulates what it is like to try to present the unstable relationship with one's mentally ill mind and body on digital platforms. What much of the book articulates vividly is how the purely mental or existential self can be approximated in the form of the online self as a way of reclaiming a sense of control: "I like that I can be somebody else on the Internet. I like that I can present one facet of myself and embody that. I don't have to live in a body on the Internet. It's so much easier to present an illusion of oneself than to contain multitudes. Illusion is easier than flesh" (200).

The internet, particularly mass social media, with its sleek, minimalist interfaces, time stamps, and linear organization, helps to flatten and mute the pain and confusion of living with mental illness. The ability to delete, sort, and disseminate that text creates a sense of controlled reprieve. This, I would argue, can be read as a form of cyborg praxis. As Broder goes on to articulate, however, this praxis often requires the acceptance of existential instability and alienation from the body as conditions of being mentally ill online. While this site of discursive practice may provide Broder with reprieve from societal alienation, it also requires her to transmute herself in a way that causes a schism between online and offline life: "I just don't see myself ever walking a middle path with the Internet…Once a cucumber turns into a pickle, you can't turn it back into a cucumber. And I've been pickled by the Internet for a long time" (82). A disability studies approach to mental disability online asks us to critically question this alienation. "When a disabled body moves into any space, it discloses the social body implied by that space" (Siebers 2008, 85). Viewing Broder's experience not as an eccentric, inspiring testament to digital culture, and instead as a disability narrative, demonstrates that the internet is built in a way that is hostile to the mentally disabled.

Broder's online presence might be understood in relation to two juxtaposing forms of digital feminist knowledge: as a site of discursive practice and as a source of embodied knowledge. Broder (2016) writes that the Twitter account allowed her to connect with people who have had similar experiences, and who found solace in being able to relate to her: "The more real I was, the more people could relate. It seemed like there were a shitload of people who were scared of life and death" (200). In her *New Yorker* article on the book, Haley Mlotek (2016) reminds us that "the female authors who write about their sadness…provide a language for other readers, a direction for likeminded women to point themselves in, a rope to climb over a wall" (n.p.). Through varied, but generically consistent, micro-instances of communal recognition, the counterpublic generated by @SoSadToday provides a powerful source of discursive knowledge. At the same time, I would argue that the celebration of discursive spheres for marginalized identities like these often does not take into account the material and emotional conditions under which these spheres are formed. As in the case of ADHD and ASD, I would maintain that the difficulty with which mentally disabled people must try to survive in neurotypical society is often portrayed as a form of romantic cyborgism, fetishizing the resourcefulness of those for whom social architecture is not designed. A disability studies critique, however, asks us to invert our way of thinking and consider how the environment should bend to fit the needs of people with disabilities.

For Broder and other people with disabilities, the process of producing and procuring embodied knowledge online is a less seamless and intuitive process than that of discursive knowledge because the internet, through its emphasis on the diegetic over the mimetic, the perfect over the imperfect, and the virtual over the physical, does not lend itself to the representation of disability identities. In many ways, as I have discussed, the internet is hostile to all marginalized groups. However, as I have tried to demonstrate throughout this article, mental disability holds a unique precariousness because of the way the mind is widely disseminated as the principal metaphor to describe the general idea of online experience. Where Broder's mind ends and the digital space begins is unknown and, while this phenomenon may not be dangerous on an individual basis, on a larger political scale, it poses a threat to the autonomy and self-determination of the user. I believe that by maintaining a focus on mental disability within the discourse on online identity, we can come to more inclusive and fundamental conclusions of what it means to present the self online.

Conclusion

When considering the status of identity and disability in the digital realm, it is important to take note of how it may be shaped by antecedent

metaphysical assumptions about the relationships between technology, the body, and human life. If we assume that digital technology makes us all cyborgs, it raises the question of how we can explain the existence of disability identities online. The generalization that technology makes us all cyborgs provides the kind of normalizing impulse that might also convince us that computer programmers with ASD are somehow akin to all things digital or that ADHD minds embody the quick-paced, multimedia functionality of web browsing. Cyborg politics, if taken uncritically, can hybridize technologies and people in a way that insists on muddling disability rather than providing it with a platform. At the very least, this assumption makes it difficult to politically locate disability in the digital realm when it emerges. If we assume that digitization is always the "source…of new powers" (Siebers 2008, 63), we are not likely to take note of its problems.

When we imagine the best possible future for humanity, how do we envisage our relationship with technology? What would the result of the ethical advancement of humans look like? It is my sense that in an ideal world, as digital technology advances, our freedoms will increase. This might mean freedom from geography, social alienation, nature, linear time, pain, and, as I have suggested in this paper, freedom from the body. Uncritical cyborg politics ask us to praise Broder's (2016) resourcefulness in her use of the internet to produce new, alternative sites of discursive practice rather than asking whether the internet can meet her needs and desires as a person with a mental disability. When she writes that she cannot walk "a middle path with the Internet" (82), she implies that once identities become codified within digital sphere, they are often rendered incoherent in other spheres. I have argued that the critiques made of Haraway's (2000) cyborg can also be made of the cyborg politics that shape our perceptions of online identity. However, the critiques I have made and recounted from others do not conclude that the very concept of the cyborg is ableist. Kafer (2013) asserts that, in fact, if it can be critiqued and modified, the figure of the cyborg could provide a useful framework to disability studies. To my mind, the cyborg will lend itself best to people with mental disabilities when it allows us to transmute our identities between the digital world, the embodied world, and back.

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"Not Just What We Dismantle But Also What We Hope to Build": Alicia Garza on Black Lives Matter and Digital Activism

Alicia Garza is a writer, activist, and organizer around issues including the intersections between race and labour, the environment, and violence, particularly against trans and gender nonconforming people of colour, and is currently the Special Projects Director at the National Domestic Workers Alliance. In 2013, alongside Opal Tometi and Patrisse Cullors, she co-founded Black Lives Matter, an international activist network with regional chapters.

Clare Mulcahy (interviewer) is a recent graduate of the English and Film Studies doctoral program at University of Alberta, and is a full-time instructor at Northern Alberta Institute of Technology. Her research focuses on African American women journalists' negotiations of professional legitimacy through their turn-of-the-century writing in the African American press.

Abstract

What follows is an interview with Alicia Garza about Black Lives Matter and the relationship between traditional and digital activism.

Résumé

Ce qui suit est une entrevue avec Alicia Garza au sujet du mouvement Black Lives Matter et de la relation entre l'activisme traditionnel et l'activisme numérique.

So I'd like to start off by asking: why you do what you do in terms of Black Lives Matter (BLM) in particular?

The reason I do what I do is so we can have a future as a planet and as a world. We're in a set of conditions in this country and what happens in this country affects what happens in the world. For me, my commitment is grounded in the impact that this country has on the well-being of people all over the world and the impact that this nation-state has on its own citizens. Given that, it feels really important to be part of an ever-growing group of people who are doing the hard work of figuring out not just what we dismantle, but also what we hope to build.

Going off of that, can you talk about how BLM started and if you understand it to be a feminist movement?

Sure. We created this project in response to the acquittal of George Zimmerman and the murder of Trayvon Martin, in response to a state-sanctioned, extra-judicial murder of a child by a vigilante. But it was also very much trying to respond to a set of larger conditions that point to the overall quality of life of Black people in this country and around the world. With the way in which this nation-state was developed, Black lives play a particular role in the maintenance of a larger set of systems that marginalize millions of oppressed and disenfranchised people. But that set of conditions is actually very unique for Black people, just like it's unique for Indigenous people, and just like it's unique for immigrants and other people of colour. The way that folks are racialized really determines a lot of their outcomes and life chances.

When we talk about BLM, I think one of the biggest misconceptions about it is that it is a movement to save the lives of Black men. So to that we have two responses: we definitely consider BLM to be feminist both in its origins and also in its practice, but there's lots of confusion and even distortion of who BLM is, particularly as it relates to the question of feminism and the eradication of patriarchy, and particularly as it relates to

transphobia and homophobia. We did not create this organizing project to save the lives of men; we created it to preserve the sanctity of the lives of Black people, using a queer feminist lens. BLM as a network was really created from the experiences of three Black women, all of whom are feminist, two of whom are queer, one of whom is the daughter of Nigerian immigrants. And state-sanctioned violence is much, much bigger than police violence; it's the impact of the state in meting out either control or straight-up harm.

Why do you think BLM is represented in mainstream media as a movement that is about police violence against Black men? Why is that the narrative that repeats?

It depends on which media you're talking about. [laughs] I think that by and large this country has a really hard time understanding the complexity of blackness. And that is a product of a settler-colonialist, white supremacist nation, where anybody who's not white gets flattened, homogenized, and given a role in a gendered and racialized division of labour. And I think that the media here is not immune to that; a lot of the narratives and viewpoints and frameworks really reflect the overall ideology of the nation-state. One other dynamic that's really important to acknowledge is that, within our mainstream media, there are still very few people of colour, and Black people specifically, who are making decisions about what is being covered and from what angle.

It's also a movement issue. I think largely progressive movements still have a long way to go when it comes to understanding the intersections between race, gender, and class. Even with people who have the best of intentions and who are politically aligned, because of the prevalence of narratives that centre Black men, it's somewhat easy to think that anything having to do with BLM is about Black men being killed by the police. And then there's a dynamic where Black cisgendered men are more likely to experience violence at the hands of police in the form of murder. Black women, however, are more likely to experience violence by the police in the form of sexual assault, and I think we see similar rates for Black trans people, gender nonconforming, or otherwise visibly queer folks. So I think it's those dynamics interacting in an interesting interplay with one another that create the condition to have this kind of perception of what BLM is about.

The last point you were making about how Black women and Black trans and visibly queer people are more likely to be sexually assaulted—do you think that's somehow harder to rally around or harder to protest in some way?

I think it's a harder issue to protest. It's less widely reported on in mainstream media. It's really the most egregious thing that we see projected on television screens across the world; journalists will even tell you that if 'it bleeds, it leads.' But I also think that, even within Black freedom movements, there can be a privileging of the cisgendered male body over all bodies. And I think that is attached to narratives that are very old in our community, to the stories that we tell about enslavement in this country. Even though Black women actually had to carry the burden that was typically assigned to both men and women, because Black women were denied access to womanhood and treated like men, there's still very much this way in which Black cisgendered men are seen as the centre of the family. And everything else is the second act. Everything else is the appetizer and cisgendered men are the main course. [laughs] Those tropes include things like the endangered Black male and the male-less Black family and, so to restore the family, you would have to restore the male figure to the family, which then of course is restoring patriarchy.

There's been this propagation of narratives from the faith community, and there were these tendencies as well in the Black nationalist tradition. Revolutionary Black nationalist traditions really did not do enough to complicate gender and gender roles as they've been ascribed. They then continued to propagate this narrative that is patriarchal at best and at worst is just fiction. But I think alongside those problematic narratives has always been Black feminists, Black queer folk, Black gender non-conforming folk, who were like, 'That's bullshit. We don't actually need to replicate a white supremacist ideal of what family is or isn't in order to be deserving of dignity.' There's always been that tension there.

Turning specifically to the Internet, I'd like to talk more about the affordances and restrictions of working online.

I think the benefit of the Internet, of course, is easy and instant access to anything and everything. You can actually be transported across time and space and geographic boundaries to be engaged with something that's happening in real time, which has been a real benefit to social movements. On the flip side, that level of access to everything means that there's access to everything. Even when social movements are using technology and the Internet specifically to further our aims, it's also being used to surveil what activists are doing, because it's largely happening in this space that is really open to everyone. It's very much a tool that is increasingly being used by law enforcement agencies to disrupt and criminalize activity that is critical of the state.

So what are the ways that you've actively tried to shape the online community and what kinds of resistance have you met to that?

I think when we started BLM, we were trying to provide space for an Internet community that was already active around the violence that was being enacted around Black lives. So we created this set of social media platforms so people could talk to each other directly. The idea behind it wasn't to control the conversation, it was actually to take us out as middle-brokers, so people could talk to each other directly about what was happening in their cities and what they wanted to see done about it.

What we understood from the very beginning was that it's not enough to talk online. That's great, but ultimately they needed to take the fruits of that conversation and do something in real-time, in real life, in their physical locations. And what we found was that people not only wanted connection on the Internet, but they wanted it off the Internet too. So we put out a call for people to take action together and the response was really overwhelming. We couldn't even accommodate the demand that was there. And that's actually how our chapter structure developed. We brought people together offline in St. Louis over a weekend, where they got to meet local leaders, they got to participate in organizing and direct action, they got to support people on the front lines, and they just got to build relationships with people. And what we realized, as a group, was that what was happening in St. Louis wasn't that different from what was happening in the cities that we work from. So what needed to change was actually our response to it. People decided that they wanted to continue to organize together under the banner of BLM in their local areas. So now we use the Internet and technology to create community, but also to act as an access place for people who want to be involved in a movement for social justice.

We know *not* to use the Internet for organizing, for strategic political conversations, for target research. Doing that kind of stuff online actually makes us really vulnerable to the types of surveillance I talked about earlier.

So the movement started with Facebook and Twitter specifically. Have there been new kinds of social media or digital platforms that have been useful for you?

Yeah! First and foremost, I think it's really important to distinguish us from the movement. And I say that because, in my conversations with folks, I think they really assume that we are responsible for everything that's happening in this country and around the world. [laughs] And we're totally not! We really are sticklers about it because it causes tension. People are like, 'Why are you claiming our work?' and we're like, 'We're not, but other people are just mushing it all together.' So we want to be as principled as possible in saying it's not all us.

Yeah, so maybe a better question is, within the movement, have you seen specific kinds of technology being used in innovative ways?

So in our network, lots of us use encrypted technology to be able to communicate with one another, apps like WhatsApp or Signal. And then, of course, depending on the age demographic, people use different platforms. I'm still on Facebook, which is apparently old and out. [laughs]

I've been told that!

Which then makes me feel some kind of way, because that's the only platform I like. Twitter, it's too much for me; Instagram, I don't want to see a thousand fucking pictures; and Vine and Snapchat, I have them but I need tutorials.

Yeah, Snapchat is beyond me. [laughs]

Way beyond my paygrade. But a lot of our activist youth use it and use it very strategically and use it very consistently. One thing we grapple with a little bit is, how do we deal with the fact that people engage differently on different platforms for different reasons. Sometimes people will be like, 'You didn't say shit about this thing.' And we'll be like, 'Yeah, but you're looking for us on Snapchat, we're not even on Snapchat. So if that's where you're looking, of course you're going to be disappointed, because we don't have a presence there.'

Do you think it's necessary to cover a wide range of social media, or more important for people to use the tools that they find effective for them?

I think it's more important for people to use the tools that they find effective for them. And what's even more important than that is to make sure that, no matter what platforms and tools you're using, that you're really taking advantage of being with people in real time.

Yeah, I'd like to talk more about that. You were talking about how there needs to be a coming back to real space and real time. Do you think that Internet activism, or hashtag activism, is a tool or is it doing something entirely new and different from traditional activism?

I think that there's still a lot of learning happening about the best ways to mobilize people in a digital age where people's group behaviour has changed. I don't think there's any one answer there. If you look at some of these bigger platforms like MoveOn, for example, they have a huge reach, but they also have a pretty diverse group of people who are involved, and it's in some ways difficult to find the common denominator that will move the majority of people. Then if you look at a platform like ColorOfChange, which has like upwards of two million members, they pay a lot of attention to what their base wants and there are times, I think, when they have to make choices about which issues they step forward on because of the behaviour of their base. But I think where there's a lot of synergy and where there probably wasn't like five years ago or ten years ago, is that the Internet is an important tool to help facilitate organizing at a scale that has impact within its particular context.

What the jury's still out on is, can the Internet *replace* traditional methods of organizing? I think where we fall, because we're organizers, is -- no. Nothing can replace the hard work of doing that kind of face-to-face engagement, even though people have tried, across time. I don't think you can shift that, mostly because I think organizing is so very much about relationships, and transforming relationships, and the Internet allows you to build relationships, but they are somewhat artificial. That's the major contradiction there. With a real person in real time, it's actually kind of hard to stay fake. Whereas on the Internet, everything is curated, everything. I don't care if you talk about, 'I'm so honest on Twitter, I'm 100% myself on Facebook.' You're totally curating everything. [laughs] I do it too! So for us, the main path is to figure out what's the best and brightest way to use many tools in cooperation with each other, rather than trying to replace what we already know works with something that we actually don't know if it works in the same way. The big downside to traditional organizing is the scale question. On two feet or in a wheelchair, you can only reach so many people per day. And we've got that shit down to a science. We know how many people we can talk to in an hour in like a traditional canvassing operation. We even know how many of those people that we talk to will agree to become a part of something. But I think, with the Internet, the lifespan is shorter. It's pretty hard to keep somebody involved and engaged on the Internet in the same thing over a long period of time, which is actually what we're going for.

With forms of protests, like a march, do you think there's a visibility that makes it a more effective form of protest than tweeting something, for instance?

It really depends on the context. We've had to organize actions against many different kinds of targets. We had to launch something against a crowd-funding site and, actually, the most effective way to target them was on the Internet because everything they did was on the Internet, and I'm not even sure they had a physical location.

So holding a march in protest would not be productive? [laughs]

Yeah! [laughs] We had a big blow-out with them. They actually withdrew $23,000 that we had raised for legal defense for activists, because somebody had flagged our fundraiser. And then, they were 'holding it' until

the issue was resolved and we were like, 'Yeah, that's not going to happen.' If I'm correct, I became aware of that issue around 8 o'clock at night and probably by 9 o'clock had put it out on Twitter and asked people to work on it. By 11 o'clock, I had a response from a higher up in the company and I had all of our money. So that's one example of the power of the Internet. But when it comes to a mayor, for example, Twitter's not actually that effective. Because a mayor is not accountable to how many tweets they get; a mayor is accountable to votes. Unless you can translate tweets into votes, you don't actually wield power. The other thing that mayors are accountable to is, of course, money, so unless you can turn tweets into dollars, then there's no dice. Different tools are useful in different contexts for different reasons, and the strategic organizer is thinking about what tools are appropriate for what context and for what time.

Eugenics, Race and Canada's First-Wave Feminists: Dis/Abling the Debates

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Abstract

Using government reports produced by one of Ontario's pioneering women physicians and leading eugenic crusaders, Dr. Helen MacMurchy, this article interrogates the significance of disability as a central paradigm within first-wave feminism and its promotion of eugenic reforms. I examine how conceptualizations of race were reconstituted through the construct of disability to generate not only inter- but also intra-racial distinctions between differently classed white women. I argue that it was ultimately by leveraging a range of social categories —gender, class, race, and transgressive forms of sexuality—into a disabling paradigm that not only racialized women, but also poor white women were disempowered by eugenics.

Résumé

En s'appuyant sur des rapports gouvernementaux produits par la D^re^ Helen MacMurchy, l'une des femmes médecins pionnières et des principales militantes eugénistes de l'Ontario, cet article interroge la signification du handicap comme paradigme central au sein du féminisme de la première vague et de sa promotion des réformes eugéniques. J'examine comment les conceptualisations de la race ont été reconstituées par le biais du concept du handicap pour générer des distinctions non seulement interraciales mais aussi intraraciales entre différentes classes de femmes blanches. Je soutiens que ce fut en fin de compte en rassemblant un éventail de catégories sociales—genre, classe, race et formes transgressives de sexualité—en un paradigme de handicap que non seulement les femmes racialisées, mais aussi les femmes blanches pauvres, ont été marginalisées par l'eugénisme.

> it is of but little use to try to keep people who are mentally and physically unfit for citizenship out of the country if we pay no attention to keeping the Canadian national stock fit mentally and physically. It is necessary to refuse entrance to undesirable emigrants, but it is, if possible, more necessary, not to refuse to the Feeble-Minded that protection and care which alone can prevent them from wrecking their own lives and bringing into the world native-born Canadian citizens more Feeble-Minded and unfit in mind and body than they are themselves. What is the use of forbidding the immigration of the mentally and physically defective from abroad if we manufacture them at home?
>
> Dr. Helen MacMurchy,
> *Sixth Report of the Feeble-Minded in Ontario, 1911*.[1] [1]

The question of race figures centrally in historiographical deliberations over the meaning and the mission of the early-twentieth-century women's movement. Transnational historian Jane Carey (2012) characterizes these debates as "[s]omething of a mini 'history wars,'" with opinions sharply divided between valorizing assessments celebrating the achievements of feminist foremothers or harsh condemnations of their race- and class-bound imperial agenda, exemplified by first-wave feminism's global involvement in eugenics and the promotion of themselves as "mothers of the race" (735).[2] In Canada, attempts to bridge these historiographical schisms, by Janice Fiamengo (2002b) and Cecily Devereux (2005), have emphasized the need for more nuanced studies that assess the intricacies of early feminist thought and activism, including competing ideological formations around the question of race (Forestell 2005). Surprisingly absent in these debates, however, is the attention to the question of disability[3] and its centrality to the reformulation of race, gender, and class hierarchies through early-twentieth- century feminism and eugenics.

While studies of the early-twentieth-century women's movement focus to a considerable degree on the involvement of first-wave feminists in eugenics and the racist and the classist constructs advanced under the banner of eugenical reforms, few writers have interrogated the significance of disability as a central concept within feminist eugenic discourses. Yet, disabling paradigms stood at the heart of first wave-feminism and its promotion of eugenics, imbricated around a set of white, Anglo, bourgeois, heteronormative, and gender ideals which demarcated who did and who did not constitute a physically and mentally "fit" Canadian subject. In many respects, the pertinent historical question is not solely about race per se, but how, under the aegis of eugenics, the concept of race was deployed and reconstituted, through a construct of disability, to disempower women across a range of social categories.

In what has now become a seminal paper within the field of disability studies, "Disability History: Why We Need Another 'Other,'" Catherine Kudlick (2003) makes a case for the inclusion of disability as an analytic category in historical studies. Drawing on Rosemarie Garland Thomson's (1997) arguments regarding the need for historical inquiries that examine disability as a cultural construct and critical category of investigation, Kudlick extends this analysis to emphasize the centrality of disability to political processes associated with the emergence of western liberal states and modern constructs of citizenship. According to Kudlick (2003), conceptualizations of disability are critical to understanding how western cultures "determine hierarchies and maintain social order, as well as how they define progress," especially since such constructs often underlie (and thus facilitate) gender, class, and race discrimination through associations with disabling notions such as "abnormal" or "unfit" (765). To Kudlik, disability is not an individual characteristic, but an important analytic category essential to conceptualizing power, hierarchy, and attempts to regulate social order trans-historically in modern western liberal contexts.

According to Kudlik (2003), Thomson (1997), and Douglas Baynton (2001), disabling discourses have been used across time and space to label women, as well as a host of other social groups—Jews, Blacks, homosexuals, anarchists, socialists, Indigenous peoples, and mixed-raced individuals, as "lesser than," weaker, frailer, and more degenerate than those alleged as superior through oppositional positioning. Baynton (2001) argues that the "rhetorical tactics" used in the U.S. by those opposed to women's suffrage "was to point to the physical, intellectual, and psychological flaws of women," particularly their frailty, their irrationality and, by the late-nineteenth century, women's less-evolved state compared to men (41). In this

context, the construct of a "menacing" feebleminded woman was critical for first-wave feminism so as to be able to locate themselves in a distinctly superior position—as "mothers of the race"—from which they could agitate for greater social, economic, and political rights for themselves (Baynton 2001; Carlson 2001). But the women held up by first-wave feminists as the maternal leaders of "the race" were not only white; they were also middle class and situated as mentally/physically "abled." Hence, eugenic discourses around race were ultimately about delineating between different classes of white women, demarcating *intra*-racial distinctions through a construct of disability and notions of "fit" and "unfit."

To illustrate this dynamic and the importance of disability as a category of analysis for debates on first-wave feminism, this article examines reports on the feebleminded in Ontario produced by one of the province's pioneering women physicians and eugenic crusader, Dr. Helen MacMurchy. MacMurchy is best known for her work as head of the federal Division of Child Welfare in Ottawa from 1920 to 1934 (Strong-Boag 1979; McConnachie 1983; Dodd 1991). However, her role in spearheading the eugenics campaign in Ontario has received less detailed attention from historians. From the early 1900s, MacMurchy was an active and central figure in the province's eugenics movement, initially working closely with the National Council of Women in urging the institutionalization of mentally defective women and, eventually, their sterilization. In 1905, she was appointed by the province's premier to conduct a census on feebleminded women and girls in Ontario. Although MacMurchy's position as Inspector of the Feeble-Minded was not formalized until 1914, she produced fourteen annual reports on the feebleminded from 1906 to 1919. As well, she published *The Almosts: A Study of the Feeble-Minded* in 1920 and *Sterilization? Birth Control? A Book for Family Welfare and Safety* in 1934. Writing profusely and often quite sensationally, MacMurchy's publications functioned as an important venue for the promotion of the eugenical agenda in Ontario well before the creation of the *Canadian Journal of Mental Hygiene* in 1918.

What is remarkable about MacMurchy's publications are the scant references to immigrants or racial groups.[4] Indeed, as the quote at the beginning of this paper illustrates, her position on native-born versus immigrant feebleminded starkly contrasts with the racist discourses Canadian historians have shown typified eugenics and early-twentieth-century social reform movements, including first-wave feminism, in both central and western Canada (Chapman 1977; Bacchi 1983; McLaren 1986; Valverde 1991; Dowbiggin 1995; Menzies 1998). Beyond her periodic allusion to the "Canadian National Stock," MacMurchy makes no explicit reference in her reports to Indigenous, African-Canadian, Asian, or South Asian groups when discussing the problem of mental defect or when arguing her case for wide ranging eugenic reforms. The first mention of immigration and the possibility of foreign mental defectives entering Canada appeared in her 1910 report, but her distress focused chiefly on the British home children being sent to Canada. Quite distinct from the hyperbole that characterized her discussions of the dangers posed by the excessive sexual and reproductive propensities of feebleminded women, MacMurchy's 1914 report simply noted that "[g]reater care" needed to be taken around the admission of mentally-defective immigrants to Canada. Who she did target in her reports, however, were poor, Canadian-born, white women.

Despite an eventual mandate to study all feebleminded persons in Ontario, MacMurchy concentrated her publications to a fair degree on the issue of mentally defective women and girls.[5] Her focus on feebleminded women reflects the gendered thinking that underscored eugenics, whereby reproductive concern over hereditarian transmission and the excessive breeding of the "unfit" was conceptualized chiefly around women's bodies and their procreative capacities (Tylor 1977; Noll 1994; Yukins 2003). To justify limiting the reproductive rights of feebleminded women, MacMurchy deployed a variety of moral, economic, and socio-political arguments to rationalize proposals for their institutionalization and custodial care. In the early 1900s, the reproductive control measures advocated by eugenicists centered on inhibiting opportunities for pregnancy through sex-segregated custodial institutionalization. While by the 1930s, MacMurchy along with other eugenicists would articulate strong support of eugenic sterilization as the most effective means to inhibit the reproduction of the mentally unfit, during the period in which she was writing her reports on the feebleminded in Ontario, confinement to a supervised, sex-segregated institutional setting was seen as the primary mechanism for

asserting reproductive control over those deemed mentally defective.

Of the estimated feebleminded population in 1906, MacMurchy claimed that 859 were female and 526 were male. A year later, in her 1907 report, feebleminded females were cited as numbering over 1000 in Ontario, while males increased only slightly to 582. MacMurchy repeatedly emphasized the most critical cases in need of immediate attention as "all feeble-minded women and girls," and women were often presented in the reports as "the most urgent part of the Feeble-Minded problem." Similarly, case studies used to embellish her arguments typically involved feebleminded women and girls rather than men. In the three reports that MacMurchy published from 1907 to 1909, she used forty-nine individual case studies to illustrate the lives and the conduct of the feebleminded. Forty-eight of these cases were of mentally defective women.

Like other early-twentieth-century eugenicists, MacMurchy generally presented feebleminded women as pre-eminently prone to sexual immorality, describing them as "vastly immoral," "absolutely and hopelessly immoral," or as having "vagrant immoral tendencies." MacMurchy drew out close associations between feeblemindedness, prostitution, and the spread of venereal disease. Single mothers were also targeted. Surveys and case studies repeatedly underscored a connection between illegitimacy and feeblemindedness. Out of the two hundred cases of "illegitimate motherhood" at the Haven in 1910, MacMurchy maintained that nearly three-quarters involved feebleminded women. Examples of mentally defective women having eight to ten illegitimate children were often cited as "typical" cases. To demonstrate the hereditarian nature of illegitimacy, lineages were drawn out in quite extensive detail, in both text and charts, to illustrate how feebleminded women, often themselves born out of wedlock, begot numerous illegitimate children. In the 1911 report, MacMurchy impressed: "We have records—fresh records—obtained this year of grace 1911 of Feeble-Minded women in Ontario having eight and nine children, all illegitimate and all Feeble-Minded."

MacMurchy presented her concerns with mentally defective women and their sexual/ reproductive proclivities as "dangerous to the community and to our national welfare." In her reports, she frequently drew out the socio-economic repercussions of feebleminded women's unbridled sexual and reproductive propensities, presenting mentally defective women as a disruptive force in communities and dangerous to the welfare of the nation. MacMurchy argued that mentally defective women made up the bulk of the inmates populating public institutions such as refuges, havens, and houses of industry. Their "bad mothering" also contributed to their children's descent into juvenile delinquency and their general poor health. As MacMurchy put it, mentally defective women "contribute a large degenerate element every year to…the Canadian National Stock."

Outside of periodic allusions to the "Canadian National Stock," MacMurchy's reports contain few explicit references to immigrants or racialized feebleminded populations. These silences are noteworthy given the prevalence of racist discourses within the eugenics movement, as well as within the broader social reform movements of the period. As Mariana Valverde (2008) documents, racist views saturated the writings of leading reformers in this era, including established religious leaders, social gospel proponents, temperance and social purity activists, and feminist organizations such as the National Council of Women. Historians have similarly documented how calls for restrictive immigration policies were central in the "racial purity" platform championed by first-wave feminist luminaries, including Alberta's "Famous Five"—Emily Murphy, Irene Parlby, Nellie McClung, Louise McKinney, and Henrietta Muir Edward (Chapman 1977; McLaren 1990; Grekul, Krahn, and Odynak 2004).

According to Carolyn Strange and Jennifer Stephen (2010), immigrants absorbed the full brunt of Canada's eugenic racism (524). These authors maintain that eugenicists were not concerned about Indigenous reproduction since nineteenth-century colonial policies had already established mechanisms designed to diminish the procreative capacities of First Nations populations. In their view, racism was so thoroughly entrenched in western imperial contexts by the early 1900s that eugenical ideas were simply not that necessary or important in maintaining already-established racialized social hierarchies. Rather, Strange and Stephen argue, the "race-based reproduction management," established through colonization practices, in essence constituted "a prior logic for eugenic policies concerned to shore up the fitness of Canada's Euro-Canadian majority" (525).

However, in the passages where MacMurchy does refer to "race" or the "Canadian National Stock," more appears to be going on than the privileging of white Anglo-Saxons as a whole. As Valverde (2008) notes, there was an ambiguity that, at times, characterized references to race in eugenic discourses where the term "race" implied something beyond mere Anglo-Saxon-ness. She interprets this as a sign of the "slippery slope" thinking emblematic in racist discourses of the period, whereby Anglo-Saxons identified themselves both as a distinct race and as "the human race," and increasingly as "the Canadian race," as an emergent Canadian nationalism strove to extricate a unique identity from Britain in the early decades of the twentieth century (109-113). But as the following passage from MacMurchy's 1908 report illustrates, the "human race" being privileged in this period was not only one that was white and Anglo-Saxon, but it was also one that was progressively demarcated *between* whites along the fault line of "fit/unfit," suggesting that an intra-racial construct was being developed through eugenic discourses:

> We cannot leave this problem to the working out of natural laws. We have, in the progress of civilization, secured the poor boon of life to the mentally unfit, whom nature would have removed, so that now those unfit threaten somewhat the interests of the race and we must now set our house in order and since we have secured the survival of the unfit, we must establish places fit for the unfit to live in and to make the most of themselves, so that life will be something good for them and that their lives shall not threaten others.

International scholarship on eugenics has begun to focus on the ambiguities associated with eugenic constructs of race and racial superiority, noting how the targets of eugenic discourses were often not racialized groups, but poor whites. Rafter (2004) argues that early-twentieth-century eugenic interventions in the northeastern U.S. targeted mainly American-born "white trash," that is, poor, rural whites (232-257). Steven Noll (1991, 1995) advances similar findings for the eugenic campaigns in the American south where Blacks were essentially overlooked and excluded from the institutions that were developed to house white feebleminded populations. In the South African context, both Sol Dubow (2010) and Susanne Klausen (1997, 2001, 2004) demonstrate that eugenics was entangled in the conflict between Africkaaners and the British. According to Dubow (2010), until the 1930s, the eugenic problematizing of race referred explicitly to battles between "Boer and Brit" (523-538). Alison Bashford and Phillipa Levine (2010) note as well that there is considerable evidence for various national contexts that eugenic interventions were primarily aimed at those who racially "belonged" and not ethnic or racialized populations. "To be sure," they argue, "these were projects of racial nationalism and indeed racial purity—eugenics was never not about race—but the objects of intervention, the subjects understood to be 'polluting,' were often not racial outsiders, but marginalized insiders whose very existence threatened national and class ideals" (3-24). This suggests that discourses of race, linked to notions of disability, were deployed by eugenicists as means of reformulating social hierarchies between whites.

In "The (Dis)similarities of White Racial Identities: The Conceptual Framework of 'Hegemonic Whiteness,'" Matthew Hughey (2010) offers a useful analytic framework for grappling with the ambiguities surrounding historical constructions of race, particularly the notion of "a race" as advanced within the context of eugenics. As he notes, in the United States, historical and sociological studies have begun to challenge views of "whiteness" as a distinct, uniform category of analysis, emphasizing instead a diversity of white experiences and subject positions. Hughey warns, however, that this is a potentially problematic trend "that over-emphasizes white heterogeneity at the expense of discussion of power, racism and discrimination" (1289). In response, he draws on Raewyn Connell's concept of "hegemonic masculinity" to advance the notion of "hegemonic whiteness" as an analytic tool that can acknowledge both inter- and intra-racial distinctions, while remaining cognizant of racist politics and the racial superiority historically invested in whiteness. As Hughey puts it:

> I argue that meaningful racial identity for whites is produced *vis-á-vis* the reproduction of, and appeal to, racist, essentialist, and reactionary *inter-* and *intra-*racial distinctions: (1) through positioning those marked as 'white' as essentially different from and superior to those marked as 'non-white', and (2) through marginalizing practices of being white that fail to exemplify dominant ideals. (1292)

Hughey's concept of "hegemonic whiteness" is useful for recognizing that racist discourses can operate in parallel dialectics of racialization, whereby not only are non-whites situated differently from whites, but some whites, those who Anna Stubblefield (2007) terms "tainted whites," are also relegated to subordinate and inferior positions within their own racial category. Ann Stoler (2001) argues that these intra-racial constructs conjoin race and class "lower-orders" in order to preserve an association of whiteness with respectability, civility, and privilege for bourgeois elites. Robin Brownlie (2006) crafts a somewhat similar argument regarding the interlacing of race and class constructs in their study of First Nations enfranchisement in Ontario in the interwar years. When examining the case file records of Indigenous men and women who applied to the Department of Indian Affairs for enfranchisement, Brownlie found that it was only Indigenous people whose behaviour approximated the "parameters of whiteness" who were successful in their applications. According to Brownlie, whiteness was "both a shorthand for full citizenship and a prerequisite for it" (47). To be considered "close to white," Indigenous men and women had to demonstrate self-discipline, sobriety, virtue, have education, and have the ability to earn an income and pay taxes—in other words, they had to be self-sufficient. Brownlie concludes by asserting the importance of recognizing whiteness as a "status" as opposed to simply a biological or cultural category.

If we apply the concept of "hegemonic whiteness" to MacMurchy's discussions of race and her references to the "Canadian National Stock," it helps to illuminate how she was de facto demarcating *amongst* whites who did and who did not constitute a proper Canadian citizen, and who was and who was not to be considered a physically and mentally "fit" subject worthy of the rights and entitlements of citizenship. I shall return to the question of citizenship later in this discussion, but it is important to consider here how MacMurchy was constituting social relations through a construct of race, albeit in a manner that deployed racial concepts not against non-whites, but whites who she and other eugenicists obviously regarded as lesser-than and inferior to what they defined as the "Canadian National Stock." Given the focus and the emphasis of MacMurchy's reports on feebleminded women, this was clearly constructing some white women—poor, marginal, and sexually non-conforming white women—as *not* the mothers of the race. It was also constructing them as disabled.

While MacMurchy's reports concentrated for the most part on archetypal eugenic concerns, namely women's unbridled sexuality and their reproductive propensities, one can also glimpse in her writings how eugenicists were troubled by an array of female behavioural and personality traits, which they suggested were indicative of mental defect. The case studies presented in MacMurchy's reports drew out a portrait of feebleminded females as unkempt and slovenly with messy hair, shabby clothing, and a general "untidy appearance." They either talked "incessantly" or were sullen and brooding. Their homes were described as disorderly and dirty, often located in the "lowest city haunts." Feebleminded mothers were portrayed as "neglecting" their children. If single, they rarely held steady employment, and when they did, they performed their work poorly. Most vexing, however, for MacMurchy, was the demeanor of many feebleminded women. The examples she presented stressed their "quarrelsome" natures, "abusive" (complaining) manners, their "surliness," and their "irritable tempers." According to MacMurchy, most feebleminded women were simply "hard and unattractive, impudent, insolent and useless." However, she argued, under constant supervision and direction in an institutional setting, a mentally defective woman could be "taught to read and write, to sing, to cook to sew, to knit. With good, simple food, regular bathing, physical exercise, regular habits, etc., she becomes strong, bright-eyed and attractive. She becomes quiet, obedient and well-behaved."

MacMurchy obviously framed the issue of feeblemindedness, especially the problem of feebleminded women, within a paradigm that stigmatized particular forms of female behaviour that fell outside hegemonic bourgeois, Anglo-Celtic, heteronormative, patriarchal norms. Her critiques of women's sexual agency, poor and working-class women's divergent moral standards (with respect to sex and reproduction outside of marriage), their distinct forms of family formation (large, often female-headed, and lacking domestic "order"), their "unfeminine" deportment, and vulnerable women's heightened dependency on social services, cast behaviours associated with women's social and economic disadvantage as oppositional to bourgeois norms, as

simply "not normal." In this sense, feminist readings of eugenics as a dialectic project, simultaneously constituting divergent class, race, and gender identities and status is correct (Gordon 2002; Petchesky 1990; Ladd-Taylor 1997). But it also framed these identities and socio-economic locations as *against* the social, the economic, and the political interests of "normal" bourgeois subjects.

In addition to pointing out the moral, the reproductive, and the social burdens that white feebleminded women imposed on the state, MacMurchy also presented them as a serious economic threat. According to MacMurchy, Ontarians incurred a tremendous financial expense by maintaining the feebleminded in the community, especially feebleminded women and girls. In her 1908 report, she asserted: "it may be unhesitatingly affirmed that if provision were now made…for the care and protection of feeble-minded women and girls… [the] number [of feebleminded] would never increase and might even decrease. Nothing could be more economical." MacMurchy went to great lengths to point out that feebleminded women cost taxpayers hundreds of dollars annually in free V.D. treatments offered through municipal public health services. With respect to the numbers of feebleminded in charitable and correctional institutions, MacMurchy asserted: "the Feeble-Minded…make us PAY, PAY, PAY for their food, their shelter, their clothes, their folly, their crimes, their children." To reinforce the costs of this for taxpayers and the state, MacMurchy cited a study conducted in Pennsylvania where it was estimated that two feebleminded families had cost the state over a quarter of a million dollars in twenty-five years of social welfare maintenance. Almost every report discussed the "enormous sums" expended by churches, benevolent societies, and taxpayers in sustaining the feebleminded in the community.

A broader politic is evident in MacMurchy's writings in that, in addition to constructing particular classed, gendered, and racialized identities and normative ideals, MacMurchy's sensationalist rhetoric was also designed to prompt significant constrictions to the legal rights of marginal populations through the construct of feeblemindedness—that is to say, through the paradigm of disability. Specifically, MacMurchy and other eugenicists sought to curtail the autonomy, rights, and freedoms of those deemed mentally "unfit" by motivating public and, thus, governmental support for new regulatory mechanisms that would give professionals the power to directly intervene in and control the lives of marginalized and troubling segments of the population. In this sense, MacMurchy's work was centrally embroiled in a project of state formation, paralleling unprecedented interventionist policies developed in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries in Ontario and elsewhere in areas such as child protection, social welfare, juvenile delinquency, prostitution, and homosexuality.

Eugenic initiatives around mental defect were significantly onerous, however, as they established a governance framework that could potentially be applied to anyone, regardless of whether or not they transgressed formal state laws, as long as they could be officially deemed mentally defective through an IQ test and medical certification. Given the minimal and often substandard educational opportunities that marginalized men and women had in the early 1900s, a poor IQ rating was not difficult to obtain. Additionally, eugenic initiatives were a harsher mode of governance than other forms of state intervention as they could result in permanent institutionalization—a life-long institutional sentence that neither criminal justice nor social welfare regulators could impose on "troublesome" portions of the population (Radford and Park 1993). This was quite intentional. As MacMurchy put it, an "indeterminate sentence" was the "only solution" to the problem of feeblemindedness in the community.

MacMurchy's work as Inspector of the Feeble-Minded was essentially about providing a rationalization that would motivate popular support for substantial changes in Ontario's legislative and policy contexts, and the governance of economically vulnerable populations. In this way, MacMurchy and other eugenicists were embroiled in a project of disablement, achieved through a reconfiguration of social and political citizenship—not only discursively through an oppositional positioning of the "fit" and the "unfit," but also materially by explicitly calling for enhancements in the power and, thus, the ability of medical professionals to curb the autonomy and freedoms of those deemed "unfit" through certification as mentally defective. This disenfranchisement was most obviously achieved through institutionalization, but also through a range of other restrictions in civic rights such as legal con-

straints around marriage, restrictive immigration legislation, exclusionary labour practices, and limitations around access to equal education with the formation of segregated separate classes and schools for mentally defective children (Carey 2009). The project of disenfranchisement also eventually included the erosion of liberties with respect to reproduction and body autonomy rights through surgical sterilizations of men and women deemed feebleminded.[6]

When eugenics advocates, such as MacMurchy, spoke of the feebleminded, they were carving out a new category of disability.[7] This project entailed a reformulation of taxonomies traditionally associated with intellectual impairments, building out and upon the long-established and formally recognized medico-legal classifications of "idiot" and "imbecile." "Idiots" referred to persons not able to fully develop speech and who were generally considered as having a mental age below three. Most mental health professionals identified this disorder as congenital; that is, a condition present from birth or acquired in the early stages of childhood development. The diagnosis of "imbecile" was used to distinguish acquired conditions, produced through an injury or disease of the brain subsequent to birth. It was believed that both idiots and imbeciles manifested some form of physical stigmata and, thus, were detectable through simple observation (Berrios et al. 1995, 212-258). Feeblemindedness, on the other hand, was conceptualized by eugenic experts as a different class of intellectual disability all together, with a higher level of intelligence than that of an idiot or imbecile, and generally undistinguishable in appearance from "normal" individuals (Winston, Butzer, and Ferris 2004). According to MacMurchy (1920), the feebleminded were the "almost" normal (McDonagh 2001). American psychologist, Henry H. Goddard, described them as a group of "invisible," "high-grade defectives" who "the public is entirely ignorant of" (Gelb 1989, 375-376).

A central impediment in pursuing eugenical reforms, especially the custodial confinement of the feebleminded, was the fact that only individuals certifiable as insane, idiots, or imbeciles could be legally confined to mental institutions (Simmons 1982, 71). MacMurchy flagged this problem as early as 1907, when she pointed out in her second report that, since the feebleminded could not be legally certified as either insane or idiots, they could not be confined to mental asylums in Ontario. Hence, in order to gain greater political support for legislative reforms that would ensure their institutionalization, eugenicists, such as MacMurchy and Goddard, devoted considerable space in their publications to explaining and defining what feeblemindedness was, constructing it as a new form of mental "defect." Like most eugenic representations in this era, they situated the mentally defective oppositionally in terms of what they were not. "We know what feeble-mindedness is," Goddard asserted in 1914, "and we have come to suspect all persons who are incapable of adapting themselves to their environment and living up to conventions of society or acting sensibly, of being feeble-minded (Gould 1981, 161).

Class and gender figured prominently as a subtext in eugenic definitions of feeblemindedness. A passage from MacMurchy's 1906 report where she was trying to explain to readers what exactly feeblemindedness was, illustrates this point quite well:

> It would seem as if they possessed certain brain cells in a state of quiescence, capable of some development or of some degeneration. Thus, time spent in teaching them to read, write, and cipher is largely wasted, but they can do farm-work, household work, washing, cleaning, knitting, sewing, weaving, sometimes lace-making. They can make clothes under supervision and with some help. Cleaning and polishing operations they are often expert at. What they cannot do is to manage their own affairs. Far less take any share in directing others, as all normal persons do. They lack the power of restraint and inhibition. The feeble-minded are difficult to define, but not difficult to recognize. They are below those of normal, though small, intellect, but above actual imbeciles and idiots. They are able to act and may speak fairly well, though usually more or less foolishly. They can partly, or even wholly, earn their living under supervision, but they are not capable of protecting and taking care of themselves out in the world at large. They lack prudence and self-control. They have not proper will or judgment.

Clearly, the feebleminded were not active, self-determining, conforming, rational subjects. They could be productive, but only in menial ways and only under the supervision of supposedly more capable citizens who knew how to manage and provide direction to those subordinate to them. Whether MacMur-

chy was conscious or not of the gendered and classed message communicated through this definition is not clear. But in her attempt to delineate feeblemindedness, MacMurchy made it abundantly evident that being feebleminded was much like being a woman, especially a working-class domestic servant. By commingling gender and mental defect, and leveraging in class as indicators of what *did not* constitute "Canadian National Stock," the task of arguing for constraints to the civic rights of the feebleminded was no doubt made easier. It is in this symbiotic or dialectic interlocking of gender-class-race-disability that eugenics advocates were able to carry forward, but also significantly transform through processes of medicalization and disablement, older nineteenth-century notions of worthy/ deserving and unworthy/undeserving subjects, allocating who should have privilege, status, and power and who should not.

Eugenic representations of mental defect constructed these distinctions on the basis of both corporeal and non-corporeal "markers"—appearances, behavioural traits, and attitudes. "Good" mentally and physically able subjects, those "fit" for civic inclusion—the "normal," according to MacMurchy—were educated individuals who demonstrated prudence, restraint, good judgment, a robust moral will, and a strong degree of self-control. They were persons able to work without supervision and adept in directing and managing others. The "good" subject could look after their own financial, domestic, and social affairs and did not need help from others. They were autonomous, self-sufficient, and, most importantly, economically independent. In other words, they were the modern, rational, liberal subject who conformed to dominant Anglo-bourgeois and masculine ideals regarding conduct. That this construct posed problems for women, especially economically dependent, married middle-class women, does not appear to have been considered.

Veronica Strong-Boag (1979) argues that first-wave maternal feminists and pioneering women physicians, such as MacMurchy, often focused their work and reform efforts on marginal women for both strategic and somewhat sympathetic reasons. The concept of care for women by women provided a pivotal ideological paradigm through which maternal feminism could rationally carve out new professional careers in areas such as medicine and social work, justifying it as an expansion of women's traditional domestic roles and skills. Strong-Boag maintains that the feminism brandished by early female physicians, such as MacMurchy, was "constrained" by their class and race locations as members of Canada's middle-class professional elite, but that they nevertheless evinced a fairly sympathetic view on the plight of their disadvantaged sisters that led them to gravitate to services for women and children (123). It is difficult, however, to locate much empathy or sympathy for poor women in MacMurchy's reports. According to MacMurchy, feebleminded women were the "most undesirable and troublesome members of society."

In *Growing a Race: Nellie L. McClung and the Fiction of Eugenic Feminism,* Devereux (2005) attempts to capture the shifting complexities of first-wave feminist thought in the ever-changing ideological context and politics of early-twentieth-century eugenics. In this task, she concludes that feminism and eugenics "shared an ideological basis in the context of imperialism. Both were concerned with liberating women "to serve and save the race" and with creating "an enlightened culture of motherhood" devoted to the imperial mission of ruling the world…it reproduced an idea of empowered maternalism that was embedded in racial and social hierarchies" (41). According to Devereux, eugenics provided a window of opportunity for early-twentieth-century white, middle-class women to demonstrate their abilities and their public value. But they could only successfully do this within the ideological constraints of eugenic imperialism. As Devereux notes, early-twentieth-century eugenic discourses

> provided feminists with an unassailable subject position with a national imperative and feminists took it. The eugenic solution was contingent upon the social recognition of a particular ability in white, middle-class women: it was *because* middle-class women were mothers of the race that they were called upon to do so much. (43)

Devereux points out that, while the aims of eugenicists and maternal feminism collided in the paradigm of "mother of the race," feminists also colluded in this construct. According to Devereux, first-wave feminists expanded and advanced this notion much farther than what leading male eugenicists sometimes wanted. "Perversely," she argues, "the discourse of eugenics actually

facilitated a much greater expansion of women's work in the public sphere than it had arguably undertaken to promote. First-wave maternal feminism, for its part, was engaged in a much more aggressive nationalist and imperialist push for political power as a means to "efficiency" than it is usually credited with undertaking." (43).

While this aggressive push for power was carried out around axes of gender, race, and class, it also centered to a considerable degree on a construct of disability. To be sure, first-wave feminists, such as MacMurchy, promoted a class- and race-based rhetoric of motherhood and what constituted "good" and "bad" mothering, but they did this within a disabling paradigm concerned with distinguishing the "fit" from the "unfit." In doing so, MacMurchy and other first-wave feminists deftly leveraged a range of social categories—gender, class, race, and transgressive forms of sexuality—into binary groupings of normal/abnormal, fit/unfit. Their power and success, thus, lay precisely in the comingling of categories that the construct of disability allowed and reinforced. That the dialectic of eugenics ultimately reified new proscriptions and models of motherhood, womanhood, and citizenship that constrained both the colonized and the colonizers, as some women's historians have argued (Stoler 2001), is perhaps less pivotal than the fact that eugenics facilitated and entrenched new modes of surveillance and governance, initially to regulate poor white women labelled disabled, but extended and applied after the Second World War, to broader groups of women with "normal" IQs, including Indigenous women, women of colour, poor and working-class women, immigrant women, lesbian women, and middle-class women. This trajectory, as Stoler (2001) notes, disrupts notions of "a unidirectional historical framing" of developments as emanating from a privileged core to the peripheral margins (848). Rather, it suggests that women across social categories have a vested interest in what happens at the peripheries.

Through the efforts of eugenicists and first-wave feminists, such as MacMurchy, a conceptual foundation was laid, via a construct of disability (as a form of social, moral, civic, and productive/reproductive "unfitness"), that would eventually be extended in the latter half of the twentieth century and applied to a wider range of women beyond those labelled feebleminded. Studies by Canadian and American women's historians have demonstrated how eugenics informed social welfare policies across the twentieth century, with supportive maternal welfare measures geared to "fit," white, middle-class mothers, while "unfit" mothering increasingly informed justifications for constrained social spending on racialized and economically vulnerable mothers and their and children (Ladd-Taylor 1994). In the postwar period, in North America, eugenics continued to fuel punitive antinatalist policies disproportionately aimed at Indigenous, Hispanic, and African-American single mothers such as involuntary sterilizations, one-child welfare benefit caps, and forced use of Norplant contraceptives (Thomas 1998; Smith 2005). Karen Stote's (2012) important research on the coercive sterilizations of First Nations women in Canada demonstrates that dysgenic reproductive policies directed at Indigenous women actually accelerated in the 1960s and 1970s, facilitated through funding from the federal Indian Health Service. After the Second World War, international agencies financed, as well, global population control initiatives geared to curbing the reproductive capacities of poor women of colour in the global South (Dowbiggin 2008; Bashford 2008; Mooney 2010). Women with disabilities continue to this day to experience considerable eugenically-informed social and medical coercion around reproduction, including pressure to voluntarily undergo sterilization or have an abortion when they do become pregnant (Finger 1990; Kallianes and Rubenfeld 1997; Tilley et al. 2012).

Research has begun to highlight how supportive eugenical measures geared to "fit" mothers should also not necessarily be read as a boon. As both Canadian and American historians illustrate, positive eugenics led to a "tyranny" of new pediatric, gender, and familial norms, heighted medical/psychological surveillance, and a broad range of expert interventions aimed at white, middle-class women and the promotion of "fit" families (Gleason 1999; Adams 1997; Stern 2002, 2005; Iacovetta 2006; Stephen 2007). In *Building a Better Race: Gender, Sexuality, and Eugenics from the Turn of the Century to the Baby Boom,* Wendy Kline (2001) argues that early-twentieth-century eugenics put in place a new "reproductive morality" that reconstructed motherhood "as a privilege, not a right" (126). According to Kline, the reproductive morality reified within eugenics "was little more than a nineteenth-century notion of gender dressed in the garb of science." The "baby boom of the

1950s," she concludes, "represented the triumph eugenics had been looking for" (156).

These studies provide a useful framework for critically re-evaluating eugenics and first-wave feminism as centrally embroiled in constitutive processes that significantly re-formed social relations, across the axes of gender, class, and race through a construct of disability that in due course proved to be exceedingly malleable. Their labours set in place new modes of governance that had significant effect for all women over the full twentieth century, but that had particularly attendant and harsh consequences for indigent, racialized, and disabled women. In "Race, Gender, and Welfare Reform: The Antinatalist Response," Susan Thomas (1998) notes:

> To be a woman, poor and fertile in the United States in the 1990s is to be blamed by politicians and social reformers for an increase in poverty and alleged immorality in society. Poor women, it is said or implied, are bearing children for the purpose of obtaining or supplementing a welfare check. They are sexually out of control and are the cause of their own poverty. The proof of their degeneracy and immorality is evidence by their entrapment in a spreading 'culture of single motherhood': excessive sexuality, expressed in nonmarital pregnancy and childbirth; changing family patterns, represented by woman-headed families; and welfare 'dependencies,' incorrectly believed to encourage nonmarital births and family breakdown…Nonmarital childbearing among the poor is thought to produce troubled children who will likely rebound to the public ill, either as criminals, school dropouts, or as budgetary liabilities such as welfare dependents. To lawmakers across the political spectrum, controlling indigent women's fertility is the first step in moral and behavioral rehabilitation, and ensuring that poor women do not reproduce has become one of the most popular welfare reform proposals of the 1990s. (419-420)

Thomas' reflections on public policies and popular sentiments at the close of the twentieth century highlight the enduring and the profound impact that eugenics had for marginalized women. That first-wave feminism was both enmeshed in and ensnared by this project, there is no doubt. MacMurchy's words dissonantly resonate in Thomas' comments. But it was primarily around and through a *disabling paradigm* that drew fluidly on hegemonic raced, classed, heteronormative, and gender ideals, that women were ultimately disempowered across a range of social categories over the course of the twentieth century. This suggests that we need to place disability and processes of disablement more critically at the center of analyses and deliberations over the meaning, the mission, and the ultimate impact of first-wave feminism and early-twentieth-century eugenics.

Endnotes

[1] Ontario, Legislative Assembly, "Sixth Report of the Feeble-Minded in Ontario, 1911," *Ontario Sessional Papers,* 1912, 11. MacMurchy's reports were published annually in the Legislative Assembly of Ontario's *Ontario Sessional Papers* from 1907 to 1920. All quotes and details attributed to MacMurchy in this paper are drawn from these reports unless otherwise noted. Page references are available from the author.

[2] For a discussion of the 'mothers of the race' concept as it was used in Canada, see Valverde (1992).

[3] My work is based on an understanding of disability as a social construct (distinct from impairment) that shifts spatially and temporally and that is socially produced through hegemonic ideologies, material conditions, and social relations within particular contexts. For a similar definition of disability, see Wendell (1996, 45).

[4] This is not to say that MacMurchy did not express racist and anti-immigrant views in other contexts or publications. See Reitmanova (2008).

[5] In her reports, MacMurchy also concentrated to a considerable degree on feebleminded youths in the Ontario school system, using this information to build a case for separate classes for mentally defective children or their removal to custodial care in institutions. However, in this article, I am focusing on the content in her reports that centered on urging the institutionalization of feebleminded women and girls, which was considerable in its own right.

[6] Unlike Alberta and British Columbia, Ontario never passed involuntary sterilization legislation. However, there is evidence that eugenic sterilizations did occur in the province. See de la Cour (2013, 63-77).

[7] The official diagnostic classification for feeblemindedness became 'Moron.'

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Mompreneurs, Leaning In, and Opting Out: Work/Family Choices under Neoliberalism

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Abstract

This article explores three trends in the search for work-family balance and relates these trends to the neoliberal family policy context in Anglo-Saxon states. I argue that these models reflect current ideologies about motherhood, the state, and work. Ultimately, these models reinforce current ideas about intensive mothering and the "good mother" and neoliberal norms surrounding the good worker and citizen.

Résumé

Cet article explore trois tendances dans la recherche de l'équilibre entre le travail et la vie personnelle et relie ces tendances au contexte de la politique néolibérale de la famille au Canada. Je défends l'idée que ces modèles reflètent les idéologies actuelles sur la maternité, l'État et le travail. En fin de compte, ils reflètent les idées actuelles au sujet du maternage intensif et de la « bonne mère » et les normes néolibérales concernant le bon travailleur et le bon citoyen.

Introduction

In the twenty-first century, much attention has been given to three trends in mothering: mompreneurs, leaning in, and opting out. These three trends purport to help women balance the competing demands of a career and family life by allowing women to run businesses from home, opt-out of the paid workforce to be a stay-at-home mom, or lean on other women for support while leaning into their career. This article suggests that these three models are not solutions to the problem of work/family balance, but rather compromises reflecting neoliberal understandings of motherhood, the state, and the nature of work. Ultimately, all three models reflect current ideals in western Anglo-Saxon societies about what makes a good mother combined with the neoliberal norms surrounding the good worker and citizen. By exploring current trends within mothering —the mompreneur, leaning in, and opting out—within the context of neoliberal social policy, the impact of family and work related policies on women's choices becomes apparent. I argue that the choices offered under neoliberal welfare states are not really choices at all; rather they reinforce the values of neoliberalism and deny the importance of societal responses to the needs of women, mothers, and families. What is really required is a new social model that reflects contemporary family structures and changing gender roles.

This article explores the relationship between mothering and the welfare state within the context of Anglo-Saxon western states. Gøsta Esping-Anderson's (1990) typology of welfare states continues to dominate discussions of welfare states and comparative welfare state policy. He describes the liberal welfare state as characterized by means-tested assistance and modest universal transfers or social insurance plans that cater to lower- and working-class citizens (26). He argues that the progress of social reform in these welfare regimes is restricted by "traditional, liberal work-ethic norms" (26). Examples of liberal welfare regimes include Canada, Australia, the UK, and the USA. Although there

are significant differences between these states and their social welfare policies, they are more similar than different in the types of means-tested benefits and limited parental leaves they offer. Liberal welfare states are particularly interesting to study in relation to motherhood because of the limited role the state has historically played in supporting mothers and families, the strong influence of neoliberal ideology, and the recent emergence of the motherhood models of mompreneurs, opting out, and leaning in as a way to negotiate work and family obligations in the absence of strong state supports for women's participation in the labour force.

This article begins with a discussion of motherhood in contemporary times. It draws on the existing scholarly literature on mothering and links this literature explicitly to the work on family policy. In doing so, I first examine the role of the state in defining, reinforcing, and constructing gender norms around mothering and, second, the impact of family policy on women's choices. The discussion then focuses on the impact of neoliberalism on the family policy context for mothering. The final section of the article analyzes mompreneurs, opting out, and leaning in as manifestations of the neoliberal discourses of individualism and free choice and the limited ability of these discourses to address the real challenges mothers face in their efforts to balance work and family. While this article is largely based on existing scholarly research, it brings together the often isolated bodies of research in motherhood studies, public policy, and popular discourses around work and family. The article identifies the linkages between these areas of scholarly inquiry and demonstrates the embeddedness of neoliberalism within contemporary motherhood in liberal welfare states.

This research is, by necessity, interdisciplinary. Not only does it draw on the field of family policy by explicitly exploring the linkages between culture and policy, it also strives to develop our knowledge of the gendered, classed, and racialized implications of these policies. Through the interdisciplinary and intersectional lens used in this article, I hope to begin the process of addressing some of the weaknesses within the field of social policy studies such as the need to understand the symbolic value of public policies (Hennig, Gatermann, and Hägglund 2012); to explore the relationship between cultural gender arrangements and family policy; and to determine how these relationships may influence the decisions of individuals regarding balancing family and work (Hegewisch and Gornick 2011). In particular, this research is influenced by John Clarke's (2004) work on the welfare state in which he argues for the need for analysis that explores how a specific moment is shaped by multiple and potentially contradictory forces, pressures, and tendencies.

Mothering in Contemporary Times

Public policies—the collection of laws, policies, measures, and actions taken by governments on a particular issue or topic—reflect and influence cultural norms and behaviour. When we look at mothering and families, public policies can be understood both as resulting from society's beliefs about the role of mothers in caring for and raising children and as shaping those beliefs. Following the Second World War, most western democracies developed welfare states that, among other things, reflected and influenced the shape and character of families as well as the choices available to women. Over the past century, however, women's participation in the paid labour force has increased dramatically and the policy framework for families has expanded significantly; yet, the idealized roles and expectations of mothers remain an enduring challenge and source of women's oppression.

Ideas about motherhood and mothering are culturally derived and reflect not only normative ideas about gender, but also race and class. Shari L. Thurer (1994), in her iconic text on mothering *Myths of Motherhood: How Culture Reinvents the Good Mother,* argues that "the good mother is reinvented as each age or society defines her anew, in its own terms, according to its own mythology" (xv). Similarly, Ian Hacking (1999) asserts:

> Men's and women's domestic roles are not ordained by human nature, biology, or men's and women's psychology. Rather, they are the product of particular historical circumstances, social processes, and ideologies, and vary widely by race, religion, and time period. Far from being fixed and static categories, motherhood and fatherhood are social, cultural, and ideological constructs. Their social definition and meaning has been changing, varied, and contested. (qtd. in Mintz 2014, n.p.)

While the socially constructed nature of mothering, parenting, and families is widely acknowledged, ideas about mothering have an enduring quality. The

idea of the mother as "loving, nurturing, tending every need, seeking tactfully to guide [the child] toward becoming a cooperative member of a happy family, and, all the while, 'having fun'" (Thurer 1994, 248) remains powerful. It is under the shadow of these unrealistic expectations that mothers over the past few generations struggled to balance their own economic and personal needs and desires with those of their partners, children, and society.

These social, cultural, and ideological constructs are necessarily impacted by race, ethnicity, ability, and class as well as gender. Racialized and working-class women often experience motherhood differently than middle- or upper-class women. For example, they may not have the option of not working or staying at home with the children. The intensive mothering expected of middle- or upper-class women is not necessarily expected of lower class or racialized women (Elliott, Powell, and Brenton 2015; Byrne 2006; Hughes Miller, Hager, and Jaremko Bromwich 2017). Thus, the commonly defined discourses around the good mother are often applied most stringently to the middle-class mother who has more choices available to her with regards to balancing parenting and career and, therefore, can be seen as making the "wrong" choices.

Current social norms around motherhood continue to assert the importance of a mother's presence, especially during the early years, as a mother's nurturing love is seen as necessary for the proper emotional, physical, and intellectual development of the child. Thurer's (1994) comment from twenty years ago that, "Current standards for good mothering are so formidable, self-denying, elusive, changeable, and contradictory that they are unattainable" (xvi) still holds true. This over-emphasis on the role of the mother, often described as intensive mothering, puts tremendous pressure on mothers to achieve unattainable levels of perfection. As Sharon Hays (1996) argues in *The Cultural Contradictions of Motherhood*, "intensive mothering is a gendered model that advises mothers to expend a tremendous amount of time, energy, and money in raising their children" despite the increasing numbers of women in the workplace and a social emphasis on self-interested gain under neoliberalism (x). Unfortunately, cultural expectations and the structure of the family and workplace have not evolved with the changes in the structure of families or the participation of women in the workforce and professional careers (Christopher 2012). Again, however, the women under scrutiny in the popular media are generally white, educated, and middle or upper class. The discourses surrounding more marginalized women tend to focus on their failures, for example, through media discourses on welfare mothers, teen mothers, or lone mothers (Hughes Miller, Hager, and Jaremko Bromwich 2017). The choices of establishing a home business, opting out of their career path, or leaning in to their career (while paying others to do their care work) are not choices that are available to all women.

Over the course of the twentieth century, families and our ideas about what constitutes a normal family changed quite dramatically. More women continue working outside of the home following the birth of their children. Men are less likely to earn a family wage and families increasingly need two incomes to attain a desirable standard of living. More marriages now end in separation and divorce, more children are born outside of marriage, and more children are raised in single-parent homes, predominantly headed by women.

As mentioned above, public policy both influences and is influenced by national and regional cultures. For example, laws regarding marriage, child custody, legitimacy, citizenship, and property are a reflection of cultural norms or how we, as a society, think of families. At the same time, these rules and regulations also shape our behaviour. When we look to mothering, public policies play a similar role. Family policies, including maternity leaves, childcare programs, and economic supplements for families, fall largely within the domain of the welfare state. Different types of welfare states are more or less likely to have strong family policies and the policies themselves are likely to be influenced by the political culture of the state as well as by cultural norms around family and mothering (Pfau-Effinger 2012). Thus, dominant cultural models of the family influence women's behaviour and choices regarding the care of their children and the combination of paid employment outside of the home and family responsibilities. The policies themselves are a product of society's beliefs about the role of mothers in caring for and raising children. However, the existence of maternity and paternity leaves, publicly funded quality childcare, and economic incentives also influence the choices of women (and families more generally) when it comes to how

they engage in the practice of mothering, providing care for their children and balancing their work and family lives.

The welfare state, the combination of policies and programs aimed at providing health and economic services for all members of society, also reflects assumptions about families and parenting. Welfare states are made and remade under the influence of complex social and political relationships and forces. These forces vary between societies and over time, making cross-national or cross-cultural analyses difficult when taking culture into account (Clarke 2004, 25). The form and content of the welfare state impacts family forms and choices. For example, the availability of affordable childcare influences a family's decision regarding whether one or both parents should work outside the home. Emanuele Ferragina and Martin Seeleib-Kaiser (2011) argue that the relationship between care and welfare is a core element of the modern welfare state. Furthermore, "demographic trends and the difficulty for parents to reconcile work and care further demonstrate the importance of this nexus…the future of welfare state systems will be dependent on the ability to balance work and family life" (597). Questions remain regarding what role the state should play and the costs and benefits of these programs. These debates are further complicated by gender stereotypes and cultural assumptions about what is best for children and families.

The importance of culture in the social construction of norms around families and mothering must be taken into account. Birgit Pfau-Effinger (2012) argues that the "attempt to explain cross-national differences in the employment behavior of mothers with small children mainly by differences in welfare-state family policies is of limited value. We need a more complex explanatory framework that, besides other factors, also seriously considers the role of cultural factors" (531). Similarly, Michelle Budig, Joya Misra and Irene Boeckmann (2012) asserts that "work-family policies are replete with gendered meanings about the role of women in employment and families" (165). They suggest an interdependent relationship between culture and policy, in that the culture itself leads to the creation of specific family policies and the level of individual "take up" of policies and programs through societal/cultural expectations about the role of women and mothers. These expectations influence women's decisions about working and how employers understand and treat mothers in the workplace (167). Thus, laws related to custody, punishment of adultery, inheritance, and adoption have reinforced this ideal of the family. Social norms and culture, family policy, and the choices of women and families combine to create the context for mothering within the specific country. This context, in turn, both enables equality to varying degrees and limits the options and choices of women and men.

When we look at the liberal, Anglo-Saxon welfare states of Australia, Canada, the United Kingdom, and the United States, the levels of women in the workforce are very similar.

Table 1.1 Women's and the Labour Force

	AUS		CAN		UK		USA	
	W	M	W	M	W	M	W	M
Participation in Labour Force (%)	59	72	67	71	56	69	56	69
Births Per Woman	1.9		1.6		1.9		1.9	

W- Women, M- Men

Source: Feng et al. 2016. *Little Book of Gender Data*, World Bank.

As Table 1.1 shows, among these four countries, Canada is an outlier in terms of women's participation in the labour force and the number of children per woman. This trend continues when we explore in more depth the participation of mothers in the work force. In Canada, the number of women with children under the age of three who are working outside the home has doubled since the 1970s to 64.4 percent (Ferrao 2010). As well, 68.9 percent of female lone parents with children under the age of sixteen are employed and 73.8 percent of women from two parent families with children under the age of sixteen are employed (Ferrao 2010). Women are much more likely than men to work part-time, as seven out of ten part-time workers are women, and one in five of them state that they work part-time for personal or family reasons (Ferrao 2010). In Australia, 36 percent of mothers work part-time and 25 percent work fulltime. The numbers of mothers working outside the home increased in Australia, but remains lower than in Canada (Baxter 2013). In the UK, statistics demonstrate that there is an overall increase in the number of wom-

en working, which is partly attributable to an increase in the number of mothers who work (Jenkins 2013). Over the past twenty years, the number of mothers working outside the home increased from 67 percent to 72 percent, and the number of lone mothers working increased from 43 percent in 1996 to 60 percent in 2013 (Jenkins 2013). Finally, in the USA, 69.9 percent of women with children under the age of 18 were employed in 2013, an increase of over 30 percent since the 1970s ("Mothers and Families" 2017). Perhaps more significantly, 57.3 percent of mothers with children under the age of one are employed outside the home ("Mothers and Families" 2017).

The relationship between parental leave, childcare, and women's participation in the labour force is complex, as discussed in the next section, but limited conclusions can be drawn from the numbers above when we examine them in the context of policies. As Table 1.2 shows, these four countries offer a range of paid parental leave benefits.

Table 1.2 Paid Parental Leave Benefits

	Total Number of Paid Weeks	Average Payment Rate	Full Rate Equivalent in Weeks
AUS	18	42.3	7.9
CAN	52	52.8	27.4
UK	39	30.9	12
USA	0	0	0
European Union Average	*65.6*		

Source: OECD 2016

The level of benefits covers the extremes of the USA, with no federal paid leave entitlements, to Canada with fifty-two weeks paid leave, although at a fairly low rate. The UK and Australia claim the middle ground with fairly restrictive and limited benefits. All four liberal welfare regimes, however, are significantly below the European Union average. The lack of paid leave in the USA contributes to the high number of working women with children under the age of one. The longer guaranteed leaves in Canada can also be understood as contributing to the higher level of women in fulltime work, as women do not have to leave employment to care for young children.

The increasing numbers of women with children who work outside the home has both led to changes in policy—for example, through demands for the right to childbirth and maternity leave, high-quality and affordable childcare, and pay equity—and reflects the limitations of the policies available. These effects combine with social norms around motherhood that continue to assert the importance of a mother's presence, especially during the early years. Mompreneurship, opting out, and leaning in are ways in which women struggle to reconcile the conflict between home and work within a policy context that offers limited support. As well, it is important to remember that the choices of other women are even more restricted as they may not have the personal or familial resources available to them to choose the more privileged path. The evolution of the welfare state provides greater choice and support to more women, but continues to have its limitations, particularly under neoliberal ideology.

The Rise of Neoliberalism

Towards the end of the 1970s, the Keynesian welfare state came under attack from neoliberalism. Neoliberalism represented a backlash against the welfare state of the post-war period and argued for more market freedom and less government and state interference (both in markets and in individual lives). With regards to the welfare state, neoliberalism's emphasis on rolling back social programs, reducing government spending, and individual/familial responsibility for their own economic success and security, rather than dependence on state programs, was particularly impactful.

As John Clarke (2010) notes, "For market enthusiasts, there was no domain of social life that could not be improved by its engagement with market dynamics. While this was perhaps most visible in relation to state-related practices, such as social welfare or public service provision, it was claimed to extend to questions of sexual relationships, partner choice and household organization" (376). Whereas the Keynesian welfare state of the post-war period advocated for the political control of markets, neoliberalism aimed for market control of politics (Fraser 2009); the assumption underpinning neoliberalism was that states are inefficient distributors of social goods. Rather markets could do

it better and cheaper and without creating intergenerational dependence on social programs.

Neoliberalism impacts women in unique ways. Alexandra Dobrowolsky (2009) notes that neoliberalism often meant the off-loading of responsibilities from the state to families. Embedded in this was the assumption that women would fill the gaps created by the elimination of political, economic, and social supports. Under neoliberalism, western states, such as Canada, Australia, the USA, and UK, saw an increase in the feminization of poverty (Goldberg and Kremen 1990, 2). Women tend to rely more on government programs, such as childcare and mother's allowances, and be employed by the shrinking government departments that provided them and, thus, feel the impact of these cuts to a greater extent (Dobrowolsky 2009). Ultimately, under neoliberalism, families were to be responsible for themselves rather than dependent on government assistance. In the late 1990s, a shift occurred within these countries—from neoliberalism towards a social investment model. Instead of talking about taxation and spending, governments began talking about strategic "social investments" in areas where the possibility of social and economic returns existed (Dobrowolsky 2009). Ultimately, this model focuses on "employability and creating a knowledgeable, skilled workforce" (Dobrowolsky 2009). Government was to take a more active role in the economy and society than under neoliberalism, but without returning to the perceived "excesses" of the post-war welfare state. The goals of the social investment perspective are increasing social inclusion, minimizing intergenerational poverty, and preparing individuals for likely job conditions, such as decreased job security and an aging population, while overall allowing "individuals and families to maintain responsibility for their well-being" (Jenson 2009, 447).

According to many social policy analysts, the social investment perspective recognizes the contribution of women to society and strives to help women into the workforce, as is argued in the World Economic Forum's *Global Gender Gap Report 2012* (Hausmann, Tyson, and Zahidi 2012). Some maintain that the social investment perspective is helping women attain "life course masculinization" within which women's life and career trajectories would more closely mirror those of men (Esping-Andersen et al. 2002, 94-95). Jane Jenson (2009) suggests that this new approach continues to marginalize women by, first, making them invisible as policies shift to a focus on children, rather than mothers (children, arguably, offer potentially a better return for the investment) and, second, by denying the reality of systemic barriers to women's equality on the "demand" side of the market equation. Neither does it challenge the normative status of the male career path and its dependence on the caring work of women in the private sphere.

The economic crisis of the early twenty-first century, sparked by the collapse of the American sub-market mortgage market, led to new challenges in public policy. The global economic recession placed additional pressures on governments as they faced decreased revenues and increased costs, and demands from citizens for government's assistance in recovering from the crisis. Although global capital has arguably recovered much of its influence in the past few years, the economic crisis did lead to two distinct responses to the previous welfare state models. First, there has been a return to the idea of the state as the "protector" of the people (e.g. Clarke 2010). Second, we are witnessing the emergence of "austerity" as the governing principle in public policy and social programs, particularly in Europe, where countries such as Greece and Ireland have had austerity measures imposed on them by the European Union in exchange for the financial investment necessary to save the countries from bankruptcy. In this sense, austerity appears to be a throwback to the language and the extremes of neoliberalism. Put simply, this approach blames the excessive spending of states, particularly related to the welfare state, for their current economic woes. Advocates of austerity measures argue that the remedy is to be found by drastically reducing the size and scope of the state, government, social programs, and public policy (Mandel 2009). The consequences of this, as with neoliberalism generally, are potentially quite dangerous for women.

Joanne Baker's (2014) analysis of neoliberalism and motherhood in Australia explicitly connects the neoliberal agenda of a smaller state, reduced spending, and individual responsibility to motherhood. She asserts that the "regulatory dimensions of neo-liberalism interact with post-feminism to create an updated and complex environment in which to navigate motherhood" through its focus on private responsibility and the undermining of collective social responses to care-

giving (170). Similarly, a report by the Women's Budget Group in England maintains that female single parents and pensioners in particular are impacted negatively by the cuts to benefits and public services (McVeigh 2013). Specifically, "public sector cuts have reduced job opportunities for women and are making it harder to combine earning a living and taking care of families, and also making it more likely that the gender pay gap will widen" (McVeigh 2013, n.p.). Jane Chelliah (2014) provides further support for this position, arguing that the austerity cuts in the UK have had a disproportionate impact on women, contributing to the feminization of poverty. She connects the "airbrushing" of mothers from public policy to neoliberalism, stating, "neoliberal ideologies claim individuals must work out their own problems within the sphere of the nuclear family because it is too expensive for the government to provide provision…thus, a mother's unpaid work of caregiving becomes integral to the functioning of the neoliberal state" (190).

This political and economic context can be understood as constraining the choices of mothers and families; however, as discussed below, the liberal language of free choice utilized by governments and mothers masks the ideological assumptions and bias within the family policy framework. Although state supports for mothers vary significantly between the Anglo-Saxon liberal states, maternity and parental leaves in these countries provide substantially less income replacement and time away from work than their counterparts in Europe, particularly Scandinavia. The lower level of support for new mothers can be understood as both forcing women back into the workforce shortly after childbirth or adoption to provide financially for their families, or to exploring alternate models of combining work and family; namely: mompreneurship, opting out, or leaning in.

Mompreneurs, Opting Out, and Leaning In

Three models of contemporary motherhood attempt to reconcile the competing claims of home and career for individual women: the mompreneur, opting out, and leaning in. These three models emerged in the context of neoliberal social policy in North America combined with neoconservative ideology aimed at preserving the role of the nuclear family and mothers as caregivers within Canada and the USA. Women's expectations regarding work, careers, and gender equality within the family have risen significantly over the past few generations (Asher 2011); yet, women remain stuck between the proverbial rock and a hard place. While women are increasingly achieving higher levels of education and skills, their ability to accommodate their families within their careers is limited (Ely, Stone, and Ammerman 2014; Ibarra, Ely, and Kolb 2013). The ideas surrounding mompreneurs, leaning in, and opting out speak directly to the challenges mothers face today and the creative ways they are attempting to address them. All three models are limited by the fact that they fail to challenge the status quo and the larger social and structural barriers women face. Instead, they focus on their individual lives and choices. As long as the options for combining work and mothering remain viewed as individual choices, separated from the social and political context that shapes and constrains these choices, little change is possible.

The focus on these types of mothers also ignores the reality of most mothers for whom leaning in, opting out, or mompreneurship are not viable options. The discourse of choice surrounding the models of modern motherhood obfuscates the lack of welfare state social policy, particularly within liberal welfare states, and governmental supports as well as the continuation of gendered expectations around home and caring work. As the sections below demonstrate, these options are only really options for women with the education and personal and financial resources to make them work. Furthermore, instead of challenging barriers to women's equality and full participation in society, these three models reinforce them under the logic of neoliberalism.

Mompreneurs

There are many definitions of a mompreneur, including a woman who balances the role of motherhood with being an entrepreneur, a woman who becomes an entrepreneur after having children, work-at-home moms, a mother who runs her own business out of her home while caring for her children, or a woman who runs a business from her home that focuses on selling goods and services to other moms (Jean and Forbes 2012, 115). The subject of mompreneurs received a great deal of popular attention in recent years. Gillian Anderson and Joseph G. Moore's (2014) analysis of the profiles of mompreneurs in magazines indicates that

mompreneurship reflects as ongoing struggle for these women to earn and care enough to meet their needs and social expectations. Their analysis of the magazines found that:

> while struggles to manage the dual demands of (un)paid work are not altogether ignored, the clear intent of these women's profiles is to celebrate the possibility that mothers might simultaneously carve out a rewarding life, forge stable family relationships, engage in personally rewarding, socially useful paid work, and yet still embody expectations of physical beauty, a sense of self and opportunities for self-care. (99)

Similarly, Franci Rogers's (2012) profile of successful mompreneurs reinforced this ideal with quotations such as "the great thing about this is that I can do it at any hour…I can work things into naptime without being interrupted, or I can do things early in the morning while the kids are still asleep" (41). Being a mompreneur, then, becomes a way of "having it all": the children, the rewarding career, and a stable home and family life while maintaining traditional gender roles. At the same time, the women representing the success of the mompreneur movement are most often white, middle-class, and beautiful, in contrast to the welfare moms of the popular media who are portrayed as racialized, poor, miserable, and lacking in self-control (Anderson and Moore 2014, 99). This dichotomy reinforces gender, class, and racial stereotypes and demonstrates the integrated and intersectional nature of women's struggles to balance work and family.

The rise of the mompreneur as a popular model of motherhood also reflects a subtle critique of the expectations placed on women to be ideal mothers under neoconservatism and to contribute to the public economy under neoliberalism. D. P. Moore (2010), for example, argues that the rise of mompreneurs is partially due to the unrealistic expectations women face regarding their dual (and sometimes conflicting) commitment to their job and their family and the guilt resulting from their failure to balance these two roles successfully (in Jean and Forbes 2012, 115). Melissa Jean and Caroline Forbes (2012) suggest that "becoming a mompreneur can be viewed as a solution to the demanding societal expectations women face" (115). In addition, their 2012 study of mompreneurs in Canada found that most of the women they interviewed came from homes where the income was over $100,000 per year and that the businesses of the mompreneurs comprised less than 20 percent of the family income, suggesting that these were women with the financial freedom to choose entrepreneurship. The business ventures of these women were not solely economically driven. The main reasons for starting their own business was found to be finances, dissatisfaction, market opportunity, and the desire to balance work-family demands. However, as the businesses grew, these women found it increasingly difficult to both care for their children and manage their work (Jean and Forbes 2012).

Part of the popularity of mompreneurs can be tied to its ideal fit with the values of neoliberalism. Mompreneurship can be understood as a reaction to neoliberal and neoconservative ideals and policies that make it harder for women to work outside the home; for example, the lack of affordable quality childcare or the difficulty in finding flexible employment. Yet, mompreneurship is presented as a valuable option for women who want the best of both words. They are viewed as freely making a choice about how to manage family and work, in isolation from the social structures that shape women's working lives. At the same time, this model reifies the role women play as the primary caregivers of small children. Mompreneurs are able to fulfill these conservative roles while still participating in the paid labour force—contributing human capital, utilizing their hard won education and degrees, and making necessary contributions to the family income. As such, the mompreneur is the perfect combination of the liberated woman and the nurturing mother figure.

Opting Out

Opting out speaks to neoconservativism and the idea that women are somehow working against their nature in the public sphere. The "opt-out revolution" is a term coined by the American media and refers to a trend of college-educated, married professional women leaving their careers to become fulltime mothers in recent years (Lovejoy and Stone 2011, 631-632). By "choosing" to opt-out of the paid workforce, these women were represented as reaffirming their roles as mothers. Many scholars, however, question whether or not opting out is really a choice, as opposed to a reaction to the systemic barriers to the inclusion of mothers in the workplace. Brenda Cossman (2009), for example, views the opt-out movement as being an issue of self-governance, there-

by "dissolving any broader sense of collective responsibility for the work/family conflict" (409). Furthermore, research suggests that once these women opt-out, it is difficult to opt back in. Meg Lovejoy and Pamela Stone (2011) question whether these women want to and are able to return to work. Research suggests that women who do re-enter into the workforce after opting out often enter different career streams, abandoning the investment in their previous careers (631-632). In fact, Judith Warner (2013) found that while two-thirds of the women she interviewed had originally been working in male-dominated professions, only a quarter returned to work in those fields. The rest chose more female-dominated and less lucrative occupations, such as teaching and non-profit work, that are more closely linked to the socially ascribed role of women as caring and nurturing. In this sense, opting out appears to be less about women being "liberated" from the paid work force to care for their children and more about women either conforming to traditional gender roles or being squeezed out of their career by structural barriers (Ibarra, Ely, and Kolb 2013). Again, the opt-out women covered by the popular media are more likely to be white, educated, and middle to upper class. They tend to have a husband who can provide for the family, thereby allowing them to opt-out (Warner 2013). In this sense, this is not a free choice available to all women, but a choice for some privileged women.

Shireen Kanji and Emma Cahusac's (2015) analysis of the opt-out movement argues that "research on women's exit from paid work often constructs women as making a binary choice between career and family" (1416), but this is a false dichotomy reflecting the emphasis on individual choice at the root of neoliberal ideology. While the popular media may suggest that women who are opting out are finding their true vocation as mothers, the reality is much more complex. Many of the women Kanji and Cahusac studied wanted to work. Many of their study participants who left work, or opted out, to stay at home with their children, experienced a crisis of identity as they adapted to their new roles as stay-at-home mothers (1423).

The idealization of opting out for mothers is problematic in a number of ways. First, it serves to reify traditional gender roles. Not only does the popular rhetoric surrounding opting out reflect traditional, conservative views on women and motherhood, the choice of opting out is presented as a choice for women or mothers, not men or fathers. Second, as with neoliberalism, this model of motherhood focuses on the individual and individual choices, neglecting the social norms and structures, and the existing public policies that shape the choices available to women. The women choosing to opt-out are overwhelming white professionals who have extensive resources to support their choice, most significantly their spouse's income and financial support. While their lack of dependence on social welfare policies and supports is lauded under neoliberalism, the rhetoric of free choice undermines the very real need of most women for greater state support and their lack of choices. The popular coverage of these women thus glorifies their choice, simplifies the context and complexity of their choices, and serves to reduce pressure on the state to provide adequate support for new mothers negotiating work and family obligations. Finally, a Harvard Business School study of alumni found that the vast majority of women are not opting out at all. It revealed that only 11 percent of their graduates leave the workforce to care for children fulltime. Even fewer women of colour (7 percent) leave the workforce for family reasons, and Black and South Asian women are least likely to leave to care for children fulltime at only 4 percent (Ely, Stone, and Ammerman 2014). These numbers suggest that the phenomenon of opting out is limited to a small minority of women. The fact that women are not opting out of the workforce in significant numbers to care for children fulltime challenges the traditional understanding of gender roles and gender biases that suggest that women are less likely to be committed to their career or more likely to prioritize children over work (Ibarra, Ely, and Kolb 2013).

Leaning In

Leaning in, alternatively, aims to support the career-oriented mother who does not choose to opt-out. Leaning in suggests that women can support each other while keeping their public and private lives separate. Sheryl Sandberg, Facebook chief operating officer and the author of the book *Lean In: Women, Work, and the Will to Lead* (2013), argues that the movement is "focused on encouraging women to pursue their ambitions, and changing the conversation from what we can't do to what we can do" (LeanIn.com 2015). In the introduction to her book, Sandberg (2013) maintains that the wom-

en's movement has stalled. Women, she says, have made huge advances, but men still rule the world and "conditions for all women will improve when there are more women in leadership roles giving strong and powerful voice to their needs and concerns" (7). While leaning in is also focused on the choices of individual women, Sandberg does recognize that structural barriers, such as sexism, discrimination, or a lack of leave, do hold women back. However, she is more concerned with the "barriers that exist within ourselves," arguing that "getting rid of these internal barriers is critical to gaining power" (8). In this sense, women are both to blame for their own situation and responsible for changing themselves and, in turn, the world around them.

Sandberg's book remains a source of controversy and is heavily critiqued by feminists for its dismissal of structural barriers and the uncritical adoption of corporate mentality. In particular, the movement is often criticized for refusing to recognize the challenges and conflict women face because of these two roles. Instead of looking at how to change society so that women can succeed, *Lean In* explores how to change ourselves so that we can succeed. Susan Faludi (2013) writes:

> When asked why she [Sandberg] isn't pushing for structural social and economic change, Sandberg says she's all in favor of 'public policy reform,' though she's vague about how exactly that would work, beyond generic tsk-tsking about the pay gap and lack of maternity leave. She says she supports reforming the workplace—but the particulars of comparable worth or subsidized child care are hardly prominent elements of her book or her many media appearances. (n.p.)

Similarly, Linda Burnham (2013) argues that, *Lean In* "has essentially produced a manifesto for corporatist feminism," a "1% feminism" that "is all about the glass ceiling, never about the floor" (n.p.). Instead, Sandberg focusses on how women can change themselves, embrace corporate culture, and encourages women to engage more with that culture in order to (somehow) change the world around them. In doing so, she leaves herself open to the criticism of people, such as Christine Williams (2013), who maintain that *Lean In* supports a vision of neoliberal feminism and corporate capitalism. Furthermore, the vision represented in the book and movement focuses largely on elite and educated individuals. Sandberg (2013) refers to the men that still rule the world (7), but neglects the role that race and class play in the world and under patriarchy. This omission makes her argument even more simplistic.

Rebecca Colesworthy (2014) also criticizes Sandberg for blaming the victim (although the victims are working women who fail to make it to the top), favouring the individual over the collective and prioritizing economic equality over other forms of equality (155-156). Other critics, such as Sylvia Maier (2014), challenge Sandberg's enchantment with the American myth and the corresponding obfuscation of entrenched systems of gender inequality by looking beyond America to see if leaning in really works. Maier concludes that Sandberg's view is ethnocentric and does not apply to women "living and working in parts of the world where socio-cultural factors and not a lack of work ethic or will to lead are the paramount obstacles to women's professional success" (63). Arguably, this quotation also applies to women in western, Anglo-Saxon democratic states.

The privileging of markets over states under neoliberalism also underpins the arguments in Sandberg's book. Although corporate America is Sandberg's area of expertise, her dismissal of social and policy change as someone else's job reinforces the importance of corporations in women's lives. By focussing on what women can do to change their attitudes and lean in, she reinforces the myth that hard work is the key to success and that women's choices will determine how successful they are.

Discussion and Conclusion

All three models—mompreneurs, opting out, and leaning in—focus on the challenge of combining the ideals of gender equality that working women today grew up with and the continuing barriers parents of young children face when trying to negotiate work and home responsibilities. All three models adopt the language of free choice that is so important to neoliberal ideology, arguing that women have choices about how they combine work and family. Mompreneurs can embrace liberalism's work ethic and entrepreneurial spirit. Those who opt-out can be seen as freely choosing motherhood over career and those who lean in are choosing not to let gender be a barrier to their success.

The three models are also related in that none of them advances a critique of market capitalism or the

laissez-faire state. While the critics of these models of motherhood are quick to point to the structural barriers that lead to women having to choose between spending time with their children or having a successful career, the advocates of these three options neglect the societal factors that shape women's choices such as paid parental leaves, affordable quality childcare, and flexible work arrangements. Positive popular representations of mompreneurs, opting out, and leaning in also render race, class, and ability invisible. The options are presented as choices for all women whereas the evidence indicates that these limited options are still only options for women with the education, money, and support to access them. They do not speak to the experiences of most women. The women profiled in studies on mompreneurs, opting out, and leaning in are overwhelmingly white, middle to upper class, educated, married, and heterosexual. Their experiences are not evidence of broader societal change, innovative family friendly policies, or a dramatic rethinking of gender roles within the family. Rather they are the experiences of an elite few who are lucky enough to have these options for balancing work and family.

The supporters of these models of motherhood appear to have accepted the premises of neoliberalism and neoconservativism that focus on women's duty to home and family as well as the individual responsibility (versus a societal responsibility) to provide and care for their families. These shifts reflect the values of neoliberal feminism, which promotes individual responsibility, limited government, and market driven solutions to social problems (Williams 2013, 59). As well, it "absolves capitalism of playing any role in the oppression of women" (59). It is not surprising, then, that these options for mothers are most prevalent and popular in liberal welfare states where the social supports for women and men to balance family and work are sorely lacking.

Over the past 100 years, women in western Anglo-Saxon countries have made remarkable gains towards equality. Women are far more likely to be educated and employed now than during previous generations. While women's role in the public sphere and paid workforce has changed substantially, the cultural norms around motherhood and the unattainable ideals imposed on mothers by society, popular culture, and experts have been (in some ways) slower to change and less likely to change for the benefit of women. Today's mothers are more likely to pull the double shift of paid work and caring work and less able to connect the burdens and barriers they face in relation to systemic and structural causes. Instead, they are required to either "lean in" or "opt-out." The idea of a mother as self-sacrificing and fulfilled primarily through the care of her family endures despite the critique of many feminists before us. The major challenge of our times is the rise of neoliberalism, followed by its variations of investment and austerity, and the disconnect between these ideologies and the lived reality of mothers and their social, political, and economic causes. In my working environment, as a professor, I am told that it was my "choice" to have children and so I have to live with the consequences of my decisions. The problems I face are the result of my individual "inability" to manage my commitments, not the fact that I work in an environment that demands total commitment from its workers and which is based on the assumption that professors have wives at home who are responsible for the home and hearth. Until we, as a society, begin to seriously challenge the norms of mothering and the norms of the workplace, the double burden placed on women will not change.

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Examining Gender Relations among South Asian Immigrant Women Living with HIV in the Greater Toronto Area: Theoretical Implications

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Abstract

This paper focuses on South Asian immigrant women living with HIV in Toronto. Our community-based research affirmed the benefits of augmenting R.W. Connell's social theory of gender with a focus on the local. We explored how multiple relations of domination and subordination affect women living with HIV. A general inductive approach identified four themes pursuant to women's perceptions of gender relations, and how they affect their risk of HIV: power, emotional attachment, gendered division of labour, and social norms. Richer understandings of how power operates between genders paves the way for theory refinement, and innovative, refocused research.

Résumé

Cet article est basé sur une recherche de doctorat achevée en 2011. L'objectif principal de cette étude est d'explorer comment le pouvoir masculin dans les communautés sud-asiatiques, légitimé par la masculinité hégémonique, contribue au risque d'infection par le VIH chez les femmes sud-asiatiques. Les histoires racontées par ces femmes révèlent des relations de pouvoir durant leur enfance et leur vie adulte, caractérisées par un déséquilibre de pouvoir et une domination du mâle. La compréhension des réalités des immigrantes sud-asiatiques selon une optique anti-oppressive est offerte comme un moyen de réduire le sentiment d'impuissance acquise, sans essentialiser la culture.

Introduction

There is a shortage of research focusing on HIV in the South Asian community in North America. Similarly, there is a dearth of published research on HIV/AIDS-related issues among South Asian women in Canada in general and in the Greater Toronto Area (GTA) in particular. Scholars engaged with this issue agree that there is an overall stigma attached to HIV/AIDS in the South Asian community, which has resulted in an overall denial of HIV/AIDS as a disease affecting community members (Abraham, Chakkappan, and Park 2005; Alliance for South Asian AIDS Prevention [ASAAP] 1999; Gagnon et al. 2010; Leonard et al. 2007; Raj and Tuller 2003; Singer et al. 1996; Vlassoff and Ali 2011). Although these studies have identified patriarchy, immigration, poverty, and discrimination as structural factors affecting South Asian women's risk for HIV, they fail to explain *how* these structural factors affected women's behaviour. This paper addresses this gap by examining how structural factors interact with the unique individual experiences of South Asian women, using Raewyn W. Connell's (1987, 1995) social theory of gender (see also Connell and Pearse 2009).

Theoretical Framework

By providing a clear picture of gender as a "structure of social practice" (Connell 1995, 71), Connell's social theory of gender explains how power operates between genders (1987; Connell and Pearse 2009). It emphasizes the relations of power between men and women while asserting that gender is structured relationally and hierarchically and consists of multiple masculine and feminine defined roles. According to Connell (1995), gender is affected by both the impersonal power of institutions and by more intimate and inter-personal connections. By acknowledging power relations as socially derived, Connell opens up new ways of understanding gender and gender relations.

An important aspect of Connell's (1987) social theory of gender is the recognition of race, class, and gender as structures that contribute to women's oppression. In light of these factors, it becomes imperative that scholars use an anti-oppressive lens to examine South Asian immigrant women's vulnerability to HIV. This lens acknowledges these women as racialized immigrants who are currently living in an imperialist nation where there is a deep tension between (a) a purported love of difference; and (b) the exploitation of those differences for its own ends. The focus of the paper is on the theoretical contributions by filling a gap in Connell's social theory of gender. I am weaving the anti-oppressive lens into the text.

Although Connell's (1987; Connell and Pearse 2009) theory is useful, some aspects of the theory have yet to be thoroughly examined. The first includes the particular local context in which hegemonic masculinity is performed. Although gender is enacted at local, regional, and global levels, the application of Connell's theory to local contexts is underdeveloped. According to Sarah Rosenfield (2012), "Gender conceptions and practices consist of the division of labor between men and women in and outside the home, the power relations between men and women, and differences in the self" (1793). These relational approaches conceptualize gender as dynamic and situational, sensitive to the local context (Sharman and Johnson 2012). Typically, changes in a local setting, such as the institution of the family, occur more rapidly than do societal changes (Connell 2002). Theoretically, Connell stipulated the significance of context in a general fashion and through the work of qualitative investigations of masculinities. Even though Connell has examined context in their more recent work (2005; Connell and Pearse 2009), the explanation of the local social context could be analyzed further. To that end, there is still a need to delve in greater depth into the daily transactions of individuals to explain personal context.

Second, the details in the interactions among individual, structural, and normative factors could also be expanded to more diverse contexts, especially a precise account of how they are interdependent in people's lives. Connell (2012) made a strong case for the link between gender roles, relationships, and health. She posited that gender is "multidimensional: embracing at the same time economic relations, power relations, affective relations and symbolic relations; and operating simultaneously at intrapersonal, interpersonal, institutional and society-wide levels" (1677). Viewing gender as multidimensional opens the door for the inclusion of the local as proposed in our study. It creates a space for examining the influence of individual, structural, and normative dimensions of gender.

Finally, Connell's (1987; Connell and Pearse 2009) theory tends to operate at the macro level. New knowledge may be created by directing more attention to a micro lens where these mutual dependencies and interactions are explained. By recognizing people as social actors, and specifically examining how structural, individual, and normative factors interact to legitimize hegemonic masculinity, the significance of Connell's theory at a micro-level in diverse populations may be more evident.

Research Objectives

This paper focuses on South Asian[1] immigrant women[2] living with HIV in the Greater Toronto Area (GTA) in order to improve our understanding of the factors that increase women's vulnerability to HIV infection. The main objective of this study was to investigate the macrostructural assertions of Connell's (1987; Connell and Pearse 2009) social theory of gender, which is primarily concerned with demonstrating the relational and hierarchical nature of gender. Because her theory has a global emphasis, this study attempted to examine gender relations using a local lens by focusing on the daily interactions of South Asian women living with HIV. Considering the local in more detail is quite imperative because hierarchies are formulated in a particular local context. South Asian women in the GTA were chosen as representative of a specific local context and a site of gender construction and contestation where hegemonic masculinity can be enacted.

Second, this study also aimed to gain a deeper understanding of the detailed interdependencies between structural, individual, and normative influences in the lives of South Asian immigrant women living with HIV. This investigation examined Connell's theory in order to explain *how* social norms interact with both personal beliefs and social structures (e.g., power relations, cathexis [emotional attachment], and gendered division of labour) to generate different constraints that influence South Asian immigrant women's risk for HIV. This strategy has helped to further investigate the interdependencies of social structures, individual-level factors, and social norms of behaviour.

Method

This qualitative study, based on community-based and feminist research principles, involved a general inductive approach and a thematic analysis of one-on-one interview data. Participants were obtained using a non-probability, purposive sampling strategy.

Community-Based, Feminist Research

This study followed the principles of community-based research (CBR) by developing a collaborative relationship with the ASAAP, a community-based organization serving South Asians living with HIV in the GTA. The research strategy emphasized the significance of collaboration, participation, and social justice wherein the focus was not only on individual South Asian women, but on the South Asian community as a whole. Informed by feminist research methods, we aimed to create a research atmosphere that fostered an egalitarian relationship between the researcher and the participant (Hamberg and Johansson 1999; Kirby and McKenna 1989). Additionally, a female researcher conducted all of the interviews (i.e., the first author), an approach recommended when research involves female participants and issues related to health, sexuality, or both (Hamberg and Johansson 1999).

Qualitative Methods

This study is based on the narratives of South Asian immigrant women living with HIV and residing in the GTA. Qualitative methods were deemed most suitable for developing an understanding of the personal experiences, feelings, perceptions, and values that underlie and influence behaviour (Patton 2002). Data were collected through in-depth one-on-one interviews, judged to be the most useful technique for gathering study participants' personal narratives, experiences, and histories (Creswell 2003; Marshall and Rossman 1995). This approach also allowed the interviewer to probe more deeply into the local context that is identified (but underdeveloped) in Connell's (1987) social theory of gender. Confidential, one-on-one interviews were deemed especially appropriate given the highly personal nature of the subject matter and the likelihood that many of the participants may have experienced some form of HIV-related stigma.

Sampling Strategy

For the purpose of this study, a non-probability, purposive sampling strategy was used. Originally, the study participants were to be limited to women who

accessed services at ASAAP. However, because many South Asian women living with HIV do not access AIDS Service Organizations (ASOs), due to the stigma of the disease, snowballing techniques were used to recruit additional South Asian women living with HIV (Morgan 2008). An infectious disease specialist also referred additional participants.

Data Collection

A semi-structured interview schedule (guide) was developed based on the objectives of the research and on Connell's social theory of gender (Connell and Pearse 2009). The one-on-one interviews averaged between one and a half and two hours. Basic sociodemographic questions were asked at the beginning of the interview, including date of birth, country of origin, year of immigration, date of diagnosis, and languages spoken. The interview guide was used to facilitate the flow of the interviews, which took a conversational format and very quickly turned into storytelling as the women felt safe to share their stories. Using the open ended-questions and probes (e.g., how much have you kept from the South Asian traditions over the years? What about values related to female sexuality? Male sexuality?) provided a safe space for the women to tell their life stories. The open-ended questions and probes allowed for additional inquiry into participants' responses and identified specific areas and topics to be explored. The use of the guide provided a certain degree of consistency among all interviews (Barriball and While 1994).

Analysis

The general inductive approach was employed in this study. It is a technique used to analyze qualitative data where the analysis is directed by both explicit research objectives and the data (Creswell 2003). We followed an iterative process to allow the research findings and directions to materialize from the frequent, prevailing, or central themes built in the raw data (Thomas 2006). The use of an inductive approach was intended to aid in understanding the data through the formulation of summary themes and categories. All interview transcripts were subjected to preliminary thematic analysis, which involves the clustering or coding of research findings into groups of closely-related themes so as to provide a more manageable view of the data (Strauss 1987).

Findings

Sample

The study sample consisted of twelve women living with HIV who self-identified as first-generation immigrant women of South Asian descent with the exception of Juhi, a second generation immigrant who identified as South Asian. The women reported origins in India, some parts of Africa, the Caribbean, and South East Asia. They all resided in the GTA and ranged in age between twenty eight and fifty years. They were all fluent in English so there was no need for translation; however, one of the women did have her husband present during the interview because she did not feel her English was strong enough to be interviewed on her own.

Thematic Findings

The study findings are presented according to the four primary themes emergent from the analysis related to HIV risk in women: 1) *power relations; 2) emotional attachment; 3) gendered division of labour;* and *4) social norms* (see Figure 1). The theoretical implications of these themes are presented in the Discussion section. The participants' quotes included in the presentation of each theme illustrate the interactions between and among the themes. However, despite the themes being interdependent, they are discussed separately for analytical purposes. The findings from the in-depth interviews, which were designed to investigate the experiences and interactions of the participants within their families and their immediate community, are described. Through the interviews, we were able to examine in some detail the women's perceptions of gender relations and how these relations affected their risk of HIV.

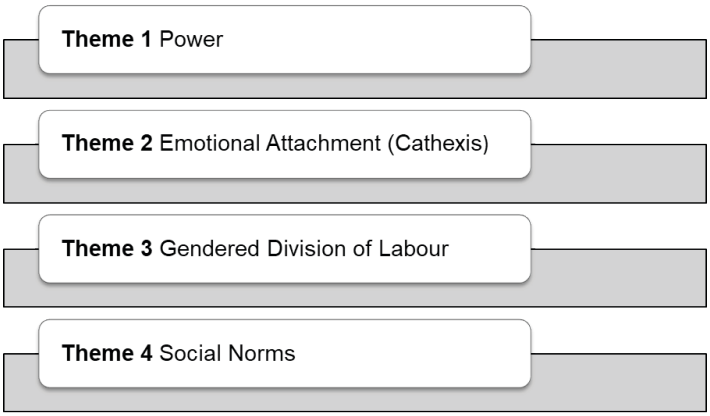

Figure 1. Four main themes

Theme 1: Power

The women's stories highlighted power relations during their childhood and in their adult lives, characterized by power imbalance and male dominance as evidenced by patriarchal authority. The women said they were expected to be less assertive and more submissive than the males in their families. All of the participants described their fathers as the *head of the household* and talked about the power exerted by their fathers, brothers, and husbands as an accepted reality in their world.

Examining social power as understood by these women shed some light on its complexity. Force was only one component the women reported experiencing, which seemed to indicate the male figures in their lives were trying to establish and maintain dominance. Although physical abuse was not often used as a way of exercising control over the women, the majority of them said they experienced ongoing emotional and psychological abuse as well as unequal access to household and workplace resources. Sutra said that, although her husband was controlling and she had experienced one incident of physical abuse, she claimed that he was supportive because he encouraged her and paid for her to attend college. She reported that he was controlling when they first arrived in Canada, which rendered her vulnerable to the eventual physical abuse. Sutra described the incident of physical abuse:

> It was really hard that time in particular just for controlling things. You know we went to the wedding and he wanted to leave early and…And then he left me and he went home… Now when we got home, he started arguing with me and then we got into fight. Yeah, that's the only time when we got into a physical fight. Yeah, and after that he realized what he did and he said, 'Sorry.' Yeah, that's it. Yeah, but it's the only time I remember that we got into a real fight. Yeah, but usually it's verbal, verbal fight in the house.

The women learned about male superiority early on in their lives. Doyel was asked about her parents' roles in the family. Although she spoke about her mother working periodically with her father on the family farm, it was clear that her father held a position of authority over her mother. Although her mother was working in the field alongside her father, she was viewed as an assistant to him, not as an equal contributor in her own right. Doyel remarked: "*The man, he's superior… this is how I see it when I was growing up. Of course a man is not as equal to a woman. He would do more of the job. She's just there to help him.*"

The women internalized gendered behaviours from early childhood and carried them into their intimate relationships with men. They described practices in their families of origin that resulted in them being, for the most part, passive in their acceptance of marital partners chosen for them. This passivity subsequently remained in their relationships with their husbands. By speaking of men as superior and women as inferior and controlled by men, the women highlighted the power imbalances in their marriages. Examples of these dynamics were expressed clearly through the recounting of experiences related to their relationships throughout their lives. For example, Haifa described the expectations for females growing up simply as: "*No, we were not allowed to date.*" In some households, double standards for dating were openly exercised and enforced. Several of the women spoke about males in the household, usually brothers, being allowed to date whereas they, as female children, were explicitly told that dating was not an option for them. Sutra shared her experience of this double standard in her family: "*But my dad wouldn't talk to his son, saying that, 'You can't do this.' But he would talk to me. You know, even if he knew my brother had girlfriends.*"

The participants' individual beliefs in male superiority, and their widely accepted beliefs and norms supportive of male dominance, are interdependent and representative of *power relations* as a social structure (per Connell's theory). Without this interdependence, there would be no basis for the hierarchical relations of power between the women and their partners. Power relations, supported by strongly adhered-to social norms that position the women's role in the home, remain the structure most resistant to change and the most influential in sustaining the legitimacy of male power. Although the presence of abuse suggests a failure of legitimacy, it is not valid to infer that its mere absence constitutes legitimacy of male power. For this reason, we propose that, in addition to power relations, emotional attachment plays a central role in validating and legitimizing male power.

Theme 2: Emotional Attachment (Cathexis)

This theme focuses on the social structure of *emotional attachment* and its interaction with the structure of *power relations*. Exploring this theme allows for a better understanding of the factors that put this sample of immigrant women at increased risk for HIV. The interaction between power relations and emotional attachment was clear as power imbalances could only be sustained if the women had emotionally invested in and endorsed them. At the relational level, emotional attachment influences how one may approach a power imbalance. For example, without an emotional attachment, one may decide to simply leave a relationship that does not foster equal power and opportunity. With emotional attachment, however, leaving may become much more difficult as fear of losing a partner could shape how one communicates. Further, the interdependency of power relations and emotional attachment also intersected with social structural factors, the women's personal values and beliefs, and the social norms illustrated by their shared understandings of traditions and practices. These interdependent factors played a role in how these women constructed male superiority in their lives and how hegemonic masculinity was legitimized.

The interdependence of power and emotional attachment is perhaps best illustrated by the women's reactions and responses to their husband's extramarital affairs. Many of the women reported that they were aware of their husband's infidelity. Despite not approving of this behaviour, they did not feel there was anything that could be done. Shreya talked about the shared idea that when a woman is married, she requires nothing else in life but her husband. Even if she briefly thinks about sex, she will only think about it in relation to her husband. She remarked of sex:

> Well you do that with your husband. Yeah, that's really with their husband, and we don't think about anything else. If sex comes to your mind, definitely you're gonna think about this with your husband. You're not gonna think about other men. There are so many guys out there, but if I look at them, they don't mean anything to me, they are just guys. Because I have mine. Yeah.

Shreya added that women will not go outside the marriage for sex because they know that is not in their best interest. In other words, if a woman does engage in this behaviour, her life could be destroyed: "*It's not something…It's not that she's not allowed to, but it's not something an Indian woman would do…oh yeah, to us the men can go and sleep with fifty women. Nobody will say anything. But the woman goes and sleeps with just one man, that's it. Yeah, that's the end. I mean her entire life is ruined.*"

According to Deepa, to ensure their own self-preservation, women will choose not to have sex outside the marriage, accepting instead that men sometimes do and that the woman's role is to acquiesce. She also talked about women's fears of being sent to prison or being tortured if they were to engage in these behaviours, which contributed to their decision not to do so:

> I think, yeah. I think that's men. Like I said before, men is men and they choose to do that. That's how they see themselves as men. You know like I'm not judging anybody, but I know for a fact it happens in the culture and they're just men and they're gonna remain men, right? A woman can't do that. If we do that then we will be shamed, be disgraced, maybe we might get killed, we might get stoned to death. They will chop off our hand, you know all these bad things. They might send us to prison and bad things will happen to us. But men, it's like that's something they do.

The interdependence of social norms, power relations, and emotional attachment is also clearly illustrated in the women's stories regarding sexual roles and marital relationships. For the majority of these women, husbands or partners asserted their power by dictating the terms of their sexual relationships, including whether or not condoms were used. Within this sexually intimate realm of living, most of the participants reported that men do not use condoms with their wives nor would they do so if asked. Most women agreed that it was usually the man who had a problem with using a condom. For Minu, it was simply a matter of men's preference: "*It is you know, sometimes the man wouldn't want to use it*." The most frequently reported reason for not asking one's husband to use a condom was the fear that if a woman did so, her husband would assume she was being unfaithful to him. This fear contributed to women's submissiveness to their husbands. They did not want to put their relationship

(and thus emotional attachment) in jeopardy. This fear legitimized male power in the lives of these women and was especially evident in Deepa's quote above.

Some of the women's narratives also provided evidence of the interdependence of individual beliefs and social norms. Because some believed that male infidelity was widely accepted in the community, these women accepted male power (in the form of a double standard with respect to sexual autonomy) as part of their own reality. Strong social norms, and the emotional buy-in from the women, provided legitimacy for male power. Ultimately, the power dynamics in these situations contributed to the women condoning the extramarital affairs and leaving them in a position where they were still at risk of HIV. They were aware of the affairs, but they still did not want to lose their relationship, leaving them submissive to their husband's wishes.

For some of the women, trust in their husbands and a misplaced faith that the relationship was monogamous led to risk of HIV. Those who suspected that their husbands were involved in some kind of extramarital relationship, either while they were together or during a separation, described themselves as being a person who would not have considered that her partner was having sex outside the relationship. For instance, despite Anandi's devastation upon receiving the call from public health that revealed her partner's infidelity at the same time they were trying to conceive and in spite of a doctor recommending she not continue her relationship with him, Anandi accommodated his infidelity and went on to conceive her second child with him.

The women's risk of acquiring HIV was heightened by a complex myriad of factors, including their (a) underlying desire for trust and fidelity in their relationships; (b) emotional dependence on their partners; (c) trust in their partners to not put them at risk; and (d) lack of awareness of HIV, paired with their inability to negotiate or enforce condom use regardless. The confluence of these factors demonstrates the interdependency of emotional attachment, personal values and beliefs, power, and social norms. For instance, Chandra reported that she trusted her husband to be monogamous or at least to protect himself by using condoms if he did engage in extramarital affairs. She recalled her neighbour's words, warning her about the possibility that her husband would cheat on her during her absence: "*You have left your husband for 2 1/2 years, and at that time, he was a single guy. For sure, he's been fooling around*." Nevertheless, Chandra felt strongly that she could trust her husband to do the right thing: "*I didn't know much, I don't know much about the virus. I had so much trust that I thought maybe he fooled around, but he was protecting himself. I had trust*."

Again, the interdependency of the women's individual experiences and their perception of social norms is clearly illustrated in their narratives. According to Anjali, most women assume that there is trust and fidelity in their marital relationships, a trust that results in a false sense of security. Anjali described her perception of women's desire for trust in their marital relationships: "*In terms of women, their husband is the man that they will marry, so they don't think of any worry. But, however, they don't know where those husbands have been and what they're doing. And they come back home after they've been elsewhere.*"

Theme 3: Gendered Division of Labour

The third theme to emerge from the study was the *gendered division of labour*, which is a social structure in Connell's (1987, 1995; Connell and Pearse 2009) social theory of gender. The gendered division of labour is not just about the allocation of work, but about the nature and organization of that work. It is impossible to separate either from the distribution of the by-products of work; that is, the distribution of services and income. The gendered division of labour must be seen as part of a larger pattern, a structured system of production, consumption, and distribution. When developing this theme, we focused on the social structure of the *gendered division of labour* and its interaction with the structures of *power relations* and *emotional attachment* in relation to HIV-risk. As per intersectionality, we examined the overlap of these social structures and highlighted examples that also connect to the women's personal values and beliefs. Understanding the interdependence of these factors contributes to an understanding of the construction of male superiority and the legitimization of masculine hegemony in these women's lives.

The women's narratives illustrated that their households were constituted by a division of labour that defines the work of women as domestic and unpaid and the work of men as public and paid. The

gendered division of labour reflects ideas about a "woman's place." From their accounts, the division of labour in their families were partly a consequence of their husbands' power to define their wives' situation. Childcare and other care-giving duties were basic to the division of labour in these women's families. Because their husbands were in control of the division of labour in the family, these men made the decision as to whether or not to help with childcare, reflecting their dominance and power. Many men refused to participate in childcare, reflecting the social norm that this is women's work and thus of lesser value. This practice had a particular prominence in the domestic division of labour in that it represented a large portion of these women's daily domestic duties. In Noor's case, the in-laws assisted with childcare. However, according to Noor, it is not uncommon for women to have to look after aging in-laws as well as their children: "*Yeah, she [mother-in-law] is cook and she is look after my daughter. Before she is live with me and now she is ah lives with my brother-in-law. Well mostly men earn, earn money and women stay at home. Women look after in-laws as well.*" The gendered division of labour inside the home limits the women's ability to do paid work outside the domestic realm, which in turn translates into less power in their relationships.

The economic hardships faced by most of the women translated into economic dependence on their partners, which increased men's control over finances, ultimately increasing their power in the marriage. Most of the women in the study reported limited economic control in their lives. Men were charged with making decisions about the large expenditures, such as a house, car, or major appliance, whereas women, as the subordinate party, had authority over what men consider to be menial purchases such as groceries or children's items. Despite the fact that he shared in the daily chores including housework and childcare, Doyel still felt the economic control exercised by her husband. She was in charge of purchasing small items such as groceries and things for the children:

> So if I want anything I'll buy it. But of course he's the one who looked after major stuff. He bought, he bought a house. He bought a car, you know, I'm not the one. I'm not gonna go out and buy. I never drove in those days and so I didn't go out and buy a car. I didn't go out and buy fridge and washing machine and stuff like that. He's the one who would be doing those things. He's the one who paid the bills. Me, I'm the one who buys food, you know, go to the laundry store and those, the lingerie store, [chuckling] go to the baby store, you know, those are the things I did.

Doyel's account highlights that, even though some situations were suggestive of equal roles in the relationship (e.g., shared household duties), there was still a dependent relationship with regards to money and purchasing power. In this situation, there was still a clear divide between men's and women's abilities to make major decisions that could impact both persons in the relationship. This is a nuanced example of how power inequities between husband and wife contribute to HIV risk for South Asian women in the GTA.

Theme 4: Social Norms

The fourth and final theme in this study, which has been discussed to some degree in the above sections, is *social norms*. Connell (1995) used the term *culture* to refer to the totality of social norms. According to her, culture is communicated through norms and related behaviours, with norms defined as "individual perceptions about the generally held attitudes of others in the system. Individuals derive beliefs about what is valued within the social system by their perceptions of attitudes generally held by others, especially when they need to negotiate norms and behaviours with others in public" (33). Social norms do not form an individual's attitudes, but they impact them and are impacted by them.

The three interdependent but distinct social structures discussed above (i.e., individual, structural, and normative influences) interacted with the women's individual attitudes and the social norms they adhered to, thus influencing their sexual practices and their risk of HIV. The interactions of the social structures and individual attitudes with *social norms* will now be discussed.

We found that individual beliefs were not always consistent with social norms. Four of the women in the study contested male power by resisting their upbringing, which dictated a form of asexuality for females with the exception of procreation with their husbands. These particular women wanted to "experiment" in what seemed at the time to be a safe venue. But, they

contested male power secretly because of their fear of the severe repercussions that may have resulted if they had opposed a socially sanctioned norm in public; in this case, female virginity. For example, despite growing up in Canada, Anjali described her upbringing as "*very traditional*." Nonetheless, she reported that when she was much older and in university, she indulged in sexual activities which she kept secret from everyone in her family. The man involved eventually became her husband: "*Until university came, a little bit of experimentation and that was hidden. It was never, even in university, it was hidden. It was never brought up and I, I, I did have sex before marriage, but they didn't know it.*"

In this study, social norms were the most important factor in legitimizing male power and keeping order in these women's lives. Many general accounts of patriarchy give the impression that it is a simple, orderly structure. However, these women's stories showed that, behind the facade, exists a mass of disorder and anomalies. As illustrated by these women's narratives, the perceived ideal of purity, modesty, and obedience may never have existed in their lives. Anandi, Juhi, and Anjali engaged in premarital sex with their boyfriends who they later married. Haifa also engaged in premarital sex, but with a boyfriend whom she never married. Haifa and Anjali both dated and had sex with a man following the demise of their marriages. Haifa described having a clandestine premarital sexual relationship with a boy when she was fifteen or sixteen years old: "*Yeah, we dated, yeah. Mm, no, I can't remember how many years. Maybe 3, 4 years.*" When asked whether she used condoms while having sex, Haifa responded, "*Oh, we don't use that*." The interaction of norms with the women's individual practices and the social structures of power relations and emotional relations is clearly illustrated here. A socially and religiously sanctioned norm of modesty for girls (i.e., premarital sex was forbidden) was inconsistent with their experiences. They resisted this social norm at great risk.

On a different level, power relations, as exemplified by the power imbalances described in their marriages, reinforced the psychosocial dynamic of male superiority and female submission. This, in turn, allowed the men to determine and reinforce behavioural norms, including sexual norms. The women were emotionally and economically dependent on their husbands with most of the women subjected to ongoing emotional or psychological abuse in their marriages. For these reasons, they were not in a position to resist; that is, to require that their husbands use condoms even if they knew that their husbands were engaging in sex outside the marriage. Further, regardless of their life experiences, whether it was domestic violence or HIV infection, the women, encouraged by their religious beliefs, accepted their experiences as their fate and did not protest in either word or deed.

This intractable situation was exacerbated by the stigma attached to divorce in their cultural community, reinforcing their lack of power and heightened risk of HIV. For example, despite hardships in her marriage, Sutra's extended family became involved in the relationship to ensure it remained intact:

> Even though some of things which I didn't know he was doing behind my back. Like every family is like that, some of the family. But sometimes when things get rough, we sit down and talk or maybe sometimes we get, we fight. And then the parents, like we involve parents. We sit down and you know. It happened a couple times, we fought and then after that we get together, you know it's like a normal married life.

Further, strongly endorsed norms likely contributed to most of the women staying in their marriages, especially those norms that value family honour and condemn those who bring shame to their families. As evidenced by the quotes above, the women's words exemplify the rather complex interactions that legitimize male power. Despite the fact that individual women's attitudes were not always consistent with social norms (i.e., some of them pushed back), most of them still, for the most part, lived according to the norms of their cultural community. Staying in their marriages, in some cases despite warning signs, and bowing to social norms and male power increased the susceptibility of the women to HIV infection.

Gender equality is another dimension of the social norm theme. Gender inequality arises from differences in socially constructed gender roles (i.e., the actions or activities assigned to or required of a person). Inequality refers to unequal treatment or perceptions of individuals based on their gender. Connell's (1987)

theory assumes that gender inequality is reproduced through the processes of institutionalization and legitimization. As such, it is built into the social structures of power relations, emotional attachment, and the gendered division of labour via the everyday routines that sustain them. Indeed, we found complex interactions between social norms and the social structures of gendered division of labour, power relations, and emotional attachments. The women identified themselves as belonging to communities with strong social and gender norms that supported a clearly defined gendered division of labour (and, by association, increased risk of HIV).

Most women in the study confirmed that they socialized primarily with others in Canada who were from their ethnic or cultural community. As Noor remarked, "*but mostly our friends, who come and visit and you go and visit are mostly East Indian*." Also, the women's experiences of social and workplace discrimination further influenced their decision to work at home and assume childcare responsibilities. The resultant division of labour increased the women's economic dependence on their husbands, resulting in an increase in the women's submission and emotional attachment to their husbands, which in turn strengthened male power in the relationship. Thus, attachment to the community influenced the women's behaviours in such a way as to increase their risk of acquiring HIV from their husbands, representing the convoluted complexity of their situations.

This relationship becomes even more complex because attachment to the community can paradoxically provide support for the women while also exposing them to HIV risk. Some women came to Canada when they were young wives and the only person they knew was their husband. Some of these women were not even that familiar with their husband. These women reported that isolation amplified the challenges of adjusting to a new country and the new role of wife. While Doyel discussed who she and her husband socialized with when they first came to Canada, she confirmed that most of her contacts were with "*South Asians…we were involved in the South Asian community*." Chandra also socialized strictly with families from her own community despite working in a culturally diverse organization. It was important for her and her own family to be around others from her own community: "*It's hard…I'm a working person, but I'm mostly a family person. So if I had time I would have company so that we all are family and kids grow up together…I still keep my culture*." Ironically, her cultural norms were inadvertently exposing her to risk of HIV infection and hence the paradox.

Discussion

With this analysis, we aimed to investigate the connections between the macro- and micro-structural assertions of Connell's (1987) (see Connell and Pearse 2009) social theory of gender by examining the local context of South Asian women living with HIV in the GTA. We also aimed to examine the interdependencies between structural, individual, and normative influences (per later work by Connell 2012; Hankivsky 2012) in the lives of South Asian immigrant women living with HIV. Four themes were identified as relevant to Connell's social theory of gender and as significant to the women in this study: power relations, emotional attachment, gendered division of labour, and social norms. Through their stories, the women in the study demonstrated how they constructed male superiority in their lives through these four social constructs, thus revealing how they participated in the legitimization of hegemonic masculinity. The importance of the findings is discussed below with particular attention paid to how the findings highlight the significance of examining micro-level, local structures in the context of Connell's social theory of gender.

Power relations emerged as a major theme in this study. In Connell's social theory of gender (1987, 1995; Connell and Pearse 2009), power is a structure in gendered relations referred to as the sexual division of power. Among other things, it is maintained in relationships through hegemonic masculinity (Connell and Messerschmidt 2005). The women's narratives suggested that they believe in male superiority and these beliefs are widely accepted in their community. Given these assertions, we propose that individual and societal beliefs are interdependent with power relations as a social structure and that, without this interdependency, there is no basis for the hierarchical relations of power between the women and the men in their lives. We also propose that this interdependence influenced the women's sexual practices, thus contributing to their risk for HIV.

Both the emotional and psychological abuse

perpetrated by the participants' husbands appeared to reinforce the subordinate status of the women in the study. Possessiveness and combativeness (i.e., emotional and psychological abuse) were commonly reported forms of abuse with physical violence mentioned by five women in the sample. Although abuse is an indication of the illegitimacy of male power, its use suggested it was maintaining the status quo; that is, it appeared to force the women to abide by widely accepted social norms as reported by the women (especially in regards to women's asexuality and division of labour). Some of the women suffered from abuse when they first immigrated and were isolated and more vulnerable to their husbands' control. This finding of abuse is consistent with previous studies that examined the experiences of South Asian-sponsored brides in Canada. In these studies, women indicated that they were exposed to harsh physical and emotional mistreatment by their husbands (Cote, Kerisit, and Cote 2001; Husaini 2001; Merali 2009).

In a qualitative study examining South Asian adolescent girls' experiences in Canada, Aziz Talbani and Parveen Hasanali (2000) found that the young women perceived "a high social cost attached to protest [and opposition]" (623); thus, they accepted the status quo. Through our analysis, we also identified some tensions between micro- and macro-systems, highlighting the significance of studying Connell's (1987) social theory of gender from the local context (see also Connell 2012). For the women in our study, and in Talbani and Hasanali's (2000), the local context appeared to have a strong impact on day-to-day living, especially when tensions between micro- and macro- systems existed. As Connell (2012) and Zena Sharman and Joy Johnson (2012) have proposed, conceptualizing gender and health in local contexts is an emerging imperative.

The effect of immigration on power relations has also been documented in other studies. Many South Asian immigrants in Canada reported feelings of being socially ostracized. As a result, their socialization is limited to others who are part of their cultural networks (Cote, Kerisit, and Cote 2001; Husaini 2001; Merali 2009) as was evident in our study. Further, social relations that result in gender disadvantages may actually be strengthened, rather than diminished, through the process of immigration. As was found in our study, this is possible because new diasporic identifications may reinforce existing patriarchal relations (Dwyer 2000). In such cases, changes in the macro-system may actually increase the vulnerabilities in the local context. As we assumed, examining the local contexts and the interdependencies between the micro- and macro-level structures detailed in Connell's theory may be worthy of further investigation.

The women in our study experienced social isolation at the local level, often due to racism and gender inequality. Sherene Razack (2005) maintains that the social isolation experienced by the women in her study could be illustrative of a "culture clash" (11). Culture clash constructs Canada's role as that of the rescuer and as an icon of tolerance that saves people, especially women, from patriarchal cultures that devalue them. Since the events of 9/11, Razack argues that a specific "geo-political terrain" (12) has been promoted worldwide, allowing undeniable racism to be expressed in the name of feminism. This racism needs to be attended to because the new geo-political terrain is characterized, in part, by a violent culture clash between the West (constructed as modern, good, civilized, secular, and democratic) and the Islamic world (depicted as the West's opposite: non-modern, evil, uncivilized, religious, and barbaric) (12).

In the sample of women we interviewed, this divisive terrain (Razack 2005) may have contributed to the local context by further isolating the South Asian women in the Canadian context and leaving them in a vulnerable position in a country where their social and familial networks are limited. Although the women's retreat to their own communities and religious institutions may not have always been a safe haven for them as it reinforced hegemonic masculinity, it provided them with acceptance and validation, which became a source of strength and resilience against the various oppressions in their lives despite the aforementioned paradox (see also Rosenfield 2012).

Some of the women in our study gingerly pushed back against male power and gendered violence, often risking their safety and lives and despite the fact that they still contracted HIV. This can be considered a form of agency. Veronica Magar (2003) examined gender-based violence and established a model of empowerment in which agency is a fundamental concept in women's emancipation and liberation. According to Magar, "agency is the individual's capacity to act on their life situation and make strategic life choices using

capabilities and resources such as knowledge and skills, critical consciousness, and gender awareness available to them" (520). Yasmin Jiwani, Nancy Janovicek, and Angela Cameron (2001) add a critical piece to this idea of agency in the context of a culturally divided terrain: when anti-immigrant sentiments are present and extreme, members of visible minority groups must constantly bend to societal norms and seek support from their own cultural communities. Further, they assert that the Canadian context represents a culture replete with increasingly complex relations that are challenging to navigate.

The women in our study said they experienced this navigational challenge, which they partially met by turning to their local communities, a move that inadvertently exposed them to heightened risk of HIV. This risk manifested because of the aforementioned convoluted interdependencies between power relations, emotional attachment, gendered division of labour, and social norms and the three structural, individual, and normative influences (see Hankivsky 2012).

Conclusions

Our analysis suggests that using Connell's social theory of gender to explore *how* social norms may interact with personal beliefs and social structures (i.e., power relations, emotional attachment, and gendered division of labour) offers new knowledge that can impact how we understand experiences; thus, how we can best support people who are situated in challenging social locations that threaten their health and well-being (Connell 2012).

Findings from this study clearly indicate that power, emotional attachment, gendered division of labour, and social norms *are* structures that contribute to some South Asian women's oppression and increased risk of HIV.

The major contributions of this research include the need to augment Connell's theory of gendered social relations with a focus on the local (balanced with an anti-oppressive lens) and to take into account the insights gained from the four themes emergent from this study: power, emotional attachment, gendered division of labour, and social norms. If gender differences are socially constructed, these social relations can be reconstructed, leading to more supportive and less hegemonic personal relations. Richer and nuanced understandings of how power operates between genders, especially for South-Asian women at risk of HIV, paves the way for theory refinement and innovative, refocused research.

Endnotes

[1] The term "South Asian" refers to an extremely diverse group of people whose origins can be traced to the region of South Asia that includes the principal countries of Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Myanmar, Nepal, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka (Statistics Canada 2006). It also refers to people who self-identify as South Asian although their country of last permanent residence is not in South Asia. This includes South Asians from places such as Africa (especially East and South Africa), the Caribbean (Guyana, Trinidad, and Jamaica), South America, the Pacific (Fiji), and European countries that trace their origin to the Indian subcontinent and continue to describe themselves as South Asians (Council of Agencies Servicing South Asians 2000).

Acknowledgment

We offer our gratitude to the incredible South Asian immigrant women who gave so much of their time and shared their inspirational stories with us and to the Alliance for South Asian AIDS Prevention, a community-based AIDS Service Organization that offers services to South Asian women living with HIV in the Greater Toronto Area, for helping with the project every step of the way. Special thanks to Dr. Mona Loutfy and Dr. Carmen Logie for their valuable feedback.

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Review Essay: Gendered Bodies and Necropolitical States

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Books Under Review

Bromwich, Rebecca. 2015. *Looking for Ashley: Re-reading What the Smith Case Reveals about the Governance of Girls, Mothers and Families in Canada*. Bradford, ON: Demeter Press.

Dean, Amber. 2015. *Remembering Vancouver's Disappeared Women*: *Settler Colonialism and The Difficulty of Inheritance*. Toronto, ON: University of Toronto Press.

We encounter dead women when flipping through magazines, newspapers, television channels, or web pages. Some stories are embedded in newspaper columns while other stories are told through a Netflix series. Do we linger on these narratives or keep moving? Do we recognize ourselves in their stories? Do their stories haunt or stick to us (Ahmed 2004; Gordon 1997)? Do we feel pity, sadness, anger, or nothing at all?

These questions inspired scholarship on social death. Michel Foucault (2003 [1976]) and Giorgio Agamben (1995) analyzed the State's role in preserving live or recognizing one as having a life that can be killed. Achille Mbembe (2003) and Judith Butler (2004) assessed necropolitics and grievability. Activist provocations often question whose lives count too. One need only trace Black women's history from Sojourner Truth and Mamie Till to Alicia Garza, Opal Tometi, and Patrisse Cullors to understand the tradition of making violent racialized erasure visible. Hashtag memorials #SayHerName and #MMIWG2S, as well as vigils like Transgender Day of Remembrance and Women in Black, also question disposability under militarism, transphobia, and "imperialist, white-supremacist, capitalist patriarchy" (hooks 2004). This intellectual landscape provides the setting for Rebecca Bromwich's *Looking for Ashley: Re-Reading What the Smith Case Reveals about the Governance of Girls, Mothers and Families* (2015) and Amber Dean's *Remembering Vancouver's Disappeared Women: Settler Colonialism and the Difficulty of Inheritance* (2015). In this review essay, I discuss what these books contribute to necropolitics and memorialization. These texts are essential monographs[1] that deliberate the ethics of grievability and the incitement to act accordingly. *Looking for Ashley* and *Remembering Vancouver's Disappeared Women* are outstanding meta-texts because they question how we are implicated in necropolitical world-making.

Looking for Ashley: Resisting the Tabula Rasa

Looking for Ashley's instantiates a gendered analysis of necropolitical governmentality. Using formal legal documents, docudramas, and print media texts, Rebecca Bromwich (2015) argues criminal justice, child welfare, and mental health systems turned Ashley Smith into a "case" to be managed to death, literally. These "discursive sites" produced Smith as a carceral subject ("Inmate Ashley"), an immature girl-child ("Child Ashley"), and a pitiable patient with unmet psychiatric needs ("Patient Smith"). Smith was criminalized, infantilized, and psychopathologized. *Looking for Ashley* is a deft Foucaldian analysis of the collusion between the prison industrial complex, the child-reformer movement, and the mental health industry. Over the course of three substantive chapters, the author critiques a villain/victim binary that leaves little room for Smith's complexity or agency.

The most intriguing part of *Looking for Ashley* is Bromwich's refusal to let advocates and activists off the hook. In their attempts to humanize Smith, she became a "noble victim" (212) unlike "other" people (i.e. non-white, racialized, Indigenous, and working class). By producing Ashley as a "saveable" figure, meant to draw on public sympathies, progressives reinscribed social death to Others. Bromwich cautions against politicizing or memorializing death if it reinforces necropolitics elsewhere.

Remembering Vancouver's Disappeared Women: Taking Stock of Inheritances

Whereas *Re-Reading Ashley* subtly invites reader reflexivity, *Remembering Vancouver's Disappeared Women* tackles settler complicity explicitly. Amber Dean (2015) uses public memorials, artistic works, activist discourse, documentary film, missing posters, and other ephemera to address witnessing and remembering. Dean contends some memorial practices collapse the divide between observer and murdered subject (i.e. "that could have been me"). She argues this assumed intimacy obscures histories of colonial violence directed towards Indigenous women. An improved response is to wrestle with the "practice of inheritance" (7), which requires asking, "where and how I am" implicated in the disappearances of marginalized women (10)? Rather than over-identifying or distancing, Dean invites readers to contemplate interdependence, a central concept for Indigenous peoples.

The book's strength is Dean's citational conscientization through reflexive engagement with Indigenous thought. In one chapter, she weighs the ethical and methodological uses of haunting theory against Indigenous theory while wrestling with her own unsettling after a documentary viewing. In other chapters, Dean evaluates memorial practices meant to evoke grievability such as artistic updates of missing posters or park dedications. One of the most useful sections is the last chapter where Dean compares "strategic remembrance" and "remembrance as difficult return." Through "strategic remembrance," artists and activists focus on concrete action to effect change, but give short shrift the colonial past. "Remembrance as difficult return" critiques existing necropolitical conditions that disproportionately affect women who are Indigenous, poor, sex workers, or use drugs/alcohol. Encountering this type of memorialization (e.g. Valentine's Day Women's Memorial March in the Downtown Eastside) requires participants to reckon with complicity as well as their inheritance of violent histories.

Conclusion

Looking for Ashley and *Remembering Vancouver's Disappeared Women* critique both necropower as well as responses to necropolitics. They interrogate how the State makes certain gendered lives illegible and they indict the public too. Bromwich questions public projection: what discourses were projected onto Smith to make sense of her life and death? Dean centralizes colonialism: why does one need to reckon with colonial inheritances before they/we can push for justice? These books show we are all implicated in governmentality and necropolitics. We should proceed cautiously in our desires to humanize the dead, as a counter-necropolitical action, because such efforts may reinscribe normative gender, sexuality, class, mental health, or colonial formations. These books remind that, while we should remember the dead, we should fight against the living-death of others.

Endnotes

[1] At the 2017 Women's and Gender Studies et Recherches Féministes (WGSRF) conference, Amber Dean shared the WGSRF Outstanding Scholarship Prize for *Remembering Vancouver's Dis-*

appeared Women and an Honourable Mention went to Rebecca Bromwich for *Looking for Ashley*.

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Book Review: *Auxiliary Skins: A Collection of Stories*

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Book Under Review

Miscione, Christine. 2013. *Auxiliary Skins: A Collection of Stories*. Toronto, ON: Exile Editions.

In her debut collection of short-stories *Auxiliary Skins*, Canadian author Christine Miscione explores the human body, drawing an enthralling collection of stories out of its surfaces and its hidden mysteries.

Each of Miscione's short-stories moves, very differently, unexpectedly, and sometimes disturbingly or shockingly, between the insides and the outsides of the realm of the body, going across and beyond the un-definable boundaries of corporeal and psychological *feeling*. *Auxiliary Skins* is, in fact, about *feeling* in all of its shades of meaning, from the physical to the profoundly emotional. For example, in "Skin Just," the simple marks on the protagonist's skin are turned into obsessively growing, cancerous thoughts, which cannot be eradicated; in "Breached Heredity," on the other hand, a young woman's pregnancy hides, and at the same time exposes, the twisted tangles of her family life; and the second-hand clothes in a vintage shop, with stories of their own, are the triggers of cause-effect chains ending in tragedy—with hints of irony—in "Plungers, Porcelain, and Paltry Things."

Miscione experiments audaciously in her writing: some of her stories choose eccentric points of view that completely disorient and estrange the reader. In "Uterine Kisses," for example, the narrating voice comes from within the deforming glass walls of an incubator. Many of the tales in the collection are almost cinematographic in their narration, which slowly zooms out from the initial frame to gradually reveal the wider picture to its audience. However, Miscione's writing is carefully detached in doing this, and leaves blank spaces of silence for the reader's imagination to fill. Her multiform style plays with unusual forms of storytelling as well: in "Roidal Conundrum," for instance, we end up looking for a narrative (and perceiving all of its suspense) in the posts of an online forum, almost as if we were eagerly scrolling through it to get to the end.

Every one of the stories in the anthology has its markedly individual features: the result is a collection of fascinating and grotesque specimens, whose outer skins

we are invited to observe and to gradually peel off, to explore what they hide, and what they reveal.

Book Review: *If We Were Birds*

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Book Under Review

Shields, Erin. 2011. *If We Were Birds*. Toronto, ON: Playwrights Canada Press.

Governor General award-winning *If We Were Birds* by Canadian playwright and actor Erin Shields (2011) is a powerful recreation of the Greek myth of sisters Philomela and Procne that inspired Ovid's *Metamorphoses* and many other works. It is an interpretation of how women are treated by men in power that forces the audience to face the violence of war and contemporary political conflicts in which women have been the main victims.

The plot closely follows the ancient myth, with Shields masterfully intertwining satirical moments and horrendous war testimonies of cruelty experienced by women. After her marriage to the warrior Tereus, Procne, daughter of Pandion, the King of Athens, is taken to live in Thrace, forever separated from her younger sister Philomela. After giving birth to a son, Procne longs for Philomela and implores her husband to bring her for a visit. Tereus agrees and goes to Athens to discover that Philomela has grown up to be a beautiful woman. On their way back to Thrace, Tereus violently rapes Philomela in the woods. In order to make sure that she cannot recount the incident, he cuts off her tongue. However, Procne discovers what he did and is determined to avenge her sister in the most brutal way: by murdering her own son and feeding him as a meal to her husband. When Tereus finds out, all three protagonists and the chorus are transformed into birds by the Gods. Instead of setting them free, the transformation perpetuates their pain by preserving the power relations between them. Filomela states clearly at the beginning: "Not much has changed, now that I am a bird…especially the size of my fear" (4).

The all-female chorus—in fact only two out of nine members of the cast are male—is employed in *If We Were Birds* to critique the atrocities committed in war. It consists of slave women whose words were inspired by testimonies of survivors from the conflicts in Nanking (1937), Berlin (1945), Bangladesh (1971), Bosnia-Herzegovina (1992-1995), and Rwanda (1994), contributing to a twentieth-century perspective,

without explicit references in the text that would distract from the main plot. The play thus combines two different spheres of violence: the public and private. The unclear distinction between the two is perfectly exemplified in the words of grieving Procne: "I thought there was a difference between family and war" (67).

But what does it mean to be a bird? The final metamorphosis of the characters and the chorus is not experienced as liberation from pain, but rather a break from the cycle of violence. The hybrid creation of human consciousness trapped in the body of a bird is a reflection of reality: despite the transcendence of the silenced victims from suffering to freedom, there is no perfect resolution or escape from the horrors of violence. This Brechtian ending reveals that the purpose of the play is not merely to console the audience or report brutality, but rather to applaud and honour women survivors who lived to tell their stories and just like birds, continue flying.

Book Review: *My Mother Did Not Tell Stories*

Enrica Aurora Cominetti is a graduate student at the University of Guelph.

Book Under Review

Kruk, Laurie. 2012. *My Mother Did Not Tell Stories*. Bradford, ON: Demeter Press, 2012.

With her collection of personal poems *My Mother Did Not Tell Stories*, Laurie Kruk (2012), Associate Professor of English at Nipissing University in North Bay, offers an honest portrayal of women living in between boundaries and bonds – both emotional and sociocultural. Their stories are presented in three parts, which shed light on different aspects of motherhood and womanhood, such as constant change, resilience, and awareness as well as melancholy and nostalgia for the past.

"Part I: My Mother Did Not Tell Stories" voices the evolution of women's mothering experience, from the delicate tenderness of its beginning in "First Birds," through the familial rituals in "Reliquary," to "the dark pages / of adult discouragement" and reiteration of gender stereotypes in "my mother did not tell stories" (30).

The second section, "River Valley Poems," paints the misadventures Kruk's family had to face when unwittingly moving to a French-speaking flood zone in Ontario, thus learning painful lessons "not just [because of] nature," but also because of the cultural differences separating them from the locals ("After-Earth: second spring," 43). In this way, the author imbues the collection with an intersectional approach, as she stresses not only gender differences, but also linguistic and ethno-specific ones.

"Drawing Circles," the collection's final section, closes the loop of the narrative, as, in "mak[ing] a long, slow arc / turning back" to the family's past, it conveys a sense of continuity of a shared memory ("Boat Trip to James Bay," 71). Kruk's mother's once untold stories can finally be passed on now that they have been verbalized, thus enabling the author as well as the reader to "mak[e] use of these windfalls, neglected / lessons, unharvested plenty" ("Translating the Bush," 76). By so doing, Kruk skillfully connects a past reflected in "stretch-marks, scars, sags /lines, wrinkles, valleys and flesh-dimples" to the territory of present life ("How to Look Good Naked," 97).

Overall, My Mother Did Not Tell Stories is characterized by a stunningly elegant phrasing as well as strong closing verses. Yet, the delightful grace of Kruk's poetry is in some places encumbered with too much information and an overly polished and technical lexicon. This can be seen in "Catching the Rabbit," where she uses the appellative "formerly sun-drowsy lagomorph" to refer to the animal of the title (88). Moreover, her explanatory notes may be somewhat distracting to readers interested primarily in her poetry and may prevent them from fully engaging with her artistic vision. For example, the long footnote for "T & N. O. Rail" in "Widowmaker" will be appreciated by readers curious about local history but not necessarily by those interested in poetic verse (58). Nevertheless, Kruk's poetic strategy of telling stories in an authentic and simple way truly has the power to enchant the interlocutor with its pure and effective lines.

Book Review: *Women and War in Antiquity*

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Book Under Review

Fabre-Serris, Jacqueline, and Alison Keith, eds. 2015. *Women and War in Antiquity*. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press.

Jacqueline Fabre-Serris and Alison Keith's book *Women and War in Antiquity* is a compendium of articles designed to explore the often neglected subject of the involvement of women in the theatre of war in antiquity. In this goal, Fabre-Serris and Keith have been most successful. The articles in this volume delve into the many diverse ways in which women have both participated in, and been a product of, war in both ancient Greece and Rome. The subject matter of these studies varies widely from Phillipe Rousseau's examination of Homer's epics and the dismissal of women from masculine activities in "War, Speech, and the Bow Are Not Women's Business," to Alison Sharrock's investigation into the participation of women on the battlefields of fictional works in "Warrior Women in Roman Epic," to Violaine Sebilotte-Cuchet's reinterpretation of archaeological and historically literary sources in the analysis of Carian queens and their relation to the warrior women who preceded them in "The Warrior Queens of Caria (Fifth to Fourth Centuries BCE): Archaeology, History, and Historiography."

The methodology these scholars employ is wide ranging as we read the voices of historians and literary critics throughout the work, something that Fabre-Serris and Keith note as being central to the conference that inspired this book. This volume effectively takes the whole of classical antiquity—the Greek and Roman, as well as the mythical, historical, literary, and dramatic—and packages it neatly with women at its very center, doing away with the conventional notion of war as a strictly masculine endeavour.

The approach that Fabre-Serris and Keith have taken here is to bring contemporary gender and women's studies together with the classics; as such, this interdisciplinary work will be of great value to a variety of readers beyond those interested strictly with the history and philology of antiquity. The contributors bring compelling perspectives to this collection, and despite the minor caveat that some insights might reach beyond the purview of the ancient sources, these works

make it abundantly clear that a discipline as traditional as the classics can evolve in the face of contemporary methodologies. Though this collection might not, ultimately, thrust the women of antiquity to the forefront of discourses on warfare, it has the potential to inspire future scholarship on the subject; herein lies its greatest strength. This volume is not only valuable to the ardent classicist, but to the general reader interested in the role of women in societies, both ancient and modern.

Book Review: *Rome's Christian Empress*

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Book Under Review

Salisbury, Joyce E. 2015. *Rome's Christian Empress: Galla Placidia Rules at the Twilight of the Empire*. Baltimore, MD: John Hopkins University Press.

In *Rome's Christian Empress*, Joyce Salisbury offers a fictionalized biography of Empress Galla Placidia. Salisbury provides a comprehensive narrative of Placidia's life, detailing the theological debates of her lifetime and the spread of Christianity throughout the Roman Empire. This narrative addresses the lack of substantial scholarship on Placidia, who is often easily cast aside because she is female, and evaluates her reign as regent and her contribution to the development of the Christian Empire.

Salisbury effectively narrates Placidia's life and fills in gaps in knowledge by drawing on political and religious sources. Through the use of primary religious sources, particularly the letters and texts of Claudian and Augustine, Salisbury convincingly explains developments in theology and the environment in which Placidia lived. Through her creative and smooth writing style, complex theological issues and debates are woven into the narrative to illustrate Placidia's family background and explain the difficulties she encountered. The intellectual debate, in which Augustine was central, is particularly well articulated and used to illustrate the struggle between Rome's pagan history and the gradual shift to Christianity. This is done to contextualize and explain Placidia's patronage of Catholic monuments, artwork, and the overpowering of Arian Christians.

As a fictionalized biography, this text is challenging as Salisbury sets out to provide a comprehensive narrative of Placidia's life, but the genre makes it difficult to determine its academic relevance and use. In its presentation, there is some ambiguity for the reader who wishes to distinguish whether this is a biography or a realistic work with fictional elements. The introduction and first two chapters discuss the lack of attention to Placidia's childhood in scholarship, but this is not remedied by the current work. Salisbury takes the liberty to make small, but multiple assumptions about Placidia's upbringing. This is problematic in that an image of Placidia is thus created without sufficient historical support. From a storytelling standpoint, a

disjunction is created in the narrative as Salisbury fails to effectively connect and address the missing links. The liberties taken do not tie together the first part of the novel, concerning Theodosius's reign and the impact of Placidia's later rule, an aim that is explicitly stated.

Despite this slight criticism of the early part of the text, Salisbury carefully blends primary sources in later sections of her narrative to create a convincing and supported account of the theological debates in this period. This effectively displays how Placidia, as a woman, had a strong and direct role in bringing Christianity to the empire. The book recasts Placidia as far more significant than a mere, inconspicuous detail in Roman history.

Book Review: Male Dominance and Expertise in the Remembering of Irish Women's Lives

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Book Under Review

Ryan, Paul. 2012. *Asking Angela Macnamara: An Intimate History of Irish Lives*. Newbridge, IE: Irish Academic Press.

In his debut academic publication, sociologist Dr. Paul Ryan employs a clever qualitative content analysis by exploring an advice column of Angela Macnamara, the 'Dear Heloise' of postcolonial Ireland in the period between 1963 and 1980. Macnamara's writings offer a window into the changing intimate lives of Irish young people, married couples, and gay men in a time of considerable social, political, and economic upheaval. *Asking Angela* remembers an Ireland emerging from an era of isolationism, censorship, rurality, and economic restriction. Ireland of the '60s and '70s now contends with television and other new medias, increased global ties, and the waning power of the Catholic Church. This era was a turning point for Irish culture, and this book offers a rich analysis of the period written and retold by those who lived it.

Asking Angela primarily relies on a content analysis of questions submitted to *The Sunday Press* and Macnamara's replies. A sample of this kind will hold considerable bias, as the reader is only made privy to those questions that Macnamara determined to be relevant and that the editor was willing to print. There was also the problem of not wanting to affront the omnipresent Catholic Church. Macnamara was regularly forced to restrain her advice, often to the terrible detriment of vulnerable children, women, and gay persons invariably influenced by her perceived expertise. Ryan addresses this problem of bias by incorporating a contemporary interview with Macnamara herself, men who lived through the era (both gay and straight), and recollections from his own family history. It is a strategy that is refreshingly honest and necessarily critical of the false objectivity that plagues many social analyses.

Ryan's qualitative triangulation successfully crafts a rich story that is appropriate for younger scholars who did not live through the time of conservative Ireland in transition, but also for non-Irish readers who will find themselves eased into the nuances of Irish life often with helpful comparisons to similar cultural trends in North America and Europe.

The subjective choices in methodology, however, created some dilemmas. Namely, the focus on men in the interviewing phase, while designed to bring some humanity and complexity to the harsh depictions of men in Macnamara's column, ironically came at the expense of women's visibility. Women's perspectives are primarily relegated to their pleas for dignity, safety, and comradery in circumscribed letters. This editorial choice is intentional, as Ryan is hoping to bring men's intimate experiences to light. He is correct in pointing out that research in Irish masculinities is scant, but it is also the case that the disciplines of Irish history and politics have been predominantly *men's* stories, with women's experiences regulated to the margins in "women's studies" and auxiliary contributions (Aretxaga 1997; Hayes and Urquhart 2004). Excluding women from this retelling of changing Irish private life risks replicating this pedagogical oppression.

There are at least two significant consequences that emerge as a result. First, gay women and lesbians were rendered almost invisible in the book's discussion of changing perspectives on sexual orientation and homosexuality. As is typical in mobilization efforts and mainstream queer studies, women are frequently subsumed within the larger narrative of gay men (Gould 2006; Purdie-Vaughns and Eibach 2008). Another unfortunate oversight made possible by the erasure of women's voices was the near clinical discussion of marital rape and abuse clearly evidenced in Macnamara's column as a constant way of life (or state of survival) for Irish women. Many readers, particularly survivors of sexual violence, will find these chapters highly triggering and mentally fatiguing to read. It was so important that Ryan incorporated his own biography into the writing and bravely offered his own life experiences and thoughts to bring reflexivity to his analysis, but this human element was largely absent in the more objective reporting style delegated to the systematic misogyny that surfaced in Macnamara's column.

Indeed, a stronger feminist praxis would have been helpful overall. For instance, Ryan makes a point to counter the stereotype that men were uninvolved with housework, supporting this through interview responses from his male respondents. However, sociological research has demonstrated that men consistently over-report their involvement in the household (Cunningham 2008; Press and Townsley 1998). That is, their attitudes and behaviors are not aligned. The men that Ryan interviewed, cued to reminisce on family life in their younger days, were likely constructing memory and identity to suit the interview and their socially desirable sense of self. Asking women for their perspectives on this matter would have been vital, as major discrepancies between men's reports and women's actual receipt of household assistance were likely present.

While *Asking Angela* takes the reader back to a time when strict gender roles were enforced, it would have been useful to learn more about deviant cases. For instance, what about women who did not get married, cohabitated, or who chose to be child-free? As with lesbians, heterosexual women who remained single were not mentioned aside from their fast track to emigration. Their stories add a much needed dimension to Ireland's story, as their invisibility and absence is just as important in the twentieth century creation of the idealized Irish home life. Some of these records are explored in Alan Hayes and Diane Urquhart's (2004) volume *Irish Women's History*, notably Sharon Lambert's (2004) contribution on the experiences of Irish immigrants in Britain and Áine McCarthy's (2004) chronicle of deviant women (spinsters and 'defiant' daughters and wives) who were disproportionately institutionalized in asylums for the insane. The growing attention paid to the horrors of the Magdalene laundries in recent years also begs us to draw attention to those who fell off the margins of Macnamara's column. For Macnamara and Ryan, women exist almost exclusively as mothers, daughters, and wives, but rarely persons in their own right. Including them in the interviews would have been an important step toward their acknowledgement.

Although gender roles are examined in a rather tempered manner, Ryan does highlight how the Irish Gay Rights Movement and the feminist movement gradually improved the lives of Irish persons. As such, it would be disingenuous to describe *Asking Angela* as a conservative text. Although he shrinks from an honest discussion of rape, Ryan does identify how feminist praxis crept into the bedroom and began to transform institutionalized marital violence and female trafficking into something that at least begins to consider that women are sentient partners in the practice of sex. Ryan, himself, is at the forefront of Irish gender studies,

having examined gay rights mobilization and the politics of male sex work in the Irish state in his other endeavors (Ryan 2006, 2016). The impact of these movements cannot be understated, as they dramatically increased individual autonomy, introduced democratic consensus in the family, and eroded the outdated belief that gay boys and men were psychologically or spiritually damaged. For scholars of gender, sexualities, and Irish culture, *Asking Angela* provides a personal and intimate portrait of a postcolonial nation torn between British and religious oppression and the influence of pop media, technologies, and interconnectedness.

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Book Review: *What's Cooking Mom? Narratives About Food and Family*

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Book Under Review

Cassidy, Tanya M., and Florence Pasche Guignard, eds. 2015. *What's Cooking, Mom? Narratives about Food and Family*. Bradford, ON: Demeter Press, 2015.

The first of two volumes that discuss different cultural and personal approaches to the association between nurturing and motherhood, *What's Cooking, Mom? Narratives about Food and Family* jumps off the shelf for the heterogeneous nature of its contributions and approaches to what might seem a straightforward topic.

Editors Tanya M. Cassidy and Florence Pasche Guignard (2015) describe the collection as a "potluck or buffet-style get-together with friends and family" (2). The volume presents this variety in chapters on the most disparate approaches to a broad and multifaceted topic. Travelling through space and time, the readers discover mothers struggling with the task of feeding imposed on them by their cultural contexts, be they in twenty-first-century Japan or post-war France, and with the private and public forces that shape and are in turn shaped by eating habits. The work exposes these "foodways" as the meat of the subject matter, and brings together a varied assortment of approaches to burning subjects such as breastfeeding, cultural integration, and the role of the food industry in everyday life. The form of the contributions—from academic articles to autobiographical narratives, poems, and even a play—reflects this search for variety and offers the opportunity to choose one's own order of reading.

The contributors are both active subjects and reflective narrators who present their work as a blend of theoretical and "spontaneous" articles from which the subjective perspectives of the writers emerge between the lines. By including their personal experience as academics and mothers, the editors put themselves on the plate, serving up their experiences as reflections of their struggles with "balanc[ing] the demands of professionalism and motherhood" (11). Interestingly, the role of father as an active member of the family is only evident in two contributions in the collection. This raises the question of whether this was done intentionally to underline the isolation that the mothers in most of the contributions experienced in their role. What is

more, despite the richness of cultural backgrounds, the social context of the writers is limited to the academic world and this prevents the reader from getting a truly comprehensive perspective on motherhood, including that of low-income mothers.

In its entirety, this bold attempt to offer a better understanding of the role of eating and nourishing in the lives of individuals highlights the centrality that family and food have in culture and society, and the book brilliantly presents this to the readers. Both the specialist reader and the enthusiast will find this work accessible and rich in new ideas related to food as both a bond and a boundary on multicultural, economic, and emotional levels.

Book Review: *Freedom with Violence: Race, Sexuality, and the US State*

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Book Under Review

Reddy, Chandan. 2011. *Freedom with Violence: Race, Sexuality, and the US State*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

In *Freedom with Violence*, Chandan Reddy studies an important contradiction of the modern liberal state—its claim to provide freedom from violence for its citizens depends on its ability to deploy violence against peoples who are perceived as irrational. Beginning with an analysis of President Obama's signing of the 2010 National Defence Authorization Act—which also included the Matthew Shephard (gay torture) and the James Byrd. Jr (black torture) Hate Crimes Prevention Act—the book examines the U.S. state's increasing power over the course of the twentieth century and attempts to develop a new way of understanding the role played by race, sexuality, and national citizenship throughout U.S. history.

As a self-proclaimed "queer of colour" scholar-activist, Reddy encourages the reading of selected American texts produced in the early and later twentieth century "against the grain" (18-19). The book introduces its readers to works like W. E. B. Du Bois's *Souls of Black Folk* and Nella Larsen's *Quicksand* and, through the application of analytical concepts (drawing on Michel Foucault and Walter Benjamin), it provides the reader with a new interpretation of the notion of freedom in a neoliberal state. The analysis offers insight into violence as the cost of freedom, given that the struggles for freedom (whether they be for racial/sexual minorities or independent statehood) go hand in hand with violence towards "x" (in this case, people of a certain race and/or sexual orientation).

Issues such as race, sexuality, nation, and class as well as the economics, sociology, and politics in twentieth-century United States are analyzed throughout the text, providing a new perspective on the state and the rise of nationalism in the U.S. Primarily intended for an academic audience, the work contains much complex sociological, political, and historical analysis. The book's conclusion, however, pulls together the interpretation of various texts in an effective manner that is easy to understand even for general readers. Freedom comes at the cost of violence and does not

always look the same throughout history, nor does it remain static in a society.

Freedom with Violence provides a new understanding of the legitimate state violence monopoly that modern neoliberal states possess and its relation to providing its citizens with freedom from violence. It does so through a well-researched and concise analysis, which draws on a variety of disciplines, giving the reader cause to reflect on the heavy costs that are associated with the freedoms many of us take for granted.

Book Review: *Ingenious Citizenship: Recrafting Democracy For Social Change*

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Book Under Review

Lee, Charles T. 2016. *Ingenious Citizenship: Recrafting Democracy for Social Change*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2016

In this book, the author Charles T. Lee (2016) presents arguments for the recrafting of democracy for social change. By way of introduction, the author analyzes the message produced by the American Ad Council post 9/11 that projects one America comprised of citizens of varying ages, races, national origins, occupations, religions, and gender with "delicate emotive" and "aesthetic effects" emphasizing the US motto "E pluribus Unum" "Out of Many, One" (1). In the same vein, the hiatus in the narrative of "E pluribus Unum" is mentioned: a type of democracy that subsumes racial, class, gender, and sexual differences into a unified citizenry (2). Drawing on the work of Lauren Berlant (1997) and Russ Castronovo and Dana Nelson (2002), Lee maintains that the type of democracy espoused by the American Ad Council calls for "conservatism, protection and represses any antagonistic struggle staged by dissenting subjects regarding the naturalness of its own self-formation…" (3). The author further postulates that "[f]ocusing on difference, disagreement and contestation from subordinate positions radical democratic politics formulates itself as a critique of the dominant liberal emphasis on social harmony and consensus" (3).

Lee also argues for a re-evaluation of western liberal and progressive thought through which many commentators, scholars, and activists apprehend and conceive the "political." He calls for a re-examination of the democratic agency and particularly the ways in which it can pre-empt an engagement with forms of agency that are not necessarily democratic, but nonetheless engender fluid configurations for change. He further maintains that it is imperative to seek out the structural roots of social problems and overturn any undemocratic structures of social relations. Methodologically, the author uses the concept of ingenious citizenship and draws on cultural theory, existing ethnographies, qualitative interviews, news reports, films and documentaries, and autobiographical statements, writings, and documents to develop a

critical layering of textual rereading, reinterpretation, and reconstruction in advancing a story of citizenship that is grounded in and informed by the lived experience of the abject (26-27).

Lee's method of critical contextualization is threefold. First, he de-centers political philosophers and theorists and re-centers an eclectic assemblage of object subjects. Second, he de-centers what he refers to as unitary subjectivity and, drawing in part on James Ferguson (2006), focuses on the idea that "what we see depends on what we are looking from" (29). Finally, he argues that the interpretive method cannot be complete without resorting to its own intellectual resources to conduct an alternative interpretation of agency and change. His emphasis, I believe, is on radical democratic change. Significantly, Lee also refers to James Scott's (2012) insight that "the accumulation of thousands or even millions of petty acts can have massive effects on warfare, land rights, taxes and property relations" (xx). Gender and women in particular feature prominently in this study; he refers to Saba Mahmood (2005) who wrote that, "all human beings have an innate desire for freedom" (5) and argues that it is "normative to feminism as it is to liberalism" (Lee 2016, 22).

In chapter one, Lee discusses liberal citizenship as a cultural script which serves two critical objectives. The first is to instruct human subjects on the "normal" way to conduct themselves as citizens in different social spheres and institutions. It is this concept of citizenship that gives liberal democracy its ability to persist and allows for abjection within society – those who do not measure up or conform to the script – for its own constitution. The second is that citizenship is not only a cultural script, but it can also serve as a template to trace how abject subjects inventively and resourcefully disrupt and appropriate the script to generate more inhabitable spaces for themselves. Lee therefore directs his analysis to four major areas where the liberal citizenship script is disrupted and appropriated: migrant domestic workers' workplace tactics against their employers; global sex workers' purposeful abjection of their bodies; trans people remodeling gender identification and sexual practices; and acts of suicide bombing. He argues that ingenious agency shows through prominently in the capacity of these abject subjects who fall through the cracks of conventional citizenship (39).

In the third chapter, Lee devotes attention to the theme "Global sex workers, calculated abjection and appropriating economic citizenship" (101), which is useful not only for the ingenious citizenship construct, but also issues related to gender. He refers to the relations between "bread" (practicality and survival) and "roses" (aspiration for equality and justice). These two contradistinctive positions "revivify" the politics inspired by female immigrant textile workers during the strikes at the turn of the twentieth century whose slogan was "it is bread we fight for, but we fight for roses too" (103). Significantly, one of the central questions is whether prostitution demonstrates agency by purposefully using the "shameful" abjection of a woman's body to earn an economic livelihood and allows her to acquire a limited degree of normality in relation to liberal citizenship?

Lee uses the narrative frame of calculated abjection to describe the ways in which sex workers deliberately and intentionally subject themselves to sexual abjection and dishonor in exchange for economic benefits while appropriating more inhabitable spaces. In other words, he identifies the paradox of using stigmatized work to realize social advancement, turning sexual abjection into "a calculated maneuver to fulfill economic ambitions" (108). Historically, he refers to Kamala Kempadoo (1999) who argues that slave women used sexual alliances to achieve emancipation and freedom from oppression. They exploited the colonial masters' exotic fantasies and sexual demands in exchange for money "to purchase their own or their children's freedom or in exchange for manumission" (8).

The fourth chapter focuses on "Trans people, morphing technologies, and appropriating gendered citizenship." With regard to morphing, Lee (2016) describes two streams. The first disrupts the gender script of citizenship by forcing the binary categories male and female to be inclusive of subjects born with the "opposite biological body, thereby stretching and expanding the original meanings of the categories of man and woman"; the second challenges the fundamental binary system of citizenship and creates the right to travel to gender/sexual destinations other than those labeled male or female (185). The final sections of this chapter focuses on activist reorientation: morphing in and out of rights. He references Michelle O'Brien (2013) and argues that "trans politics should not hinge on a fanatical commitment to purity or an attempt at a total refusal to

participate or be complicit in any form of corporate rule, but should instead proceed by interacting with global capitalism, corrupting, redirecting, and redefining the system to serve our ends" (185).

In the fifth chapter, Lee focuses on "suicide bombers, sacrificial violence and appropriating life itself." He discusses the Palestinian occupied territories and how Israeli citizens have a normalized position in relation to the liberal pursuit of life, liberty and happiness—from which Palestinians are "almost" indefinitely abjected. Drawing on Judith Butler (1993), Lee maintains that "Israeli and Palestinian compatriots are linked through the unequal colonial power relations in the occupied Territories, and they are not only placed in a rejected/eluded outside to the pursuit of liberal citizenship, they are also suspended in an unlivable zone of social life inside liberalism's narcissistic embodiment" (192).

In the final sections of the book, Lee argues that social transformation requires unlearning internalized oppression, raising political consciousness, and forging oppositional resistance and strategies. All of these endeavors are indispensable and formulate essential parts of the pedagogical struggle for social change. He further argues that "social activism needs to follow like water in the perpetual combat of social justice struggles" (256).

This is a useful work on ingenious citizenship that captures the efforts of the abjected to gain relevance in a neoliberal society. Without their ingenious strategies, the hyper-exploited persons and women in particular would not have survived. Except for its verbosity, this book is one of the most relevant in the field, having engaged with key literature and identified the hiatus in classical and western philosophies. This work is useful for academics, politicians, and anthropologists as well as the larger human community.

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