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Spatial Exclusion and the Abject Other in Canadian Urban Literature

par

Domenic A. Beneventi

Département de littérature comparée

Faculté d'études supérieures

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Résumé

Cette thèse examine de quelles manières les « autres » (les autochtones, les minorités visibles, les femmes) ont été représentés dans la littérature canadienne. En puisant dans les cadres théoriques de la psychanalyse (Kristeva), du genre (Grosz, Massey) et des études urbaines (Sibley, Sennett), cette thèse soutient que, dans la construction du Canada en tant qu'espace national qui tire ses racines dans son passé colonial, les autochtones et les minorités visibles ont été représentés comme une menace qui dégrade la pureté de l'espace « blanc ». De la même façon, le corps des femmes a été assimilé à un paysage « naturel » devant être dompté et exploité en termes coloniaux, alors que leur visibilité et leur mobilité dans les espaces urbains ont été considérées comme une menace à la prédominance des hommes sur l'espace.

Le premier chapitre offre un contexte historique des études urbaines dans la littérature, en partant de la tradition européenne du flâneur moderniste déambulant dans les rues de Paris et de Londres, jusqu'aux représentations américaines de New York comme symbole de leur entrée fruste et sans heurts dans la modernité. Bien que le « paysage » ait été une préoccupation centrale et récurrente de la critique littéraire au Canada (Frye, Moss, Atwood), les perspectives urbaines sur la littérature canadienne sont plutôt rares. Cette thèse se propose

d'explorer les métropoles canadiennes en examinant de plus près les différentes stratégies d'exclusion spatiale et d'endiguement de ces individus, groupes et communautés qui sont considérés comme une menace aux mythologies nationales omniprésentes.

Le second chapitre examine de quelle manière les immigrants chinois à Vancouver ont été exclus sur le plan spatial par des politiques d'immigration restrictives et des stratégies de réglementation urbaine. Les romans de Sky Lee et Wayson Choy nous font voir comment la panique urbaine et la violence raciale sont le résultat d'un regard orientalisant qui élabore les immigrants chinois comme des criminels, des gens secrets et des prédateurs sexuels déviants. Le troisième chapitre examine la représentation de Montréal dans les romans de Leonard Cohen, Robert Majzels et Régine Robin. Le corps des autochtones, des femmes et des Juifs y sont dépeints comme des « restes » méprisables, brisés par les différents discours religieux, politiques et de genre qui opèrent dans les espaces urbains. Le quatrième chapitre examine la « place » de l'autochtone urbain dans les pièces de Tompson Highway, George Ryga et Daniel David Moses. Le corps autochtone est située dans l'écart symbolique entre ville et réserve, et la violence raciale et sexuelle mené contre lui vient à symboliser la longue histoire désavouée de l'exclusion des autochtones au Canada. Le cinquième chapitre examine le corps des Noirs, « absent » de l'espace urbain, à travers une lecture attentive de

nombreux auteurs afro-canadiens, y compris Austin Clarke, Makeda Silvera et George Elliott Clarke. Élaboré comme méprisable à travers un langage de pollution, de souillure et de criminalité, le corps urbain des Noirs d'Africville et du Toronto multiculturel a été invariablement présenté comme une « tache » sur l'espace social « blanc » de la classe moyenne canadienne.

Mots clés : littérature canadienne, littérature ethnique, théorie urbaine, écriture urbaine canadienne, le corps et la ville.

Abstract

This thesis examines the ways in which "threatening others" (Natives, visible minorities, women) have been represented in Canadian literature. Drawing on the theoretical frameworks of psychoanalysis (Kristeva), gender (Grosz, Massey), and urban studies (Sibley, Sennett), this dissertation argues that in the construction of Canada as a national space whose roots lie in its colonial past, Native and other visible minorities have been represented as a defiling threat to the purity of "white" space. Similarly, women have been represented as threat; in colonial discourse, their bodies have been equated with a "natural" landscape to be tamed, controlled, and ultimately exploited, while their visibility and mobility in urban spaces have been seen as a threat to male spatial predominance.

The first chapter provides a historical background to urban studies in literature, moving from the European tradition of the modernist *flâneur* walking the "storied streets" of Paris and London, to American representations of New York as a reflection of the nation's bullish and unfettered entrance into modernity. If "landscape" has been a central, recurring concern in Canadian literary criticism (Frye, Moss, Atwood), urban perspectives on Canadian literature have been few and far between. This dissertation proposes to explore the Canadian metropolis with an eye to the various strategies of spatial exclusion and "containment" of those

individuals and communities which have been deemed a threat to the pervading national mythologies.

The second chapter discusses how Chinese immigrants to Vancouver have been spatially excluded through restrictive immigration policies and urban policing strategies. The novels of Sky Lee and Wayson Choy show how urban panic and racial violence result from an Orientalizing gaze which constructs Chinese immigrants as criminal, as secretive, and as deviant sexual predators. Chapter three examines the representation of Montréal in the novels of Leonard Cohen, Robert Majzels, and Régine Robin. Native, female, and Jewish bodies are presented as abject "remainders" broken by the various religious, political, and gender discourses which operate in urban spaces. Chapter four examines the "place" of the urban Indian in the plays of Tompson Highway, George Ryga, and Daniel David Moses. Situated at the symbolic interstice between city and reserve, the Native body's penetration by racial and sexual violence comes to symbolize the long and disavowed history of Native exclusion in Canada. Chapter five examines the "absent" black body in urban space through a close reading of a number of African-Canadian writers, including Austin Clarke, Makeda Silvera, and George Elliott Clarke. Constructed as abject through a language of pollution, defilement, and criminality, the black urban body in both Africville and

Toronto has been consistently represented as a "stain" upon a predominantly white, middle-class Canadian social space.

Keywords: Canadian literature, ethnic literature, urban theory, Canadian urban writing, the body and the city.

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Introduction

CITY:

Once you learned to accept the blurry, featureless character of that word – responding to it as a Canadian word, with its absence of Native connotation – you were dimly savaged by the live, inchoate meanings trying to surface through it. The whole tangle and Sisyphean problematic of people's existing here, from the time of the *coureur de bois* to the present day, came struggling to be included in the word "city." Cooped up beneath the familiar surface of the word as we use it ("city" as London, as New York, as Los Angeles) – and cooped up further down still, beneath the blank and blur you heard when you sought some received indigenous meaning of the word – listening all the way down, you begin to overhear the strands and communal lives of millions of people who went their particular ways here, whose roots and lives and legacy come together in the cities we live in. Edmonton, Toronto, Montreal, Halifax: "city" meant something still unspoken, but rampant with held-in energy.

Dennis Lee

È solo dopo aver conosciuto la superficie delle cose che si può spingere quel che c'è sotto. Ma la superficie delle cose è inesauribile.

"It is only after knowing the surface of things that we may discover what lies beneath. But the surface of things is inexhaustible."

Le Città Invisibile
Italo Calvino

Literature and the City

The city has always been imbued with a complex symbolic imaginary which has conflated its physical spaces with specific social practices, cultural meanings, and individual and collective identities. Writing the city in the modern context coincided with the industrialization of Europe at the end of the nineteenth century, and the urban novels of Dickens, Balzac, Hugo, and Dostoevsky, for example, presented scenes of social isolation, economic despair, and spiritual confusion in the detritus of the industrial city. In the movement of populations from rural to urban spaces, the city was figured as a point of arrival, as a disorienting hive of human activity to which the protagonist adapted and conquered, or otherwise failed and perished in.

The urban sketch form was taken up in America by writers such as Theodore Dreiser, Stephen Crane, Henry James, and W.D. Howells, among others, who provided a "realist" interpretation of the city in which individual characters came to symbolize different social classes adjusting to the consequences of rapid industrialization and urbanization. From Whitman's "Mannahatta" to Auster's *City of Glass*, New York City was figured as the expression of America's rapid entrance into modernity, a metropolis rife with opportunities for social and economic advancement, but also one where destitution, alienation, and urban decay are all too common.

Representations of the city moved from the external space of social-realist tableaus to the psychological inner space of the modernist urban dweller. The city increasingly reflected the protagonists' psyche and became a mirror of the hopes, fears, and anxieties which structure their perceptions of the world. Walter Benjamin has argued that Baudelaire's melancholic *flâneur* was the first such modernist urban dweller, one for whom the subjective experience of the city is an integral aspect of the self:

> The street becomes a dwelling for the *flâneur*; he is as much at home among the facades of houses as a citizen is in his four walls. To him the shiny, enamelled signs of businesses are at least as good a wall ornament as an oil painting is to the bourgeois in his salon. The walls are the desk against which he presses his notebooks; news-stands are his libraries and the terraces of cafés are the balconies from which he looks down on his household after his work is done. (48)

As the urban dandy experiences and interprets urban spaces, he engages in a discourse about his identity in relation to that place.[1] Thus, while the spectacle of the city provides "aesthetic meaning and an individual kind of existential security" (Tester 2), *flânerie* may also be understood as "the activity of the sovereign spectator going about the city in order to find the

things which will occupy his gaze and thus complete his otherwise incomplete identity; satisfy his otherwise dissatisfied existence" (Tester 7).

For Baudelaire, as for Benjamin, chance encounters and accidental occurrences in the city result in the perpetual effacement and reformulation of identity, and the heterogeneous sensory impressions of city life are attenuated by the projection of an ordered urban narrative onto otherwise random events. The city thus becomes the site *par excellence* of the modernist subject, as its streets, cafés, and open squares come to represent a mental map of his itineraries, a trajectory in which observations, memories, and social interactions sediment into a peripatetic sense of self.

The modernist urban novel may thus be seen as an attempt at mastering the unruly energies of the city through narrative, a form of urban representation which assumes an unproblematic correspondence between material aspects of the city and the symbolic, psychological, political, and ideological discourses which shape it. Theodore Dreiser's *Sister Carrie,* for instance, reflects the positivistic view of the city which emerged from the work of Robert Park and the Chicago School of urban sociology. The city is seen as an intricate economic system regulated by the laws of production, distribution and consumption, and urban dwellers are inseparable from these various processes, as their lives are invariably enmeshed within the materialistic determinism of the urban machine. John

Dos Passos' *Manhattan Transfer* also presents a mechanistic urban environment in which the individual is alienated; the mind is "at one with the workings of the modern city" (Lehan 239) and the metropolis in turn becomes "a phantasmagoric back-drop for frustrations and defeats" (McLuhan 154).

While Joyce's Dublin or Dos Passos's New York manifest the physical and historical particularities of those cities, their symbolic landscapes are structured and modified by the narrator's gaze; the city becomes a microcosm of the world, and its sights, sounds, and physical structures are intermingled with the perceptions, memories, and desires of its inhabitants. As Marilyn Fries points out in relation to Alexander Döblin's *Berlin Alexanderplatz*, "the city and the individual cannot be regarded as separate entities with their own consistent and constant significance; rather they must be seen as interplaying and interchanging aspects of an even greater metaphysical whole" (43).

Canadian Spatial Contexts

While a specifically urban tradition in Canadian writing has only recently become the object of critical inquiry,[2] it seems impossible to speak of Canadian identity and culture without speaking of its geography. Northrop Frye's famous "Where is Here?" has shaped the parameters of literary criticism in this country and positioned landscape as one of its most

enduring obsessions.[3] Richard Cavell has rightly criticized this formulation, since it "depends on an abstract notion of space in which social constructions are absent" (77). Recent developments in human geography and urban studies have shown that spaces are socially constructed, and that the individuals and collectivities that occupy them are inevitably interpellated by such formulations.[4]

Margaret Atwood has suggested that Canada is "an unknown territory for the people who live in it ... I'm talking about Canada as a state of mind, as the space you inhabit not just with your body but with your head. It's that kind of space in which we find ourselves lost" (*Survival* 18). The need to make one's way in a vast, largely unknown Canadian landscape produces "an almost intolerable anxiety" (*Survival* 33) in the Canadian psyche which often leads to symbolic failure or even death in the face of an inhospitable natural landscape.

John Moss has similarly argued that an undercurrent present in early Canadian writing is a "geophysical imagination"; the difficulties of adaptation to the immensity of Canadian territory and the proximity of our villages and cities to the "state of nature," Moss argues, render space and spatial metaphors a central thematic of Canadian literature. Following Frye, he makes the distinction between garrison and frontier conceptions of landscape. The garrison mentality, which arises from the initial contact with the new world, implies the occupation of a clearly delimited territory outside

of which there is no trespassing. This is seen for instance in John Richardson's *Wacousta*, where it is a question of maintaining European outposts within a hostile North American landscape. The frontier mentality, on the other hand, is more expansive and implies the appropriation of territory and the imposition of rational order upon a dis-ordered space:

> The garrison is a closed community whose values, customs, manners have been transported virtually intact from some other environment and are little influenced by their new surroundings. It is the stage of occupation ... the frontier, in contrast, is a context of undifferentiated perimeters, where the experience of one reality comes into direct conflict with that of another, a more immediate and amorphous reality. The frontier provides an alternative to conventional society. It is a place of flight and of discovery, a condition of individual being, in the struggle to endure. (12)

This fundamental difference between the garrison and the frontier mentalities is also translated in terms of social space. In the garrison, the distinction between the interior and the exterior is maintained, for the walls of the garrison signal the borders of European civilization that keep out that which is un-civilized (nature, Natives). In contrast, the frontier blurs the distinctions between internal and external spaces; it is a constantly shifting border or threshold that demands the reappraisal of binary separations

between self and other and demands practical strategies of adaptation to a new spatial environment.

Canadian space is thus "defeatured," as Richard Cavell puts it, for such a strategy enables the domination of an "abstracted" natural landscape while assuring material exploitation and the maintenance of the superiority of European cultural models. This "failure" of spatial representation is thus due to the fact that "space has traditionally been articulated as a totalising notion which seeks to express universals" (75). Canadian spaces have not escaped reductionist abstraction, be it in terms of a vast natural landscape which ostensibly inscribes the nation, its various regionalisms which elide specific communities, or in the figuration of our cities as "colonial mimicry." [5]

The representation of the sublime beauty of Canadian territory and the idealization of its social, political, and economic potential answered to the expectations of the colonial enterprise, one in which the "empty" space of nature is "filled" and therefore "civilized" through social, political, and economic institutions of British or French origin: "Our farms, cities, towns, and villages were re-creations of European space and time," Patrick Lane writes, "our language itself imposed forms and structures upon this new place, an architecture of sound whose echoes were of England and France" (64).

This form of "colonial mimicry" extends to Canadian urban space as well. Walter Pache suggests that there is "no homogeneous tradition of urban writing, nor has urban writing so far attracted much attention in criticism" (1149). A long tradition of nature-inspired writing, the relatively slow rate of urbanization, and the "long-lasting dependence on London as imperial metropolis" (Pache 1149) accounts for the paucity of urban literature and its critical reception in this country. If in Europe and America the city was increasingly seen as the symbol of the rapid modernization of the western world, in Canada it "only played a moderate and marginal role" (1149). This is because Canada has consistently been seen as peripheral to the imperial metropolis, an "incipient urban culture of the margins" (1150), whose "provincial" idiosyncrasies are described for the benefit of a European audience hungering for the exoticism of the colonies.

Frances Brooke's *The History of Emily Montague* (1769), considered to be one of the first sketches of "urban" Canada, describes the city as a social space that functions according to imported English class hierarchies and "genteel" rules of conduct. Catharine Parr Traill and Susanna Moodie similarly depict Canada as a "backwoods" whose emerging towns and cities are barely more civilized than the natural landscapes that surround them. In *Roughing it in the Bush* (1852), which Atwood notes was written "for the express purpose of telling others *not* to come" (*Survival* 149), Moodie writes "Of Montreal, I can say but little" (50),

for not only did it lack the "grandeur" and "stern sublimity of Quebec," it was "dirty and ill-paved" (51) – a plague-infested city. This "dangerous proximity of nature" (Pache 1150) and the "continuing social or economic limitations" (Pache 1150) of Canada's cities saw to it that they did not overtly challenge the centrality of European urban culture in the colonies.

If European and American writers constructed the city as a space in which individual freedom and morality were negotiated against a backdrop of social adversity and class conflict, Canadian colonial and nationalist writers offered instead "a nostalgic counter-narrative, a colonial supplement to the master-tale" (Pache 1151) of Empire. This is because Canada was mythologized as "non-city and non-literary, as rural and loyal British *hinterland*" (Pache 1151) whose cities were often "encoded as urban extensions of nature" (Pache 1151).

It is only in the 1930s, well into the modernist movement, that Canadian writers such as Morley Callaghan and Hugh MacLennan were "drawn into the vortex" (1151) of urban modernism. With an eye to Paris and London, these writers provided a "realist" interpretation of life in the streets of Montréal and Toronto and marked a transition from a predominantly rural to a predominantly urban sensibility. The "Montréal School" of the 1920s and 1930s also influenced the emergence of an indigenous modernist tradition. Poets and critics such as A.J.M. Smith, F.R. Scott, A.M. Klein, Irving Layton, and Patrick Anderson were "firmly

committed to a cosmopolitain tradition" (A.J.M. Smith xlvii) that drew influence from Yeats, Eliot, Pound, and Joyce *against* Victorian-influenced nationalist landscape poetry. Literary journals such as *The McGill Fortnightly Review* (1925-27) and *Preview* (1940), as well as the *New Provinces* anthology (1936), which "had between its covers the most famous enactment of modernist values in Canadian poetry" (Whalen 729), featured some of the first writing which described urban life in Canada.

Montréal

If rural Québec was coded nostalgically as the "authentic" space of French-Canadian identity upheld by the dual pillars of family and Catholic Church in the *roman du terroir*, (Louis Hémon's *Maria Chapdelaine*, Ringuet's *Trente arpents,* Claude-Henri Grignon's *Un homme et son péché*), Montréal was often depicted as a space of alienation, abject poverty, and the loss of cultural memory, "an urban topography marked by vice" (Schwartzwald 87). When the rural villager arrived in the city, he or she succumbed to an individualistic hedonism manifesting itself in crime, perverse sexuality, alcohol abuse, and violence. As Antoine Sirois points out, "la ville, c'est l'endroit du péché" (276).

Gabrielle Roy's *Bonheur d'occasion* (1945) was centrally important in that it was the first realist novel that "broke with a long tradition of drawing inspiration from the land and instead dealt with the grittiness of

urban life" (Demchinsky 157). Roger Viau's *Au mileu, la montage* (1951), Pierre Gélinas' *Les Vivants, les morts, et les autres* (1959) and Roger Lemelin's *Au pied de la pente douce* (1944), showed the city as "un tableau sombre sur fond de chômage endémique ou de travail misérable, de logements insalubres et de maigre pitance" (Beaudoin 65). If the city was simply a background setting for the French-Canadian novel at the beginning of the 1940s, by decade's end it becomes "le signe de la transformation radicale de la société" (de Diego 159). Montréal is subsequently represented as a space of financial ease for its small but powerful English minority and one of economic and social destitution for its French-Canadian working class.

Paul-Émile Borduas' "Refus global" (1948) was a precursor to the Quiet Revolution and ushered in a new era of revolt against Catholic control over Québec society. André Langevin's *Poussière sur la ville* (1953), Gérard Bessette's *Le libraire* (1960), and René Ducharme's *L'avalée des avalées* (1966) were written in this fervent atmosphere of social transformation, marrying urban alienation with French-Canadian popular revolt against a constrictive society. Jacques Godbout's *Couteau sur la table* (1965) and Hubert Aquin's *Trou de mémoire* (1968) represent the linguistic, cultural, and political tensions of Québec and of Montréal, in particular, through mixed (English-French) couples whose dissolution results from their social inequalities and their inability to communicate with

each other. Godbout's *Têtes à Papineau* also reconstructs the linguistic duality of Montréal as a two-headed body, "un bicéphale bilingue" (96) whose heads forever face in opposite directions.

Michel Tremblay's *Les Belles-soeurs* (1972) and *Chroniques du Plateau Mont-Royal* (1978-84) valorized the working-class east of the city, constructing it as the politicized space of an emerging modern Québécois identity, one in which setting and language (*joual)* "combine to chart a vernacular paradigm of Québec's historical sense of alienation within Canada" (New, *History* 236). Jean Basile's *La jument des Mongols* (1964) shows the seediness of the Main, with its night-time world of greasy diners and strip joints, while Yolande Villemaire's *La vie en prose* (1980), shows the city as "un partenaire invisible qui permet de dépasser l'échec amoureux, insufflant le désir de continuer à vivre, écrire, produire" (Larue 134). Monique Proulx's *Les Aurores montréales* (1996) details the varied urban experiences of immigrants to a city in constant transformation, "une ville qui n'arrête pas de changer et qui additionne tellement de nouveaux visages que l'on perd toujours celui qu'on croyait enfin connaître" (164).

In the 1980s, minority writers such as Émile Ollivier, Dany Laferrière, Sergio Kokis, Régine Robin, and Yin Chen attracted much critical attention and foregrounded the cultural and linguistic plurality of Montréal, a city in which, as Gilles Marcotte points out, "l'écrivain est immergé dans le divers, le pluriel, le mélange, l'incertain, l'incomplet"

(*Écrire* 10). Writing in Montréal constitutes "la reconnaissance de plus en plus explicite de la réalité urbaine, de la manière dont elle imprègne l'écriture, l'entraîne pour ainsi dire dans ces propres voies" (*Écrire* 11). Marcotte recognizes in the writing of urban Montréal the expressions of difference, marginality, and non-coincidence, which he expresses as "l'inachèvement" (*Écrire* 12): "La métropole québécoise appartient à la métonymie; la loi de son organisation est la contiguïté, la parataxe, qui appelle le déplacement plutôt que le développement" (*Écrire* 43).

English writing in Montréal has evolved in ignorance of, in opposition to, and in dialogue with the city's French fact. Hugh MacLennan's *Two Solitudes* (1945), whose title has become shorthand for describing the political and cultural rifts between Québec and the rest of Canada, portrays Montréal as a city divided between a predominantly Catholic, working-class francophone majority and a powerful anglophone Protestant minority. Gwethalyn Graham's *Earth and High Heaven* (1944) similarly contrasts the life of financial ease of Westmount with the city's French-Canadian and Jewish populations through the story of Erica Drake, a young and idealistic journalist who falls in love with a Jewish man despite her father's anti-semitic protestations. In *The Rocking Chair and Other Poems* (1948), A.M. Klein presents the city as "une utopique nouvelle Jérusalem où les deux langues seraient réconciliées" (de Vaucher 115). His poem, "Montreal," creates a new urban language in which English and

French languages and social realities intersect: "O city metropole, isle riverain! / Your ancient pavages and sainted routs / Traverse my spirit's conjured avenues! ... Unique midst English habitat / is vivid Normandy" (29).

In Brian Moore's *The Luck of Ginger Coffey* (1960), an Irish immigrant and his wife struggle to survive economically in a city represented as a harsh, unforgiving urban landscape. Hugh Hood's *Around the Mountain: Scenes of Montreal Life* (1967) explores the city's various inner neighbourhoods as well as its far off suburbs, demonstrating an unusual (for its time) openness to the "other" Montréal of the French-Canadian working class and its various ethnic enclaves. Mordecai Richler's *The Apprenticeship of Duddy Kravitz* (1959), *The Street* (1969), and *St. Urbain's Horsemen* (1971) carved out the Mile End district of Montréal as a distinctly Jewish imaginary space, while Scott Symons' *Place d'Armes* (1967) intertwines the protagonist's explorations of his homosexuality with the streets of Old Montréal, a space of "liberation from the strictures of conformist, Upper Canadian conventions" (Demchinsky 59).

David Fennario's *Balconville* (1979) shows that Montréal is not so much divided by language as it is by class, where "the struggles and suffering of the working poor cut deeper than their differences of language and ethnicity" (Demchinsky 171). Montréal also figures prominently in the novels of Robert Majzels (*City of Forgetting* 1997) and Gail Scott, whose

Heroine (1987) and *Main Brides* (1993) feature distinctly feminine gazes which appraise and decode the city's chaotic intersections of language, culture, and politics.

English writing in Montréal has shifted dramatically over the decades. Linda Leith has argued that where the fiction of English Canada "came of age in the Quebec of the 1940s" (2) with writers such as MacLennan and Graham, today it "perches precariously on the social and literary periphery" (9). This is due not only to the marked decline of anglophone influence after 1976 and the subsequent situation of being a "minority within a minority" in Canada, but also the fact that the "centre of gravity" of English Canadian literature (publishers, distributors, magazines, etc.) has shifted westward to Toronto. But a new generation of anglophone writers has embraced its "marginal status" and has welcomed open dialogue with and influence from the city's francophone cultural and literary environments.[6]

Toronto

One of Toronto's first "urban novelists" was Morley Callaghan, who went beyond realist representation by fictionalizing urban spaces in which "moral landscapes take precedence over realistic topography" (Keith 210). *Strange Fugitive* fictionalized the criminal underworld of "bootleggers, wrestling promoters, burlesque shows, hookers, pimps, and the criminal

underworld" (Keith 210). In *The Intruders* and *Cabbagetown*, Hugh Garner represents Toronto's working class during the depression, showing how survival in the city "depends entirely on the individual's knowledge of himself and his place" (Edwards 360). In "The City of the End of Things," Archibald Lampman writes of the nightmarish, industrialized city which evokes a Dickensian urban machine that "consumes" its human inhabitants, an "apocalyptic vision of urban industrialization as a dehumanizing process" (Pache 1154). Robertson Davies writes of urban wealth and privilege in novels such as *What's Bred in the Bone* (1985) and *Fifth Business* (1970), where an "influential and respectful Toronto ... establishes the various codes and standards against which other versions of life in the city can be judged and compared (Keith 205). Timothy Findley similarly represents affluent Toronto in his novels set in the Rosedale area of the city, one which nonetheless lays bare "the emotional pressures of a claustrophobic privileged life in decline that manifests itself in alcoholism, violence, paranoia, and madness" (J. Keith 207).

Margaret Atwood's fiction represents Toronto as an ambivalent city caught between its conservative, small-town mentality and its aspirations to become a world-class metropolis: "Underneath the flourish and ostentation is the old city, street after street of thick red brick houses, with their front porch pillars like the off-white stems of toadstools, and their watchful, calculating windows. Malicious, grudging, vindictive, implacable"

(*Cat's Eye* 14). Atwood's Toronto novels "construct the metropolis as transitory and transparent artefact superimposed on the starker reality of primeval wilderness" (Pache 1154), one whose glossy surfaces are "continually disrupted and subverted by the continuing presence of the old city, its architectural features and its stuffy social mores" (Pache 1155). The underground spaces of ravines, dark alleys, and subway stations, become important to her iconography of the city, representing not only painful buried memories of childhood, but the various threats that the city represents for women. In Atwood's fiction, the city is, paradoxically, source of "attraction and repulsion, liberation and confinement" (R. Smith 252).

Dennis Lee's *Civil Elegies* (1968) is set in Nathan Phillips Square and shows Toronto as a "diffident" city "nailed against the sky / in ordinary glory" (33). This long poem shows how Canada's colonial past and its close relationship to its American neighbour have alienated it from its own sense of territory. In Russel Smith's *Noise* (1998), the chaotic, postmodern trendiness of urban Toronto comes to symbolize a nation "caught between its rural and small-town past and its faceless, global present" (Fiamengo 258).

With the influx of immigration and the official policies of multiculturalism, there emerges a new urban paradigm which supplants the "discarded colonial myths" (Pache 1155) of Canadian urban space: "Toronto is no longer the uniformly Anglo-Saxon 'City of Empire' but a

multicultural ensemble of ethnic neighbourhoods whose boundaries are already changing as ethnicities both confront each other and intermix" (Pache 1155). If Toronto was variously referred to as the "Queen City" or Hogtown in its quiet Anglo-Canadian conservatism, its imaginary urban landscape changed dramatically once it was fictionalized by the various immigrant communities which flocked to the city after the 1960s. While ethnic enclaves and the "secretive" bodies which occupied them seemed alien and disturbing in earlier novels such as *Strange Fugitive*, they suddenly became "dynamic, exotic, different, interesting – even (alas) fashionable" (J. Keith 235) in the 1970s and beyond.

Austin Clarke's Toronto trilogy, which includes *The Meeting Point* (1967), *Storm of Fortune* (1973) and *The Bigger Light* (1975), shows the realities of recent West Indian immigrants "as they proceed to carve out new lives in a strange and often harsh city" (J. Keith 242). Clarke not only outlines the day-to-day lives of new arrivals to Toronto, but shows how the richer areas of the city are lived and experienced as places of alienation where minorities are "excluded, if not destroyed" (Pache 1156). Ondaatje's *In the Skin of a Lion* (1987) presents the construction of the Bloor-Danforth Street Viaduct in Toronto through the eyes of its immigrant labourers. The unfolding of the fragmented narrative reveals an unnamed, subterranean history of Toronto that brings to the fore "the gaps and omissions in the official text, on the anonymous workers rather than on the representative

figures" (Pache 1155) of the city's rise to prominence. If the "ethnic fictionalization" of Toronto has radically transformed the imaginary space of the city, it has also deconstructed the facile assumptions about multicultural inclusiveness, exposing the "faultlines and conflicting stories" (Pache 1156) of its various intersecting communities.

Vancouver

Vancouver's imaginary landscape has evolved from that of an emerging settlement town of hardy settlers and prospectors flocking to the lower mainland of British Columbia in search of gold to that of a "belated" postmodern city that functions as a node in global networks of commerce, communications, and mass-media culture. Ethel Wilson writes about marginal and marginalized women who attempt to make a "place" for themselves in both rural British Colombia and in the urban landscape of Vancouver. *The Innocent Traveller* (1949) traces the history of the Hastings family as they move from England to Vancouver, showing the conflicts of class and race in an emergent city still struggling to define itself. In *Swamp Angel* (1954), Maggie Lloyd makes a spiritual quest which demands a journey out of the city and into the rural landscapes of a fishing camp near Kamloops.

The Equations of Love (1952) shows that Vancouver is not simply an urban centre ensconced in majestic natural surroundings,

but a "working city ... where her characters seek work, endure humiliations, put in time, and plan escapes" (Fiamengo 256).

Malcolm Lowry's *Hear Us O Lord From Heaven Thy Dwelling Place* (1961) is a collection of short stories that presents a fragmented city whose "*objets trouvés* are debris from which the postmodern city-(e)state of Vancouver will be constructed" (St. Pierre 169). Daphne Marlatt's *Vancouver Poems* (1972) intersperses poetry with archival documents in an attempt to reconstruct the city as a multi-layered archaeological, geographical, and historical space – showing in particular the marginalization of Natives, the poor, and immigrants.

More recent urban writing emanating from Vancouver has focussed on fast-paced urban lifestyles dominated by media, technology, and the global commodification of fashions, trends, and styles. Zsuzsi Gartner's *All the Anxious Girls on Earth* (1999) shows Vancouver as a city "whose inhabitants have replaced God with fashionable forms of exercise, environmentalism, New Age spirituality, and socially approved consumption" (Fiamengo 258), while Douglas Coupland (*Girlfriend in a Coma*, 1998; *City of Glass*, 2000) writes of a city in which "west coast utopian ideology and the still breathtaking beauty of the coastal rain forest meet the materialism and environmental mess of the urban millennium" (Fiamengo 258). In Michael Turner's *Kingsway* (1995), a Vancouver street is "a chaotic meeting point where individual lives, cultures, classes,

professions, and world-views are brought into contact" (Fiamengo 259), while Evelyn Lau's *Runaway: Diary of a Street Kid* (1989) presents the underbelly of the city through the figure of a young street prostitute who must survive on its mean streets.

If Vancouver is not graced with a "long historical past" (Delaney 2) like Montréal, Toronto, or the older cities of Europe, its geographical position between the Rocky Mountains and the Pacific Ocean – its situation at the western cusp of the North American continent – makes of it an "edge city," one whose "excessive openness to movements that originated elsewhere" (Delaney 1) make it a particularly apt setting for a postmodern sensibility.

Disavowed Territories

While the imaginaries of settler societies like Canada are "deeply spatialized stories" (Razak 3), the discourses of colonization and nation-building provide "no place" for its marginalized subjects. The relegation of immigrant populations to racialised ghetto spaces and aboriginal populations to reserves within Canada effectively evacuates their "otherness" to a peripheral location, "condemning them to anachronistic space and time" (Razack 2). The fact that such "foreign bodies" have occupied Canadian territory since its early history is denied or put under

erasure in the creation of Canada as an ostensibly homogeneous colonial (and white) space.

Graham Huggan has suggested that some writers resist the "colonialist" figuration of Canadian landscape and national identity by questioning the equation between landscape and a monolithic idea of culture. He identifies several rhetorical and literary strategies in contemporary Canadian literature which render problematic the notion of territorial integrity and homogeneity in postcolonial settler societies. Huggan argues that the parodic use of maps in Canadian writing highlights their incommensurability to the official discourses of colonial space, resisting the enclosure and "containment" of nationalist discourses. He further argues that this resignification of colonial / postcolonial Canadian space not only contests the framing of settler societies by the colonial power, but that the *internal* inconsistencies of place, that is, the writing of or about other places and cultures *within* settler societies also present problems for reductionist discourses about national boundaries, spaces, and territory:

> In the case of contemporary Canadian and Australian literatures, these (postcolonial) territories correspond to a series of new or revised rhetorical spaces occupied by feminism, regionalism, and ethnicity, where each of these items is understood primarily as a set of counter-discursive

> strategies which challenge the claims of or avoid the circumscription within one or other form of cultural centrism. ("Decolonizing the Map" 410)

The pervading model of a vast Canadian landscape subjected to colonial rationalization shifts not only by virtue of regional writing, but because of the new spatial paradigms introduced by ethnic and women writers. Arnold Itwaru identifies a similar "displacement" of the meanings attached to Canadian space in his study of immigrant fiction. Already marked as "other," these new arrivals to the country must in turn "invent" a sense of self which involves the integration of ethnic difference into Canadian territory by employing spatial images and metaphors.[7]

Central to the construction of the ethnic self is a recognition of the dual symbolic spaces occupied by the immigrant – the territory of origin and Canadian space. In this sense, immigrant identities are elaborated not only in relation to the changing social circumstances of a new country, but also in relation to the new space which the immigrant symbolically reconstructs through fiction or otherwise. As Nicholas Harney writes,

> space is central to the construction of identity and culture in the postcolonial world. The presence, in polyethnic states, of diverse immigrant communities that maintain ties across state borders requires that we rethink the connections

> between how spatial arrangements influence the imagining of complex forms of identity and culture. (8)

In its fictionalization of the ethnic ghettos embedded within the Canadian metropolis, immigrant / ethnic writing effectively points to the inadequacies of applying reductionist spatial discourses on Canadian territory. The ethnic ghetto provides possibilities for reading place as resistance, disjunction, and slippage – a "heterotopic" space which generates meanings beyond itself in referring to other, absent spaces: [8]

> The Little Italies or the Chinatowns of North America are forward-moving (they are not Italy or China), but they are distinct from their surroundings because they are also past-oriented, refer to an elsewhere, and because of the effort that goes into retaining, into re-presenting that past or that elsewhere ... Little Italies can be studied as instances of the precarious pluridimensionality of the nation in the twentieth century. If they move beyond the origin, immigrant enclaves also resist the location, the structure hosting them. (Loriggio 10-21)

Marginalization and exclusion in urban spaces occur not only in the context of ethnic others relegated to the overtly racialized boundaries of the ghetto, but also in terms of gender, where male and female bodies not only occupy different sites within the urban landscape, but the activities, social interactions, types of communication, and modes of bodily display

allowed to each gender are different. The encounter between bodies in the city "maps the subject into discursively-constituted, embodied identities" (Pile 41). Just as immigrants are interpellated by the regulatory gaze of the majority and made to conform to spatial practices that do not overtly challenge racialized hierarchal mappings of the city, women are subjected to various gendered spatial rules aimed at maintaining the spatial privileges of males.[9] As Doreen Massey has argued, "particular ways of thinking about space and place are tied up with, both directly and indirectly, particular social constructions of gender relations" (*Space* 2).

In the construction of the city-as-metaphor (of the modernist male subject, of the nation, of essentialized collective identities), many of the marginalized spatial practices, bodies, and histories which circulate in the city are effaced from public discourse. The symbolic meanings attached to urban spaces have for the most part come under the purview of the privileged; the male *flâneur* who consumes the spectacles offered by arcades, galleries, and shop windows does not have the same spatial constraints as do women, visible minorities, or the poor. Gary Bridge and Sophie Watson write that,

> There has been a tendency within urban studies historically to develop an analysis and argument based on Western cities and Western assumptions of cultural, social, and economic life, with little attention paid to the profound

> differences of social, cultural, and economic processes and the local specificity of cities across the world. This universalizing approach has come under growing scepticism and scrutiny from postcolonial writers, feminists, poststructuralists and others who have pointed out how western, male, and white assumptions have produced a global homogeneous discourse which has masked and ignored difference. It has also perpetuated dominant power / knowledge relations and written whole groups of people, cities, and countries out of the picture. (2)

In *Geographies of Exclusion*, David Sibley uncovers some of the hidden spatial practices and discourses which have come to dominate in western industrialized societies, arguing that it has become necessary to "examine the assumptions about inclusion and exclusion which are implicit in the design of places and spaces" (x). The criteria of spatial inclusion and exclusion, according to Sibley, are predicated on the anxieties arising out of the need to define the borders between self and other, be it in terms of the developing child defining its bodily limits vis à vis the external world, or in terms of groups mapping out the spaces which *they* define as being coterminous with an authentic collective identity.

Drawing on Julia Kristeva's theory of abjection, Sibley suggests that the construction of individual and collective identities are predicated on the

dual movements of desire and disgust; desire for that which affirms and reinforces the primacy of the group, and disgust with that which is perceived as being foreign to the individual or collective body. The "threat" of abjection can be both from within (unresolved desire, conflict, or physical matter) and from the outside (the threat of the stranger). Within the individual psyche, the abject is "a massive and sudden emergence of uncanniness, which, familiar as it might have been in an opaque and forgotten life, now harries me as radically separate, loathsome" (Kristeva 2). When faced with the unclean, abjection is that convulsive reaction which attempts to remove the self from the scene of defilement, the "spasms and vomiting which protects me. The repugnance, the retching that thrusts me to the side and turns me away from defilement, sewage, and muck" (Kristeva 2).

The abject is also that which "fascinates," a perverse desire to see and touch the obscene. If the excretions of the body are abject in that they represent an affront to the psychologically and physically bounded body – transgressing as they do the skin's threshold – the cadaver is the ultimate abject in its uncanniness as both human and utterly in-human. Moreover, while one's own body is a source of abjection, the bodies of others are even more so: the Black body, the Jewish body, the homeless body – all impure surfaces to be read by a lingering eye – even if only for the short moment it takes to determine that such a body is "not I." As with food and bodily

wastes, feelings of abjection may attach to places, particularly those which threaten the integrity of bodily boundaries:

> The hovering presence of the abject gives it significance in defining relationships to others. It registers in nervousness about other cultures or other things out of place ... the urge to make separations between clean and dirty, ordered and disordered, "us" and "them," that is, to expel the abject, is encouraged in western cultures, creating feelings of anxiety because such separations can never be fully achieved. (Sibley 8)

Within this paradigm, those elements which are constructed as "other" must be pushed beyond the spatial and symbolic boundaries which define the (collective) self and into an "abject" space beyond. In the need to differentiate between those who "belong" in a given space and those who do not, "boundaries are drawn discretely between dominant and subordinate groups" (Sibley xiv). Such boundaries not only differentiate between privileged and abject spaces, but maintain the social, economic, and symbolic hierarchies which operate in those spaces. By disavowing the other, a society negotiates these "giddy limits" (New *Borderlands* 3) between the pure and defiled, thereby projecting and naturalizing a homogeneous and docile collective body.

* * *

"Ubiquitous but elusive" (Pache 1156), urban writing in Canada has been given short thrift by a tradition of literary criticism which favours regionalist approaches and that positions "landscape" as one of the definitive aspects of the national psyche. If urban writing is in this country is a "powerful but submerged subtext" (1156), as Pache has argued, the fictionalization of urban spaces by women, Natives, and visible minorities is even more so. This thesis proposes to address this lacuna by examining the representation of Canadian urban space from the point of view of its most marginalized groups. Although studies such as *Montréal imaginaire: ville et littérature* (1992), Simon Harel's *Le voleur de parcours* (1999) and *Vancouver: Representing the Postmodern City* (1994), explore the city in Canadian literature, they do not adequately address the various strategies of containment and control of "threatening others" or the effects which such exclusionary practices have on minority writing, culture, and self-representation.

The first chapter of this dissertation uses Sky Lee's *Disappearing Moon Café* (1990) and Wayson Choy's *The Jade Peony* (1995) to demonstrate that the negative connotations associated with the Oriental in Vancouver's public spaces are indicative of the larger, systemic exclusion of the Chinese in Canada. Fear of the Oriental manifested itself through restrictive immigration policies and urban strategies of

"containment" which effectively rendered the mobile Chinese body suspicious and criminal. Vancouver's white middle-class conveniently saw the Chinese as a source of cheap labour in building the national railway and the city's urban infrastructure, but when they began to settle in an increasingly visible ethnic ghetto in the core of the city, they were seen as a potential threat to the purity of white space and the white collective body. The second chapter provides an analysis of the representation of Montréal as a multi-layered historical and symbolic space inhabited by a variety of bodies and "bodily remainders" which attest to the city's disavowed history of violent spatial exclusion. Whether it be native bodies sacrificed in the founding of the city, women's bodies marked by misogynist urban violence, or the stereotyped identification of Jewish bodies as polluting vermin, Montréal's gleaming surfaces contain macabre traces of a past which inevitably "resurface" in its present. Leonard Cohen's *Beautiful Losers* (1966), Robert Majzels's *City of Forgetting* (1997), and Régine Robin's *La Québécoite* (1983) each show how various body-types are defined, marked, and contained by the discourses of colonialism, nationalism, and gender.

Chapter Three discusses the spatial exclusion of the native body and its "evacuation" to the reservation where it does not directly threaten white spatial predominance. In Tompson Highway's *The Rez Sisters (1988)*, George Ryga's *The Ecstasy of Rita Joe* (1970), and Daniel David Moses's

Coyote City and *City of Shadows* (2000), violence and sexual agression against the indigene comes to symbolize the evisceration of the native collective body. If the aboriginal was "cleansed" from the landscape in the westward movement of colonization and spatial appropriation, in the city he or she seems forever mired in homelessness, prostitution, and alcohol abuse. Expelled, tortured, and dismembered, the native body reaches its ultimate form of abjection in its dis-embodiment, becoming a ghostly trace which lingers on Canada's urban landscape.

Chapter Four examines the country's "body-troubles" (Sennett) with Canadians of African descent through a close reading of the poetry and short stories of writers such as George Elliott Clarke (*Execution Poems*, 2001), Makeda Silvera (*Her Head a Village*, 1994), and Austin Clarke (*Choosing His Coffin*, 2003). Representations of Toronto and of Africville, a black townshipwhich thrived on the outskirts of Halifax until it was demolished in 1970, reveal that black communities have consistently been associated with criminality, abject corporeality, and bodily and cultural pollution. In the construction of Canada as a prosperous and predominantly white middle-class social space, black bodies have become "an absented presence always under erasure" (Walcott 27).

The aim of this thesis is to show that concomitant with the construction of Canada as an essentially bicultural, white national space with European origins and traditions is a disavowed history of spatial

exclusion of visible minorities, natives, and women. The abjection of these "threatening others" through specific spatial practices and discourses maintain the hegemonic view of the nation as a homogenous and docile collective body, and the differences of class, gender, and race/ethnicity are elided in order to maintain the hierarchies operating in those spaces. The thesis will attempt to uncover the "dirty little secrets" (Cohen) of Canadian colonial and nationalist discourses and practices which has shaped, constricted, and controlled bodies and their movements in the city.

In selecting the corpus of texts for this dissertation, I have attempted to included a wide variety of literary genres (novels, plays, poetry, short stories) and marginalized groups (women, Natives, African-Canadians, Jews, Chinese-Canadians), which foreground the "abject body" in Canadian urban space. While I have touched upon the representation of poverty and homelessness in almost all the texts discussed, the scope of the thesis has forcibly limited my explorations of these areas. Similarly, other ethnic groups could have easily been included (the internment of Japanese and Italians-Canadians, and the forcible evacuation of the Doukhobors, for instance, seem particularly relevant), but this would go beyond the length of this project.

In the following chapter, I will examine the representation of the Chinese in Canadian rural and urban spaces, suggesting that they have

been spatial and socially excluded by a white majority intent on constructing the Oriental as a defiling, abject other.

Chapter 1

"Salt-Water City": Vancouver in the Novels of Sky Lee and Wayson Choy

Taking into consideration Sibley's contention that "the human landscape can be read as a landscape of exclusion" (ix), this chapter will argue that in the need to define Canadian space as being coterminous with a collective national identity whose roots lie in its English colonial past, the Canadian government, on the one hand, and the dominant white majority of Vancouver, on the other, have employed exclusionary spatial discourses and practices in order to "expel," both physically and symbolically, the Chinese-Canadian other from that privileged space. Using Sky Lee's *Disappearing Moon Café* and Wayson Choy's *The Jade Peony* as examples, I will demonstrate that nationalist mappings of Canadian landscape is an attempt at "evacuating" the racial other from the collective body of the nation. The orientalizing gaze not only defines and "fixes" foreign bodies within the confines of the ethnic ghetto, but excludes them from the more privileged sites of the city identified with the dominant white middle-class.[10]

Because spatial meanings and practices are often defined by those who hold positions of power, the challenge for any study of the geographies of exclusion is to "identify forms of socio-spatial exclusion as they are experienced and articulated by the subject groups" (Sibley x). For this reason, I will also explore some of the more "subversive" spatial practices used by Chinese immigrants – the ways in which they interpellate Canadian territory in their own identity discourses. In their descriptions of

the rural landscapes of the interior of British Columbia and of Vancouver's Chinatown, Sky Lee and Wayson Choy offer "alternate" spatialities that are shaped not only by the long history of exclusionary discourses vis à vis the Oriental, but also by the internal contingencies of gender, status, and class within the Chinese community itself. Just as the white middle class of Vancouver employs technologies of surveillance and control in order to differentiate between abject and privileged bodies and spaces in Vancouver's spatial grid, so too does the male political elite within Chinatown employ a variety of regulatory practices (moral judgements, gossip, gender discourses, economic / social status, familial honour, ethnic authenticity) which "fix" bodies within clearly defined spaces and behaviours. Within this context, the spatial is revealed to be "full of gaps, contradictions, folds and tears. Through these, marginalized communities may be able to inscribe themselves into new geographies" (Sibley 36).

In *Disappearing Moon Café,* Sky Lee adopts a variety of temporal and narrative perspectives in order to trace the convoluted history of the Wong family – from the deepest recesses of the province's early mining communities to the heart of Vancouver's Chinatown. Kae, the modern-day narrator, attempts to "recuperate" a matrilineal family tree which begins with Chen Gwok Fai, an itinerant labourer who was charged with the task of collecting the bones of dead "Chinamen" along the coast of British Columbia in the 1890s. The family tree is complicated not only by the

various "paper relatives" who are illicitly smuggled into Canada and the silencing of women's histories, but also by the incestuous relationships within the tightly-knit community.

Where Lee's novel traces the whole of immigrant history in Chinatown, Wayson Choy's Vancouver is a more intimate one, limiting itself to the perceptions and experiences of three siblings in a Chinese immigrant family. Choy's novel examines the process of acculturation, racism, ethnic violence, and the various apparatus of the state (immigration and health departments, police) which have come to shape the Chinese-Canadian community. Most vivid in Choy's account of his Vancouver experiences are the ways in which each child's perception of the bewildering urban spectacle is solidified into categories of knowledge; the physical boundaries of the ghetto which delimit communities and identities, the polyphonous dialects and verbal modes of address which characterize its social hierarchies, the gossip, folk tales, and superstition which colour its streets and alleys. Through his "subtly deconstructive reading of ethnicity" (C. Lee 21), Choy demonstrates that Chinese-Canadian identity is not so much a multicultural mask as it is the constant negotiation of border spaces – physical, cultural, and linguistic: "The Chinese Canadian subject must always negotiate these contradictory positions and racialized identity emerges as a site of hybridity and contamination" (C. Lee 25).

In the following section, I will examine the representation of Canadian rural spaces in the novels being discussed, arguing that while nationalist discourses efface the Oriental body from Canadian landscape, the Chinese offer their own spatial models which reflect a unique history of transience and marginality in that space. These "spatialities of counter-hegemonic cultural practices" (M. Keith 6) question the spatial paradigms which seek to evacuate or otherwise "contain" those ethnic bodies which threaten the "sameness" of the body politic.

The "Residual" Chinese Body in Canadian Colonial Space

In both *Disappearing Moon Café* and *The Jade Peony,* Canadian rural space is articulated in a variety of seemingly incommensurable ways. For the Canadian government, landscape represents unspoiled economic opportunity, a resource to be dominated, surveyed, built upon, and exploited – an empty space that must be "filled" with the civilizing gesture of colonization. The spatial imaginary of a settler society such as Canada thus provides "no place" for the many Chinese migrant labourers who were used as cheap labour in the completion of the railway.[11] The fact that such "foreign bodies" have occupied Canadian territory since its early history is denied or put under erasure in the creation of Canada as a white colonial space:

> Particular realizations of colonial ideology may have been inscribed in locally specific ideologies of empire; these underscored the definitions of "self" and "other" that lay at the heart of spatially diverse and contradictory understandings of nation, whiteness, power, subjection, Commonwealth; and which were installed at the heart of the imperial metropolis. (M. Keith 17)

In colonialist discourse, the new world is figured as a neutral space devoid of meaning, a "state of nature" that lacks the structuring gaze of European colonial authority. Richard Cavell has argued that such a spatial model becomes crucial to the expansionist rhetoric of empire: "Colonial space was represented as an absence ... to the extent that the land was configured as Utopia, its material existence was devalued, thus paving the way, ideologically, for its exploitation" (82). If the centre of Empire is absent, then so is Canada, its "periphery" and any effort to reproduce that peripheral space becomes an exercise in restoring the lack at its centre, an attempt at maintaining the legitimacy of colonial authority.

Indeed, one of the most effective discursive tools in spatial representation and exclusion is mapping, be it the extensive geological surveys necessary to the completion of the railway, or the urban maps which transform Vancouver's "swamplands" into an easily negotiated grid of streets and alleyways. While maps produce a spatial discourse which

"seeks to impose abstract order on material space as part of a program of appropriation" (Cavell 83), it is the slippages within these representational schemes that prove their own undoing.[12] The map "subverts its own authority by disclaiming its ability to re-present the true, real world" (Nash 52), and the inconsistencies, omissions, and slippages which occur in such reductionist representations glaringly reveal the "colonial desire to control the land and place its subjects within places which it controlled" (Pile 5).

In *Disappearing Moon Café,* mapping as a strategy of containment and control necessary to the project of nation is undermined from the point of view of the excluded. While the "empty" space of the Canadian wilderness is transformed into "place" through its segmentation and partitioning into numbered sections of the railroad, such mappings elide the presence of the Chinese labourers who built the very railway which structures that space. Gwei Chang, a young labourer travelling across the interior of British Columbia, is aided by maps provided to him by the Canadian Pacific Railway as he seeks out the abandoned grave sites and work camps of those who preceded him:

> He had maps, with sections of the railroad numbered. He pointed out the grave sites, haphazardly described at the end of each section. He'd been told that there would be markers, or cairns, or something. How hard could it be ...

"Hah" You're a dunce!" Chen's expletive clipped him on the chin. Come with me! Bring your so-called maps!" (11)

It is only with the help of Chen Gwok Fai, the elderly labourer living on the periphery of an abandoned work camp, that Gwei Chang can find what he is searching for. The old man "scrutinized his maps and criticized his information" (11) in the search for bones, but they prove useless, for they lack any information about Chinese presence in Canadian space. Chen's "cognitive mapping" of work camps and grave sites signal an alternate spatial history of Canada, one which reveals the dynamics of power involved in spatial representation.[13] The abandoned work camps and the bodies left there may be seen as a residue of colonization, a belated trace of Oriental otherness in the cartographic representation of Canadian space. With his emphatic denunciation of the official maps, Chen is in effect involved in a process of "unmapping" which is "intended to undermine the idea of white settler innocence and to uncover the ideologies and practices of conquest and domination" (Razack 5).[14]

Chen's disavowal of those maps which have *fixed* Chinese migrant workers to their abject resting place resonates with the understanding that "maps are not empty mirrors, they at once hide and reveal the hand of the cartographer" (Pile 48). By effacing the presence of Chinese graves and work camps from official maps, documents, and histories, the Canadian government in effect evacuates the ethnic other from the collective body

of the nation amd constructing him as a pollutant which must be both physically and symbolically expelled. If Canadian rural landscape is symbolically cleansed of the abject and restored to a purified space of white privilege, it nevertheless remains that "the ontology of the Western subject necessitates and creates the other: the silent subaltern" (Probyn 183).

Similarly, in *The Jade Peony*, mapping functions as tool of colonization. The "Nielson Chocolate Map of the World" displayed prominently at the front of Miss E. Doyle's classroom signals the discourse of multiculturalism in which Chinese and other immigrant groups, that "unruly, untidy mixed bunch of immigrants and displaced persons, legal or otherwise" (180) are moulded into "some ideal collective functioning together as a military unit with one purpose: to conquer the King's English, to belong at last to a country that she envisioned including all of us" (180). This map of an Empire under siege in the Second World War is rendered more vivid through the letters from the front lines which Miss E. Doyle reads to her classroom. The immigrant children are enraptured by "how the smoke rose in furious clouds over a place called *Pick-a-dill-lee* Square ... 'We will never surrender,' John Willard Henry wrote, quoting a man named Churchill, who, Miss Doyle emphasized, was a loyal friend of the King and Queen" (176).

The map, like the framed portraits of "King George and his Queen" which oversee the children, is an "insignia of colonial authority and signifier of colonial desire and discipline" (Bhabha 102) which not only constructs Canadian space as an outpost of Empire, but engages each immigrant child in the defence of the very power which has marginalized them. Maps are thus not transparent representations of the "real" but a form of spatial discourse which seeks to control, delimit, and define the social, political, and symbolic meanings attached to those spaces; they regulate and control the bodies which occupy that space by defining the boundaries between abject and privileged spaces, becoming "three-dimensional and fluid, on and through which bodies are the points of capture of multiple power relations, power relations which inhere in simultaneously real, imagined, and symbolic encounters" (Pile 44).

Both *Disappearing Moon Café* and *The Jade Peony* reveal that the spatial models employed by the Chinese immigrant community of British Columbia differs in a variety of ways from those used in the discourses of nation-building. For instance, John Raulston Saul has argued that "the natural flow in Canada is east-west" not only because of the "artificial creation of nineteenth-century government initiatives, such as the Railroad and the National Policy" but also because of the movements of explorers, those "small groups of men who leapfrogged westward into the unknown" (165), and the ensuing lateral economic relationships between Upper and

Lower Canada. While the completion of the railroad is "an act of physical heroism and political determination" (Saul 174) which symbolizes the collective mastery over nature and spatial immensity, its east-west spatial logic is incommensurable with the transnational nodes through which the Chinese community grew and prospered.

The seasonal movements of migrant workers – their connections to mainland China and to San Francisco (which contains the largest Chinatown in North America) – figure more prominently in their imaginary landscapes than do the east-west spatial logic described by Saul. While the Pacific Rim as a spatial paradigm has been central to the emergence of the Chinese community in Canada, it is virtually absent from the nation's spatial imaginary.[15]

For the Chinese diaspora, mobility itself connotes spatial meanings and experiences markedly different from those of the white majority. Landscape is equated to dis-placement, transience, economic precarity, and death. The Chinese labourers in the novels of Lee and Choy do not see Canadian landscape in terms of fixed boundaries which delineate the ground upon which collective identity is built, but as a more fluid space of transit and seasonal economic opportunities. After the Chinese Exclusion Act imposed by the government of Canada in 1923, Canadian landscape becomes a space of containment, entrapment and division from family overseas. Choy recalls that "thousands came in the decades before 1923,

when on July 1st the Dominion of Canada passed the Chinese Exclusion Act and shut down all ordinary bachelor-man traffic between Canada and China, shut off any women from arriving, and divided families" (17). Cynthia Wong suggests that for the white middle-class, "horizontal movement across the North American continent regularly connotes independence, freedom, an opportunity for individual actualization and / or societal renewal – in short Extravagance" while for Asians, mobility is "usually associated with subjugation, coercion, impossibility of fulfilment for self or community – in short, Necessity" (121).

These contrasting images of spatial fixity and mobility are evoked in a scene in *The Jade Peony* in which Jung-Sum is given a coat as payment for his help in the ironically named *American Steam Cleaners Shop*. While Jung-Sum stands proudly looking like "the young Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek" (101), it is Poh-Poh the "Old One," who reveals the "three inch *Genuine British* label [which] depicted an old windjammer under sail in stormy sea" (102). While the insignia connotes the naval power of the British Empire, literally colonizing the Oriental body as it covers it, Poh-Poh offers her own counter-discourse, revealing that "the first Chinese came to Gold Mountain huddled in the smelly cargo hold of sailing vessels like this ancient windjammer" (102).

Being in a position of dis-placement in relation to their homeland, the first Chinese migrant workers to Canada did not conceive of Canadian

space as "home" but as "Gold Mountain" or "Salt-Water City," a transitory space of residence. If the "naming" of a space becomes "a primary colonizing process because it appropriates, defines, captures the place in language" (Ashcroft et al. "Introduction" 391), such a re-naming of Vancouver in *The Jade Peony* reflects the experiences of exclusion and economic precarity of the Chinese diaspora: "Kiam told me *Hahm-sui-fauh* was the Chinese name for Vancouver because it was built beside the salt water of the Pacific Ocean. Until Kiam told me, I thought it was where all the salt tears came to make up the ocean, just as my mother told me in one of her stories about her own father's coming to Vancouver" (90). This semantic transformation of Vancouver by its Chinese immigrants is a gesture of appropriation, through language, if not through political involvement, of that space.

The pet turtle which Jung-Sum inherits from Dai Kew similarly becomes a symbol of the transitory appropriation of space of the Chinese community. Its transition from the galley of the world-travelling *Princess,* where it was secretly kept as a pet by Dai-Kew, to the box to which it is confined in a shed of the family's Chinatown Vancouver home parallels the history of transience and subsequent containment of Chinese immigrants in Canada. The search for a "proper" English name for the turtle further demonstrates the colonization of bodies operative in Chinatown, so that while Jung Sum insists that it has no proper name, only "Lao Kwei. Old

Turtle," his playmate insists that it has to have a "British or Canadian name." Jung-Sum concedes: *"'George,'* I said, pausing for effect. *'King* George'" (77).

For the Chinese labourers in *Disappearing Moon Café* who are scattered throughout the interior of British Columbia, Canadian landscape is inhabited by the unexpiated "ghosts" of Chinamen who died anonymously in the mines and work camps of the interior, "left behind to rot because the CPR had reneged on its contract to pay the Chinese railway workers' passage home" (12). The search for bones becomes an important symbol of Chinese dis-placement, of the need to repatriate the remains of its seasonal labourers, and of the desire to recuperate the "disavowed" history of the Chinese diaspora in Canada: "Bones must come to rest where they most belong" (68). The retrieval of bones and their return to China becomes a symbolic act of righting past wrongs. Failing that, these displaced persons are condemned to "wander in this foreign land forever" (*Jade Peony* 150).

Just as Canadian landscape is rendered meaningful through the various mapping strategies used in the building of the national railway and through the "rational" application of scientific principles in colonizing a "savage" landscape, the "ghosts" which inhabit this same terrain also structure its space in a meaningful way. While the Chinese migrant workers in *Disappearing Moon Café* are excluded from the official spatial

models imposed by the rhetoric of nation-building, their presence remains indelibly marked upon the Canadian landscape. For Gwei Chang, Canadian landscape is not only "hostile territory ridden with whites" (16), but one littered with the ghosts of long dead Chinese labourers,

> sitting on the ties, some standing with one foot on the gleaming metal ribbon, waiting, grumbling. They were still waiting as much as a half century after the ribbon-cutting ceremony by the whites at the end of the line, forgotten as Chinamen generally are. (6)

The collection of bodily remains proves a difficult but necessary task for Gwei Chang: [16]

> At first, he dreaded the macabre work. What were a few dried bones to him, except disgusting? But the spirits in the mountains were strong and persuasive. The bones gathered themselves into human shapes of young men, each dashing and bold. They followed him wherever he roamed, whispered to him, until he knew each one to be a hero, with yearnings from the same secret places in his own heart. (12)

These "unruly" bodies and ghosts are the residues of nation-building that refuse to remain dormant; they whisper their secrets to the collector of bones, and the graves which would have ostensibly been their final resting places are themselves transitory. While Canadian rural space is

physically transformed by the toil of the Chinese labourers, "their voices had to drown out the chopping of the mechanical Iron Chinks in the fish canneries, defy screeching eight-foot crosscut mill saws" (*Jade Peony* 201). As Gwei Chang surveys the landscape of work camps and abandoned villages, he suddenly comes to a realization of the larger meaning of his bone-collecting:

> By then, he understood. By then, in the utter peace of the forests, he had met them all – uncles who had climbed mountain heights then fallen from them, uncles who had drowned in deep surging waters, uncles who had clawed to their deaths in the dirt of caved-in mines. By then, he wasn't afraid and they weren't alien any more. Like them, he would piece himself together again from scattered, shattered bone and then endure. (13)

In his role as bone-collector, Gwei Chang attempts to reconstruct Chinese immigrant history through a gesture of recuperation. Where Gwei Chang recuperates the bones of dead Chinamen in the hope of restoring them to their rightful place and thus complete their incomplete personal histories, Kae, the modern-day narrator, recuperates the fragments of (female) memory, oral history, and family lore which would ostensibly restore the larger history of Vancouver's Chinatown residents to its rightful place. In both cases, the body of the Oriental other is defiled and

victimized by the colonization of spaces, rendered an abject "remainder" in its stubborn refusal to be assimilated into the hegemonic (white) order.

The elision of Chinese presence in Canadian rural spaces, like the relegation of aboriginal populations to reserves, effectively evacuates their "otherness" to a peripheral space. In the need to identify Canadian space as coterminous with "our" collective identity, ethnic otherness is either effaced or relegated to an ethnically overdetermined ghetto space. This evacuation of the threatening other becomes the necessary means through which the integrity of self is maintained. "The cultural heterogeneity of the countryside or the city," Sibley points out, "has to be denied in these fictional characterizations if they are to symbolize an imagined national community" (108). The equation of territory, both rural and urban, with the hegemonic cultural, political, and social body is politically expedient, for it renders any claims on Canadian space by marginalized groups suspect in the eyes of the majority.

The articulation of the "alternate" spatial models in the novels of Lee and Choy constitute a challenge to the colonization of spaces and the bodies moving upon them. In contradistinction to the "representational metaphor of mapping with its history of subordination to an Enlightenment logic in which everything can be surveyed and pinned down" (Pile 1), the imaginary landscapes which emerge in these novels are ambiguous,

changeable, unfixed – inhabited by a panoply of ghosts, good and bad omen, ill-winds, and spirits.

In the following section, I will turn to the representation of urban space in order to examine how the exclusionary spatial practices of the city's white middle-class comes to shape the urban experiences of its Chinese immigrants. I suggest that Vancouver is "contested terrain" not only in terms of the racialized hierarchical mapping of the city and the intra-ethnic tensions which result from it, but that subversive spatial practices *within* the Chinese community serve to destabilize some of the assumptions which regulate the gendered uses of space and the "disciplinary apparatus" of Chinese ethnicity itself.

Chinatown: A Geography of Containment

In both *The Jade Peony* and *Disappearing Moon Café,* Vancouver's urban spaces, particularly those in and around Chinatown, are intersected with conflictual spatial practices, histories, and ideologies. Where the white majority sees Chinatown as an "abject space" in which mysterious Oriental bodies circulate, for the immigrant community, it is a site of enclosure and containment governed by the secrecy, lies, and gossip which result from being under constant surveillance.

Throughout the novels there is a distinction between ethnic identity within the boundaries of Chinatown and the "performative" aspects of

identity outside of Chinatown.[17] This is manifested not only in the overt racialization which occurs outside of Chinatown in Choy's novel, but in the Chinese's own assertion that "we should have real English names. When we're outside of Chinatown, we should try not to be so different" (124). This "performative identity" strategically tempers ethnic difference and assuages the orientalizing gaze of white middle-class Vancouver.

The various modes of spatial exclusion which charcaterized public discourse in Vancouver not only influenced, in practical ways, the day-to-day lives of Chinese immigrants to the city (in terms of housing policies, employment, immigration quotas), but also shaped the symbolic meanings attributed to those spaces. Thus, while the Chinatown ghetto may represent an administrative "problem" for the city or an exoticized space of ethnic consumption for its privileged white citizens, for Chinese immigrants, it is experienced as a site of containment, limited mobility, secrecy, gossip, and lies. This suggests that place is experienced in radically different ways by subjects who are differently situated within its social hierarchy.

According to Robert McDonald, it is impossible to understand the racial othering of the Chinese in Vancouver without considering that such social and spatial ghettoization was a result of anxieties on the part the middle-class of entrepreneurs flocking to British Columbia at the time n defining their own cultural predominance and social status in the province:

> By according low status to ethnic minorities, seasonal labourers, and the poor, members of both the 'wealthy business and professional class' and the 'artisan or moderately well-to-do class' sought to secure their own identities as respectable citizens. Race and ethnicity served as the most significant sources of status differentiation. (201)

This stratification along ethnic / racial and class lines manifests itself concretely in the various social and urban engineering practices in which the opportunities of marginalized groups (including other visible minorities, Natives, the poor, criminals, prostitutes) are regulated and policed. It is through the enacting of legislation which severely limited or outright banned the Chinese from participating fully in Canadian social, political, and economic life that the majority "used the ideology of race to secure their place as the dominant group in British Columbia" (McDonald 203). Some examples cited by McDonald include restrictions on voting, restrictions on the Chinese entering high-status professions such as pharmacy, law, and education, limits on the ownership of land, the obtaining of liquor licences, and on employment in public works (205). More overt forms of social and spatial exclusion include the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1923 and the Chinese Head Tax.

The spatial practices used by the dominant and administrative class in Vancouver, concomitant with the ideology of "whiteness," relegated the Oriental other to abject spaces in the city and thus maintained the vision of Canada as an outpost of the British colonial empire. Consequently, the urban environment in which Chinese migrant labourers lived mirrored their low status within the social, economic, and racialized hierarchy of the city. It is *because* they are understood as residual elements of "proper" Canadian colonial society – as a negligible, abundant, cheap, and easily replaced labour force to be exploited – that those areas of the city in which they lived were of little account and did not benefit from governmental intervention unless that space was perceived as a threat to the public good.

Laws against vagrancy in effect criminalized the scores of idle Chinese bodies on the streets of Vancouver despite the fact that they were denied employment due to racial prejudice. In *The Jade Peony*, Choy writes that during the depression years in which many were out of work, "China men were shoved aside, threatened, forgotten" (18), their living conditions unbearable: "In the crowded rooming houses of Chinatown, until morning came, living men slept in cots and on floors beside dead men" (18). Even several generations after the first arrivals of Chinese, the residents of the inner city lived in difficult conditions: "Our clapboard two-storey house, which people called 'a Chinaman special,' was shaking with

cold. The wide cracks in the walls had been stuffed a generation before with newspapers printed in a strange Eastern European language" (72).

In the cramped conditions of the Chinatown ghetto, these "foreigners" are interpellated by the exclusionary gaze of the white majority, and the many instances of racial / ethnic violence that erupted between the white middle class and the Chinese migrant workers, small businessmen, and seasonal labourers before and after turn of the century Vancouver were indicative of the larger tensions over issues of housing, employment, and public health. Through policies such as the forced evacuation of tenement dwellers and health and immigration inspections of the area, Chinatown was subjected to the controlling hand of the state. Moreover, the location of Vancouver's Chinatown at the physical centre of the city permitted an easier policing of its "alien" inhabitants. This form of urban surveillance, a recurring image in the novels of Lee and Choy, impacts not only upon ethnic constructions of urban space, but also on the way in which the community constructs *itself* as isolated, hemmed-in, inward-looking, and trapped by the invasive, orientalizing gaze of the majority.

Often poor and uneducated, the Chinese were marginalized not only because of their linguistic, cultural, and physical difference from the majority, but also because the migrant workers among them were not anchored by a visible family structure. McDonald points out that their necessarily migratory lives elicited

derision in a white settler society which exemplified "the ideal of domesticity and family":

> Transiency and a disproportionately male population typified life on the industrial frontier, and this condition persisted during the early city-building years ... respectability meant families and homes, and roughness meant the single sex and impermanent lifestyle of squatters and transients. By 1913, the city's single men, "foreigners," and poor occupied a distinct inner core of the city that gave geographic expression to their social identity as people outside the mainstream of civic discourse. (236)

Employment proved difficult as well, as Chinese immigrants were continually relegated to menial labour and domestic service where they posed no threat to the racial hierarchy of the city, creating in effect the image of the servile Oriental whose difficulties in communicating in English are only offset by his desire to please his white interlocutors:

> Around me were "uncles" who had gone to universities in the 1920s and '30s but remained unemployable because only Canadian citizens could qualify as professionals. For if you were Chinese, even if you were born in Canada, you were an educated *alien* – never to be a citizen, never a Canadian with the right to vote – an "educated fool" in the words of

> some Old China men, or a "hopeful fool" in the words of those who knew the world would soon change. (*Jade Peony* 139)

In identifying a part of the city with the racialized other, the urban space of Chinatown is thus constructed in mainstream public discourse as a troubling rift in the collective fantasy of a white, protestant, and primarily middle-class Canadian nation, its urban "messiness" stemming as much from its physical squalor as it does from the sense that it is populated by foreign undesireables. The arrival of large numbers of Chinese in Vancouver at the turn of the century elicited a form of "urban panic" in the white majority population, a sense that their city and way of life was under direct attack. In *Disappearing Moon Café*, Morgan discovers that in the summer of 1924, the scandalous murder of a white woman by a Chinese houseboy sent repercussions throughout the city, as residents of Chinatown are exposed to the scrutiny of police inspectors and vigilante mobs seeking to "protect" the integrity of public order:

> In the heat of summer, the news rips through Chinatown like wild fire! A white woman is murdered! The prime suspect is a Chinese houseboy named Wong Foon Sing! Chopsticks drop and clatter in surprise! Clumps of rice stick in throats ... Let me tell you, the whole town went nuts! The Chinese

Exclusion Act – the Day of Humiliation – and then this killing. (66-7)

Even for the well-established leaders of Chinatown, the murder of a white woman by one of their own has ominous implications:

> Wong Gwei Chan and his cigar-puffing clique in Chinatown immediately saw the writing on the wall. They were only too aware of the obscene implications of this situation. Those whites who hated yellow people never needed an excuse to spit on Chinese. So the idea of a young, lone, yellow-skinned male standing over the inert body of a white-skinned female would send them into a bloodthirsty frenzy. The first instincts of the Chinese told them to board up their businesses and barricade Pender Street, with enough rice and salted fish stockpiled to outlast a siege. (70)

What ensues is a widespread panic which constructs all Chinese immigrants as potential criminals. The penetration of the female body in sexual act and murderous stabbing comes to symbolize the fouling of the integrity of the collective body and its violation at the hands of a perverse, Orientalized sexuality. Both the moral purity of the white woman and the ethnic purity of white space are desecrated by the "slant-eyed vermin" (67) which lurk on the streets of Vancouver.[18]

The construction of the ethnic other as the carrier of disease, as the abject or the defiled, is signalled also by incest, a form of disease which "spreads within a marginalized community that is forced back on its own resources" (Huggan, "Latitudes" 40). In this case, disease in seen as "a self-inflicted condition – hence the white colonial perception of Chinatown as intrinsically *decadent*, as carrying within it the seeds of its own destruction" ("Latitudes" 40). The racist discourse of contamination in decribing the "yellow fever" introduced into the white collective body from the exoticized Orient is an attempt at separating the self from the other, of evacuating that which threatens. Vancouver thus becomes a policed space in which all Oriental bodies are looked upon as possible *saboteurs* of regulated urban order.

This is how the young Sek-Lung and Meiying are seen as they walk through Chinatown after a curfew is imposed on the city after the Japanese attacks on Pearl Harbour during the Second World War. The children are interpellated by the "volunteer men and women who carefully checked each window and door to see that the law was being strictly obeyed": [19]

> "You Japs?" a man in a brown jacket said to us.
>
> Meiying showed him the tiny buttons pinned on our lapels that had the Chinese flag proudly stamped on them. Kiam had got them for us from Chinese school. I also had one that said: "I AM CHINESE."

> "Get home," said the man. "It looks like snow."
>
> We didn't rush. Meiying walked as if we had every right to be walking as we did, slowly. (*Jade Peony* 219)

The children's ethnic identities must be literally pinned to their sleeves, for the Orientalizing gaze not only effaces the distinction between Japanese and Chinese, but the specificities of class, status, gender, and regional cultures within those communities. "We all peapod China men" in the eyes of the "white devils" (18) Wong Bak remarks. As Michael Keith observes, in the encounter with the other, "the object must be turned into something familiar," (47). Because this strategy is "radically unable to deal with the strange" (47), the other is constructed as a "fetish and phobia" (47).

The Chinatown ghetto is figured as a battlefield, an enclave of ethnic treachery which must be controlled by white authority. The surveillance of bodies, actions, and movement in the city inevitably shapes the way in which urban space is experienced, described, and constructed by its residents. For instance, the bureaucratic apparatus of the country's immigration department, which regulates movements into and out of the country, instigates the elaborate system of "paper families" present in Chinatown before the Second World War – in essence the illicit falsification of immigration documents as a way of circumventing

governmental controls. In *The Jade Peony,* families are constructed, combined, reconfigured, becoming:

> heirs to a web of illegal subterfuge brought on by laws that stipulated that only relatives of official 'merchant-residents' or 'scholars' could immigrate from China to Canada. Paper money could buy paper relatives. But whose papers were connected to whose relatives? My head pounded. (132)

The web of familial and communal "secrets and lies" which characterized these families becomes important in the symbolic currency of Chinatown and the construction of itself as a community "under siege" that must falsify its own history in order to survive:

> Family unity and coherence is maintained through a collective investment in its discursive hierarchy, which includes an implicit (or explicit) agreement to keep certain aspects of family history secret. Thus "false" relations are maintained at the same time as "real" histories become untouchable or unmentionable. (C. Lee 21)

While familial relationships are governed by strict hierarchies based on age and status and on the appearance of social propriety within Chinese culture, in Canada, kinship must be "simplified" (14). A second wife brought in from China becomes "stepmother" so as to conform to Canadian laws against polygamy. As the Chinatown "old timers" would say, "In Gold

Mountain, simple is best" (14). Even one's age remains uncertain in this environment of secrecy and subterfuge, since "*Ga-ji nin* – paper years ... always different from Chinese years" (*Disappearing* 49).

This need to conform to the various forms of social surveillance and control creates a form of collective anxiety which structures the urban space of the ghetto as an enclosure of secrets and lies, a cloistered space in which ethnic secrecy is physically contained within the materiality of the built environment: "I knew that every brick in Chinatown's three- and five-storey clan buildings lay like the Great Wall against anyone knowing everything. The *lao wah-kiu* – the old-timers who came overseas from Old China – hid their actual life histories within those fortress walls" (*Jade Peony* 50). In showing his work permits, visas, and various other immigration documents, Wong Suk, one of the "Old China men," demonstrates the degree to which the need for secrecy creates both familial and historical ambiguity:

> I could see half-folded documents stamped CP RAILROAD, B.C. WORK PERMIT, letters from China, old bills, certificates with Chinese words in black ink, signed with red chop marks ... all important papers.
>
> "You kept so much," Father commented. "Good. Good."

> "Never know what government do," Wong-Suk said. "One day they say Old Wong *okay-okay*. Next day, Wong *stinky Chink*." (*Jade Peony* 48)

While familial and immigrant history is contained within these papers, such histories are indecipherable to the Canadian-born generation, not only because of the linguistic dissonance between generations, but because familial history has been falsified beyond recognition. When family discussion turns to passing on documents to other immigrant families seeking to enter the country, the child who understands English is looked upon with suspicion: "No one said anything anymore: a child with a Big Mouth stood beside the oak table. Big Eyes. Big Ears. Big Careless Mouth. A Mouth that went to English school and spoke English words. Too many English words. Poh-Poh looked at me cautiously" (*Jade Peony* 50). Secrecy is thus operative in the encounter with immigration department officials, those "white devils" that manage the movement of foreigners in and out of the country, but also within the community itself, between different generations, sexes, social classes, and families. The sense that one's personal history is ambiguous, tentative, unknowable, is reflected in the spatial imaginary of the ghetto as well, irreducible to a single objective truth.

The hidden gambling dens, false store-fronts, and secret meeting rooms in which the community elite make decisions effectively hide any

activities that might be deemed suspect or subversive to the white gaze. The "cheater floor," for instance, "was hidden to evade taxes. This extra floor housed or rather rough-housed a perpetual party of gamblers and socializers. No one could descend from the pious sanctity of the meeting hall upstairs without the notice of all the unofficial caretakers of this floor" (*Disappearing* 74). Chinatown is thus presented as a claustrophobic space, one which traps its residents, a "snare" (*Disappearing* 107).

The incommensurability between the "official" lives of the Chinese community in Vancouver (contained in passports, visas, paper families, maps) and their actual lived experiences in the ethnic ghetto mirrors the break between the official and actual uses of space. There is a dual history here; that of white, middle class Vancouver, upheld and maintained by the legitimacy of state and civic apparatus, and the silent "alternate" history of the Chinese community, with its legacy of falsified documents, oral history, and familial secrets necessary to circumvent racist immigration policies. In addition, the female members of the Chinese community are doubly silenced, for they must contend with the erasure of their stories in a male-dominated community.

While particular features of the Chinatown ghetto may be seen as a response to the various racial / ethnic discourses produced by the white majority seeking to contain and control the ethnic other, they also reflect, construct, and reinforce the discourses of ethnicity within the community

itself. Ethnicity is manifested through the visual language of the ghetto, through identifiably Chinese physical characteristics. Ethnicity is "put on display" and thus acts as a "disciplinary tool that mediates the relationship between the individual and the power elite" (C. Lee 21). The Chinese Benevolent Association building in *Disappearing Moon Café*, for instance, exemplifies the ways in which the built environment may act as a "disciplinary tool," with its "heavy furniture formally and coldly arranged; tall rigid scrolls of calligraphy [that] barked out messages of loyalty, filial duty, benevolence and righteousness" (73). The architecture constructs Chinese culture and tradition as an authoritative eye which looks down upon its residents. Similarly, the assembly hall in which Jung-Sum trains to fight in *The Jade Peony* evokes the hierarchies that operate in Chinatown: "A line of Chinese carved chairs stood on both the far sides of the room, and the walls were hung with calligraphy. At one end of the room, three large five-foot porcelain gods of fortune stood guard, with incense pots beside each one. They looked fierce and cast long shadows on the back wall, doubling their size" (113).

A description of the Disappearing Moon Café in its heyday similarly reveals the importance which the physical surroundings play in the elaboration and maintenance of senses of Chinese identity:

> Disappearing Moon was divided into two front sections, with the kitchen and the storeroom at the back. The dining room

> was the largest in Chinatown, perhaps the most beautiful in all of Vancouver, with its teak carvings on the pillars and gateways. The rich dark-blood of the rosewood furniture was enhanced by the tangled emerald-green of the ivy foliage. Cultivated jade trees, with leaves like precious stones, overflowed the dragon pots. On the walls, long silk scrolls of calligraphy sang out to those patrons who could read them. It was a nostalgic replica of an old-fashioned Chinese teahouse, which accounted for its popularity not only amongst its homesick Chinese clientele but also its outsiders who came looking for Oriental exotica. (32)

Ethnicity is constructed in the material outlay of the café, serving as a marker of exoticism for whites, a space in which the outsider literally consumes the Oriental other, providing "armchair voyeurism that constructs Chinatown as a place of mysterious vice, tourist spectacle, or enigmatic area" (Deer 12).

Chinatown is also inhabited by "residual" urban bodies that evoke a prior period of Chinese immigration, such as the "old Chinese peasant type squatted on a chilly stone bench who stared ... the way all the old Chinese sit and stare at passers-by" (*Disappearing* 40). Kae reveals that she hardly ever goes to Chinatown anymore, "except for the very occasional family banquet. And I certainly wouldn't ever let any dirty old

man touch me! Those little old men are everywhere in Chinatown, leaning in doorways, sitting at bus stops, squatting on sidewalks. The very thought gave me the creeps" (67). They are "out of place" not only because they evoke the "Old ways" of China which are increasingly looked at askance by the Canadian-born generation, but because such idle bodies do not easily enter into the fast-paced urban logic which assigns to each body and space a utilitarian value. Idleness thus becomes a form of vagrancy or criminality.

In *The Jade Peony,* when the young Jook-Liang walks hand in hand with Wong Suk, her elderly grandfather, outside the confines of Chinatown, people "stared at this bent-down agile old man with the funny face leaning on his two canes, and this almost nine-year-old-girl with her moon face – but we didn't care. 'Look,' a teenage boy once said, loud enough for everyone walking by to hear, 'Beauty and the Beast'" (45).

The workings of abjection function through the visual; in decoding the Asian body as strange, untenable, grotesque, the white gaze differentiates between the proper (white) body and the improper (Oriental) one.[20] With this visual inspection, the body becomes "a point of capture, where the dense meanings of power are animated, where cultural codes gain their apparent coherence and where boundaries between the same and the other are installed and naturalised" (Pile 41). The regulatory gaze controls bodies and movements, determines who can and cannot circulate

in public space, and ascribes moral value to various sites within the city. The body is thus implicated in the demarcation of racial boundaries, for the European desire for "distinct racial classifications" (Razack 49) demands that whites constantly "(re)create their own identities and superiority against the bodies of racialized others" (Razack 49).

"Running the [Urban] Gauntlet": The Female Oriental in Public Space

The meanings and spatial practices which marginalized groups attach to specific urban sites are as much shaped by the expectations of class, age, social status, and gender as they are by the exclusionary discourses imposed by the white majority. The social and symbolic space of the Chinatown ghetto is for this reason highly complex, demanding an understanding of place as a relational concept rather than as a static, neutral arena upon which bodies act. In both *Disappearing Moon Café* and *The Jade Peony*, gender becomes one of the principal criteria by which bodies are interpellated in public and private spaces.

The immigrant household, for instance, is constructed not only as a "female" space but as the privileged site of "ethnic authenticity." It is in the home that the Chinese language, modes of address, and familial rituals which differentiates children from their non-Chinese schoolmates are acquired. It is also in this domestic space that female knowledges reside. In *The Jade Peony*, Poh-Poh's secret pantry, discovered after her

death, connotes both female-gendered spaces and an "authentic" Chinese identity which remains mysterious to her Canadian-born grandchildren:

> On the shelf were these: the still mysterious seeds like peppercorns with tiny spikes, the packets of bitter, thick-veined leaves and mandrake roots, the tubes of BB-like pills, the tiny cosmetic pots of sweet-smelling ointments, a tin or two with half-torn labels ... The pantry now held all of Grandmama's herbal knowledge. My sister's secrets, even if she was scrawling my name into her private diary, could not compare to the Old One's secrets. (193)

Similarly, Mui Lan, the feared and respected matriarch of the Wong family, is associated to the domestic space of the home and family business. But her ostensibly privileged position at the front of the Disappearing Moon Café is easily undermined by a single word from her husband or by a bit of hushed gossip among its patrons: "Gossip! Chinatown was always full of gossip. Her own restaurant reeked of it. Too many idle loafers! She of all people should know. They were always there, all too anxious to size her up. She felt pinned to the wall, like the unpaid bills" (26).

Mui Lan's limited mobility mirrors the public / private dichotomy in which she finds herself; because as a woman she cannot publicly display the tyrannical power she wields, she must resort to circuitous lies, deceit,

and intimidation in order to ensure that her impotent son, Choy Fuk, will produce a male heir. She is thus rendered spatially immobile by the "disciplinary tools" of ethnicity and gender which place high value on public propriety, patriarchy, and familial harmony at the expense of women's own desires and ambitions.

Fong Mei, her daughter-in-law, similarly realizes that Chinese women have little control over their own destinies, for their lives "belong to strangers" (45). Their personal histories, limited to the spaces of domesticity, are subsumed within patrilineal family lines, elided in the "official" male-dominated histories of Chinatown. As Doreen Massey points out, "the attempt to confine women to the domestic sphere was both a specifically spatial control and, through that, a social control on identity" (179). In *The Jade Peony*, women are also denigrated and excluded from privileged spaces: "Jook Liang, if you want a place in this world ... do not be born a girl-child" (31). Female offspring are considered of less "value" and honour in the family: "A girl-child is *mo yung* – useless" (32).

Not only are women "contained" in domestic space, they are denied access to male-coded sites of political power and status within Chinatown, such as the cultural associations and hidden meeting rooms in which important decisions are made. Also, while women are relegated to local spaces (the network of home, family, and friends), men are allowed movement from the local to the global – be it in their spatial freedoms on

the streets of the ghetto, in their movements in the interior of British Columbia as labourers, or in their transnational movements to China or to the other Chinatowns of North America. Local spaces are thus coded feminine, the assumption being that women "lead more local lives than do men" (Massey 9) while transnational or "global" spaces are associated with the greater mobility of males. Indeed, both novels clearly demonstrate that women are denied the spatial freedoms enjoyed by men, be it in their urban wanderings in the city, or in their inability to fully control their movements across transnational spaces: "All of them desperately weaving tenuous, invisible threads over the ocean, to cling cobweblike to their men and sons in Gold Mountain" (*Disappearing* 26).

Where public space is associated to the male activities of transience, gambling, drinking, socializing, and unhindered bodily display, the private space of home and family business falls under the purview of females. "That bundle of terms local / place / locality is bound into sets of dualisms, in which a key term is the dualism between masculine and feminine, and in which, on these readings, the local / place / feminine side of the dichotomy is deprioritized and denigrated" (Massey 10).

While there were relatively few women in early Chinatown, McDonald points out that "they were not totally absent from this gendered space which encompassed the waterfront, the Chinese, the Japanese, and the old business district of Vancouver" (216). Obstacles such as the Royal

Commission on Chinese Immigration of 1884-85, the Chinese Exclusion Act, and the Chinese head tax, imposed by the Canadian government, greatly limited the ability of male labourers to bring wives and family over from China. For this reason, early Chinatown was predominantly a male space, a "self-contained community of men" (*Disappearing* 68) in which women were in short supply. Female presence in the streets of Chinatown thus elicits the gaze of men who rarely see women among their number. Their very presence in this male-coded space suggests, at least in the minds of men, their sexual availability. Kae imagines her grandmother Fong Mei's thoughts as she moves across the sexually charged landscape of early Chinatown:

> There I was in Chinatown, a lovely young female with a body that hungered beyond my control, surrounded by this restless ocean of male virility lapping at my fertile shores. I could have gone swimming, but instead I felt so ashamed, guarding my body so stiffly that my muscles shrivelled and ached. How I hated my woman's body; encasing it in so much disgust, I went around blind, deaf, senseless, unable to touch or feel. (188)

The female body is thrust into the "virile" male space of early Chinatown, subjected to its scrutiny. Similarly, the "rough cowboys" of East

Hasting's dingy bars and hotels connote excessive masculinity and overt sexuality, forms of bodily display which women could not participate in:

> Nothing quickened my heart more than gawking at the rough, unshaven men who swerved out of barroom doors and loudly sang rude songs, swore openly, spat anywhere, and shouted at Mother, "Hey good lookin!" Mother and her friends marched by these street corners, looking neither right nor left, the flowers in their bonnets bobbing with majestic indifference. As far as I knew, the ladies were never harmed; East Hastings was an everyday city nuisance that parallelled Pender Street, a gauntlet the ladies ran with cheek and courage. (70)

The street becomes a site of sexual display in which women are continually interpellated as sexualized objects by the voyeuristic impulses of the masculine gaze. While their free movement in the city may suggest their sexual availability to males, it also signals a transgression of the gender-specific spatial practices of Chinatown and the patriarchal order which subtends them. The presence of women in places traditionally coded as male (the street, the outskirts of the city) disturbs "the masculine desire to fix the woman in a stable and stabilizing identity" (Wilson 157):

> Women have fared especially badly in western visions of the metropolis because they have seemed to represent disorder.

> There is fear of the city as a realm of uncontrolled and chaotic sexual license, and the rigid control of women in cities has been felt necessary to avert this danger. (Wilson 157)

Furthermore, those women who *do* transgress the codes of propriety within the Chinese-Canadian community – be it in terms of their overt sexuality or their challenges to familial hierarchy – are stigmatized and relegated to an "abject" space on the margins of spaces which connote family, community, and public respectability. They are consequently seen as morally suspect, as fallen victims, or as prostitutes. Women who walk in the city at night are "out of place," like Mui Lan who "usually didn't walk home alone in the dark" (90) for she must maintain the public image of a respectable business woman. She is contrasted to Song Ang, whom she employs as a lowly washer-woman in the Café. Because Song Ang lacks both husband and children, she is stigmatized and evacuated from the "proper" social spaces of Chinatown, occupying a position of abjection within the restaurant, one that reflects her diminished moral status within the social hierarchy of Chinatown:

> Her big, clumsy frame shuffled about, from kitchen to booth, booth to kitchen, seemingly impervious to the sniggers and lewd remarks from the more obnoxious patrons. Whenever the tables were slow, she drudged in the dirtiest parts of the

> kitchen, elbow deep in lye or grease. If there was a moment of respite at all, she would droop on the lowest corner stool, near the back of the restaurant, always dumb. To Fong Mei, the waitress belonged to that other class of women – the one without male patronage, barely existing, mute in their misery. (92)

In seeing Song Ang as residual, Fong Mei assures her own morally superior position. Not only is Song Ang relegated to the margins of the restaurant in which she works, but to the margins of the city, living in a "tarpaper shack," a "little hovel" which reminds Choy Fuk, her employer's impotent son, of the poor villages of China in its "threadbare paucity" (98). Sibley writes,

> there is a history of imaginary geography which casts minorities, "imperfect" people, and a list of others who are seen to pose a threat to the dominant group in society as polluting bodies or folk devils who are then located "elsewhere" ... some spatial periphery, like the edge of the world or the edge of the city ... reflecting the desire of those who feel threatened to distance themselves from defiled people or defiled places. (49)

For the women of Chinatown then, public spaces in the city carry with them the double interdictions of ethnicity and gender; the Oriental *flâneuse* is

constructed as an "unruly woman," for she appropriates spaces that have traditionally been off limits to her. Similarly, in *The Jade Peony*, Poh-Poh finds herself "out of place" when she ventures beyond the home and into the back alleys of Keefer and Pender streets, looking through garbage for the "treasures" which she transforms into ornate musical chimes, a central image of ethnic identification and "authenticity" for Sek-Lung, her grandson. The fact that Poh-Poh picks through the garbage of the city renders her abject, unclean. As Sibley points out in his analysis of the *chiffonier* class of nineteenth-century Paris, "ragpickers dealt with residues and were themselves residual, socially and spatially ... a space for the ragpickers was repeatedly created beyond bourgeois space to remove the threat of contamination" (100).

While Poh-Poh's urban wanderings resemble those of Majzels' LeCorbusier in that she reclaims the detritus of the city in order to transform it into cultural plenitude, it is a form of vagrancy that is not socially acceptable. Poh-Poh and her grandson Sekky become unlikely urban *flâneurs* scorned by family and community: "Father shook his head in exasperation. How dare he tell the Old One, his ageing mother, what was appropriate in a poor village in China was shameful here ... She is not a beggar looking for food" (145). Grandmama's otherness in the eyes of her own acculturated Chinese-Canadian family becomes problematic. She is a "residue" of immigration, an abject body whose "Old-China" language

and customs are not as easily subsumed into the collective body of multicultural respectability: "They all loved Grandmama, but she was *inconvenient*, unsettling" (145). She is seen by her family as being slightly mad in her hunt for discarded treasures, and the stigma attached to her forays into questionable urban spaces pushes her into secrecy:

> By their cutting remarks, the family did exert enough pressure that Grandmama no longer openly announced our expeditions. Instead, she took me with her on "shopping trips," ostensibly for clothes or groceries while in fact we spent most of our time exploring stranger and more distant neighbourhoods, searching for splendid junk: jangling pieces of a broken vase, cranberry glass fragments embossed with leaves, discarded glass beads from Woolworth necklaces. We would sneak them all home in brown rice sacks, folded into small parcels, and put them under her bed. During the day when the family was away at school or work, we brought them out and washed the pieces in a large black pot of boiling lye and water, dried them carefully, and returned them, sparkling, to the hiding place under the bed. (146)

When the large Chinese Presbyterian Church burns to the ground, Poh-Poh is one of the first to scavenge through the smoking debris, picking out "the stained glass that glittered in the sunlight" (146). She renders the city's

spaces both sacred and profane, its residues intermingled with its treasures.

Kae has a different relationship to the city. Now in the suburbs, she wishes to protect her home from the "dangers" of Chinatown, the long history of lies, deception, and misogyny which characterized both her family and the larger Chinese-Canadian community (128). She does so by symbolically organizing the space around her as a territory of security, a garrison: [21]

> My arms fold across my chest. My toes dig into my hand-knotted carpet. And my mind stretches over our little city lot, fifty feet wide, one hundred and forty feet long, from corner to corner to corner. I build a mental fence around it, visualizing the high-voltage electricity fairly crackling off it, not just to ward off evil but to fry it dead. (122)

While the inner city of Vancouver's Chinatown becomes a space of danger and oppression for immigrant women, the suburban home becomes a barricade against murky familial history and the silencing of women's voices.

The Boundary Breached

While the urban experiences described in these novels are shaped by carefully maintained boundaries of race and ethnicity, Lee and Choy

offer up the possibility of more disruptive, fluid cultural identifications, suggested not only by characters of mixed ethnicity (Kelora Chen, Seto Chi, Morgan), but also through the representation of "disruptive" spatial practices which challenge the notion of clearly defined and "contained" cultural boundaries, bodies, and spaces. The social and cultural adjacencies, interferences, and juxtapositions of various cultural referents, practices, and identities in the urban landscape of Vancouver allows for the possibilities of hybridity. "The sense of border between self and other is echoed in both social and spatial boundaries," Sibley suggests, and the "crossing boundaries, from a familiar space to an alien one which is under the control of somebody else, can provide anxious moments; in some circumstances it could be fatal, or it might be an exhilarating experience – the thrill of transgression" (32).

While the older generation attempts to maintain the distinctions between self and other, the Canadian-born generation in *The Jade Peony* moves more readily across those geographical and identitary boundaries: "*Mo-no*s went to English school and mixed with Demon outsiders, and even liked *them.* Wanted to invite *them* home" (135). Mei-Ying and Sek-Lung, described as being "neither this nor that" (135), transgress the physical boundaries of the Chinatown ghetto and in so doing are regarded as a threat to the established spatial (and racialized) order of the city. Meiying's crossing into Japantown becomes a form of treason, an

untenable blurring of racial and cultural boundaries. When it is discovered that she carries the unborn child of her Japanese boyfriend, the pressure exerted on her to maintain ethnic purity is overwhelming, and she attempts an abortion of the child "whose very existence embodies the deconstruction of boundaries between Chinese and Japanese" (C. Lee 30).

While border zones become important in maintaining the symbolic logic of excluding filth (Kristeva), it is, ironically, on these border zones that identity experimentation occurs. These "interstitial spaces" escape the easy binarism of self/other, inside/outside, and are therefore ambiguous locations which disrupt the fantasy of geographically self-contained communities. Border zones are contested sites which ostensibly differentiate communities through the dual operations of inclusion and exclusion; if they contain, hem in, limit, and render immobile, they also produce and are productive of destabilizing effects

* * *

In both *Disappearing Moon Café* and *The Jade Peony*, the landscapes of British Columbia's interior and the cramped quarters of Chinatown are constructed as ambiguous sites of immigrant memory and identification, spaces whose physical and symbolic boundaries are bound together with notions of community, family history, and ethnic performance.

While the technologies of surveillance, mapping, and racial exclusion interpellate the Chinese as visible minorities and contain them within abject spaces, the internal hierarchies of class and gender within Chinatown assign places and modes of urban display to each body. The city is in this way constructed as a "contested terrain," as the site of intersecting spatial practices and discourses. These spatial models not only interrogate the established colonial / nationalist assumptions about Canadian space, they are "territorial disputes" which, as Huggan suggests, "pose a challenge to the self-acknowledging 'mainstreams' of metropolitan culture, to the hegemonic tendencies of patriarchal and ethnocentric discourses" ("Decolonizing the Map" 408).

In the following chapter, I will examine the representation of Montréal as a richly textured urban palimpsest upon which linger the "disavowed" bodies broken by exclusionary discourses of colonization, ethnicity, and gender.

Chapter 2

Ghosts and Urban Remains: The Montréal Novels of Leonard Cohen, Robert Majzels, and Régine Robin

In the epilogue to Leonard Cohen's *Beautiful Losers,* a tortured archivist reveals that "in Montréal spring is like an autopsy. Everyone wants to see the inside of the frozen mammoth" (245). In the search for the reasons for his wife Edith's brutal suicide, in his obsession with the history of Catherine Tekakwitha, Native martyr and saint, and in his desperate attempts at emulating the separatist political convictions of F., his friend, mentor, and lover, the unnamed narrator of Cohen's prodigious urban novel unearths the "truth about Canada" (37) – the many "victims of history" that have been colonized, excluded, and effaced from its collective memory and its spatial imaginary. The structure of the novel sees the narrator's thoughts and obsessions mapped onto the story of Catherine Tekakwitha, as each character negotiates the various "systems" which condition their lives: pop culture, the desiring body, late industrial capitalism, Nazism; or, in the case of Catherine, colonialism, tribal ritual, and religious inculcation.

In Robert Majzels' *City of Forgetting,* Montréal is presented as a dystopic urban landscape littered with the broken metanarratives of modernism. Scientific progress, historical objectivity, and utopian technological advancement are dissected in this novel which sees an unlikely band of historical and literary figures become homeless scavengers wandering through the postmodern city.[22] These include

Clytæmnestra, Queen of Aragos from Greek mythology, Shakespeare's Lady Macbeth, Le Corbusier, the modernist architect, Ché Guevara, an aging, drunken librarian who bears a striking resemblance to Karl Marx, Rudy Valentino, the silent film actor, and Paul de Chomedey de Maisonneuve, Jesuit founder and governor of the city. Several of the characters embody particular ideological or epistemological positions in relation to the urban terrain, and the way in which their various discourses are fragmented, interrupted, or simply forgotten in the haze of history suggests that the discourses which they embody have themselves become broken in the city of consumer culture.

City of Forgetting undertakes a taxonomy of the city's archaeological strata, revealing the religious, social, and political discourses which have attempted to control "errant" bodies in urban space. Montréal is presented as a city of "cannibals and corpses" (27) that linger on its terrain "no matter how much you forget them" (Majzels, "Interview," 128). They testify not only to the violent history of colonization and exclusion of indigenous bodies, but reveal the contemporary city's potential for violence toward women, the poor, and the homeless on its streets.[23]

Régine Robin's *La Québécoite* recuperates a personal narrative of the Jewish diaspora through a contemporary *flâneuse* caught in an "hors-lieu" between Europe and Québec, between an unnameable past lost to the horrors of the holocaust and a present in which ethnic ghettos elicit

both nostalgia and apprehension. The Jewish (collective) body is the "raté de l'Histoire" (158), an absented body constantly under erasure: the cemeteries the narrator visits, the anti-Semitic graffiti which constrain her to remain out of sight, and the "fabricated" Jewish culture of the ethnic ghetto all testify to the ways in which the "defiling" Jew has been socially and spatially excluded. Through a fragmented, metafictional account which intermingles various languages, memories, and historical documents, Robin deconstructs the traditional links between the built environment, nationalism, and a positivistic view of history.

Bodies, Flesh, the City

In *Flesh and Stone: The Body and the City in Western Civilization*, Richard Sennett has suggested that "western civilization has had persistent trouble in honouring the dignity of the body and diversity in human bodies" (15). This is particularly true in urban spaces, where diverse types of bodies come into contact, intermingle, and disperse. Through a comprehensive study of the body in western civilization, Sennett uncovers how "body-troubles have been expressed in architecture, in urban design, and in planning practice" (15). He cites, for instance, how ancient Roman beliefs in bodily geometry are translated into the clean, simple lines of imperial architecture, how Christian beliefs in the suffering Christ lead to the sanctification of specific spaces of worship and how,

finally, scientific discoveries in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries which theorized the body as a circulatory system lead to nineteenth century cities designed for the free flow of bodies across extended urban spaces (Haussmann's Paris, for instance).

The bodily freedoms of the industrialized city, Sennett argues, have given way more recently to a body rendered passive through the technologies of speed; the mobile, contemporary body traverses vast stretches of urban and suburban conglomerations without having to actively engage with that space. Consequently, the risk of "feeling something or someone as alien" (Sennett 20) and the aversion toward physical and moral "contamination," demands urban designs which disengage the body from its environment.

If the body has served as a model for specific forms of urban design and spatial practice throughout history, it has also served as a symbol of social and political collectivities. The "*res publica*" has been represented as a body whose organs function in a hierarchal order; the ruler corresponds to its head, merchants its stomach, soldiers its hands, workers its feet. Hobbes' *Leviathan* constructs the social contract as a political body whose parts are conjoined under the rule of law, while images of empire equate the colonial power of the sovereign with the head or "crown," and the colonies to its extremities.

While the discourses of colonial expansion and / or nation-building invariably model the collective body on the male European body, "a master image of the body inherently invites ambivalence among the people it rules, for every human body is physically idiosyncratic" (Sennett 24). Consequently, those bodies which fit this idealized (male, European) model are construed as proper, privileged bodies and have no spatial constraints imposed upon them. Others are understood as abject, transgressive, and potentially polluting bodies which must either be expelled or rendered docile through various technologies of surveillance. "In either medieval or modern form," Sennett writes, "the body politic founds rule in society on a ruling image of the body" (24).

Just as the individual confronted with the abject differentiates between the inside and the outside of the body in an attempt to define the threshold between self and external world, so too the collective body differentiates between an "inside" and an "outside" by spatially segregating or containing those who are deemed a threat to its collective identity. In so doing, the body politic "justifies and naturalizes itself with reference to some form of hierarchical organization modelled on the (presumed and projected) structure of the body ... the statist representation of the body politic presumes an organized cohesive, integrated body, regulated by reason, as its ideal model" (Grosz 107).

If we agree with Elizabeth Grosz that bodies are "surfaces of inscription" (33), then the ways in which Native, female, and Jewish bodies are represented and symbolically situated in the novels of Cohen, Majzels, and Robin reveals that such bodies have historically been perceived as a threat to a collective body modelled on Enlightenment and Modernist rationality. "As pliable flesh, the body is the unspecified raw material of social inscription that produced subjects as *subjects of a particular kind* ... the body becomes a text, a system of signs to be deciphered, read, and read into" (Grosz 32-4).

The nation in these novels is thus figured at various moments as a collective body under siege, as a violated female body, and as an impure body restored to order through ritual sacrifice and religious conversion. The many images of bodily boundaries being transgressed – of flesh cut away, or of saintly bodies and corrupt cadavers inhabiting the underbelly of the city – provide testimony to Canada's "disavowed" history of spatial exclusion. Whether it be ghosts inhabiting urban spaces, vagrant bodies traversing a barren landscape of exhausted meta-narratives, or historical figures emerging from the unconscious strata of the city, these bodies re-emerge in contemporary Montréal as the "residues" (Kristeva) of colonial / nationalist cleansing, the "Top Ten removed so abruptly from history" (Cohen 117).[24] They are the abject matter which can never be fully

excised, the "stubborn chunks" (Bhabha 219) which refuse to be assimilated into the *sameness* of the body politic.

(Post) Colonial Bodies

If the European settler has been understood as the embodiment of the universal subject, then the indigene remains "immobile against the repeated onslaught of the settler" (Mohanram 15). The history of colonialism is one of exclusion of Native others, and their erasure from its spatial imaginary constitutes a "disavowal of conquest, slavery, and the exploitation of the labour of people of colour ... a quintessential feature of white settler mythologies" (Razack 2). This collective disavowal not only traps "aboriginal people in the pre-modern" (2) but produces abject Native bodies while simultaneously assuring the primacy of European settlers as "the bearers of civilization" (2).

How then, is the body of the indigene physically and symbolically evacuated from the scene of colonization, a site which henceforth comes to be equated with an emerging settler identity? According to Razack, European claims on aboriginal space are codified into law through a dual rhetorical move; the legal doctrine of *terra nullis* in which lands are understood to be emptied of civilization on condition that "its pre-colonial inhabitants were not Christian, not agricultural, not commercial, not 'sufficiently evolved' or simply *in the way"* (3). The second move in the

construction of settler spatial mythology involves imagining an empty land developed by "hardy and enterprising European settlers" (3), "white men of grit, a robust Northern race pitting themselves against the harshness of climate" (3). Native populations are seen as a threat to this colonial spatial order, constructed as either a "racial shadow" lingering on its peripheries or "part of the natural environment, to be cleared from the landscape – urban and rural – like debris" (Goldberg 186).

Through this combined rhetorical move, the history of Canadian settlement disavows the violent colonization necessary to the expansion and mastery over lands previously occupied by Natives. Aboriginals are displaced from ancestral lands and are seen to belong to the "savage" space outside the walls of the garrison, the boundary which "contains" and protects European civilization from a hostile external environment. Attempts at "civilizing" Native populations or converting them to Christianity may also be seen as ways of symbolically incorporating, and therefore assimilating, the dangerous otherness of the indigene.

At the moment of colonization, the body of the savage other is attacked, defiled, tortured, extinguished – excised from the collective colonial body. Colonial encounters with the "savage body" thus construct the indigene as both threat to colonial authority and a proof of his / her inferiority to the civilized body: "the superficial differences of the body (skin colour, eye shape, hair texture, body shape, language, dialect or accent)

are read as indelible signs of the 'natural' inferiority of their possessors" (Ashcroft, et al. "Introduction" 321). In *City of Forgetting*, for instance, the Native body of the "cruel Iroquois" is equated with savagery and bloodlust: "Tides of flaming savages coming in red waves, faces smeared in their own black excrement, sex organs swollen with bloodlust" (Majzels 40).

In *Beautiful Losers*, Canadian colonial space is represented as an extension of the body of the king. Just as the gaze holds subjects within the power of the perceiver, the finger of the French King becomes the bodily extension of colonial power, transforming, with his Midas touch, the "savage" lands into colonial space while mapping the subjectivities of its indigenous inhabitants within his domain: "The news travels down the icy banks of the Mohawk: the King of France has touched the map with his white finger. The Intendant Talon, the Governor M. de Courcelle, and Tracy, they gaze over the infested wilderness" (83). Through this bodily gesture of appropriation (and many others, such as prayer or the planting of the crucifix atop Mount Royal), landscape is transformed from an empty *terra nullis* into a European colony attesting to the glory of the sovereign.

Spatial appropriation is attained through various technologies of surveyance / surveillance, but also through the power of language. The "voices spoken over maps, voices spoken into windows" and the "forts [that] rise along shore, Sorel, Chambly, Sainte-Thérèse, Saint Jean, Sainte-Anne" (83) interpellate Native subjects while erasing their own

histories and collective memories. "Of all the laws which bind us to the past," the narrator suggests, "the names of things are the most severe" (43). The Jesuit black robes colonize and convert the Natives through their speech acts, and it is through the infiltration of religious discourse into the collective body of the Mohawk nation that the land and its people are colonized:

> Take your fingers out of your ears, said le P. Jean Pierron, first permanent missionary at Kahnawaké. You won't be able to hear me if you keep your fingers in your ears.
>
> — Ha, ha, chuckled the ancient members of the village, who were too old to learn new tricks. You can lead us to water but you can't make us drink. (86)

Realizing that the Native elders resist any attempts at converting them, the missionaries show them the "bright mandala of the torments of hell" (86) in which "all the damned had been portrayed as Mohawk Indians" (86). After the moment of conversion, "a wall of silence was thrown up between the forest and the hearth, and the old people gathered at the priest's hem shivered with a new kind of loneliness" (87). Natives are literally silenced by colonial discourse, their bodies rendered docile through the language of conversion and through images of suffering, damnation and bodily dissolution.

Constructed as a threat within the symbolic system of colonization and nation-building, the "savage body" of the indigene remains invisible and unrepresented within the contemporary urban space of Montréal. It resurfaces only as a trace, as a dis-embodied voice or ghost from its past. This is seen in *Beautiful Losers*, for instance, when F. and the narrator walk "arm in arm" through the narrow streets of the old city. Looking out over the river, they "watched great liners shrink as they hooted down the widening St. Lawrence, shrinking into birch-bark canoes, then into whitecaps, then into the mauve hazy of distant hills" (124). If the ghosts of dead Chinamen which inhabit present-day Vancouver attest to the erasure of the Oriental body in Canadian space, here the birch-bark canoes come to symbolize the Native bodies which have been effaced from contemporary Montréal.

Majzels' *City of Forgetting* also presents Montréal as a space inhabited by the suppressed voices of the Iroquois. They whisper in de Maisonneuve's ear as he re-founds the city in the name of his French king. The porpoises which are seen surfacing on the St. Lawrence river are shaped like "white apostrophes on a gray page" (57), the barely-visible "the names of the drowned" (57) that represent Native warriors outside the city walls.

Paul de Chomedey, sieur de Maisonneuve, represents the religious fervour in which the city was found. He maintains a foothold at the site of the present day Pointe à Callière museum, a richly layered symbolic space

which has effaced the Native city of Hochelaga and reproduced it for tourist consumption. It is in the forgotten, historical belly of the city that its founder takes refuge, clinging to the historical remnants of Montréal like an unexpiated ghost from its past: "'Faith,' he reminds the monstrous city behind him. 'Faith is our only weapon'" (22).

His religious zeal, instrumental in the founding of the city, is centred on the project of colonizing a "savage" space and converting its Natives to Christian doctrine. Moving toward the geographical epicentre of the city, de Maisonneuve attempts to re-enact the founding of Montréal by planting a crucifix atop Mount-Royal, only this time it is through a modern jungle of honking cars, rushing shoppers, busy pedestrians, and urban debris. He becomes overwhelmed by the masses of indifferent shoppers and office workers who seem oblivious to the spectacle unfolding before them, and is haunted by the voices of the Iroquois who pursued him when the city was but a settlement: "A whispering prayer, almost inaudible, but somehow drowning out his prayers to the Virgin. *Kontírio, Osti'tén:'a, Ohonte'hshon:'a"* (74). The Native voices remain embedded as a silent trace in the urban landscape, a language that has been effaced from the gleaming towers and facades of the city's capitalist towers.

The Berri subway station is described as "a great steel cruciform" that lies beneath the city, "as though a stake had been thrust straight through the hard paved surface of the street and deep into Montréal's soft

clay heart" (29). The religious past as colonizing gesture is marked upon the physical form of the city, be it in the image of the cross atop the mountain that watches over the city, or the crucifix form of Place Ville-Marie, symbol of Québec's entrance into modernity. Religious discourse manifests itself materially on the city, governing its architecture, its spatial logic, and its intricate symbolic language.

Because the body of the sovereign re-enacts colonial authority within the body politic, F., the Québécois nationalist, decides that the statue of Queen Victoria must be destroyed, for, as he emphatically states to his disciple, "we cannot make the same mistake that the Indians made" (143). Thus, while the savage body of the Native is exterminated, the absent body of the Queen is protected by the strong arm of the law, "police cordons, riot tanks" (143). F's "rotten prick" (161), the phallic signifier equated throughout the novel with the penetrating gesture of spatial appropriation and colonization, signals the failure of his nationalist revolution. His thumb, metonym of Québec's separatist movement, is blown up in the bombing of the statue of the Queen, and lands "rotting in some downtown Montréal roof":

> But with my thumb went the metal body of the statue of the Queen of England on Sherbrooke Street, or as I prefer, rue Sherbrooke. BOOM! WHOOSH! All the parts of that hollow stately body which had sat for so long like a boulder in the

> pure stream of our blood and destiny – SPLATTER! – plus the thumb of one patriot ... There is a hole on Rue Sherbrooke. Once upon a time it was plugged with the rump of a foreign queen. A seed of pure blood was planted in that hole, and then from there shall spring a mighty harvest. (196)

This image of "harvest" echoes the earlier one in which the first Jesuit missionaries planted a mustard seed that "shall rise and grow till its branches overshadow the earth" (133).

One night, F. and the narrator drive to Ottawa, political centre of the country, where F. is to make his first speech before Parliament. The headlights of their car "flowed over the white posts like a perfect liquid eraser, and behind us we abandoned a blank blueprint of vanished roads and fields" (96). As they speed down the highway, they are symbolically erasing the space behind them, with the intention of re-inventing that space through Québec independence. The Canadian landscape becomes a blur, a "missing landscape" (97) as a "tangle of maps" (97) spills out of the glove compartment when the narrator seeks out the lubricant with which he will masturbate F. But the landscape into which F. drives is a ruse, an image painted onto a fabric screen which F. had set up in order to "test" his disciple:

> Two men in a hurtling steel shell aimed at Ottawa, blinded by a mechanical mounting ecstasy, the old Indian land sunk in soot behind us, two swelling pricks pointing at eternity, two naked capsules filled with lonely tear gas to stop the riot in our brains, two fierce cocks separate as the gargoyles on different corners of a tower, two sacrificial lollipops (orange in the map light) offered to the ruptured highway. (98)

This symbolically complex scene intertwines the connections between the gendered body, space, and the mechanics of colonization. The two men speed toward the political centre of the nation in their "steel shell aimed at Ottawa," representing the desire for de-colonization of the Québec nation. But it is an "Indian land sunk in soot" that they leave behind, pointing to the dis-enfranchisement of the Natives that they (as representatives of European colonization) must account for. Furthermore, Cohen equates the appropriation of land with sexual desire and bloodlust, the "two sacrificial lollipops" being the phallic signifiers that inseminate a fecund natural territory. But it is these same phallic signifiers that hunt down and rape Edith. As we shall see in the following section, the "difficult" contact between male and female bodies in these novels comes to symbolize the bloodlust of colonization and the spatial containment of women in urban spaces.

Gendered Urban Corps(es)

While the built environment has traditionally been equated with the symbols of masculinity, rationalism, and the rule of law, nature has been constructed as "female ground" – virgin territory to be plundered, appropriated, and controlled. Derek Gregory points out that,

> It is a commonplace of feminist history that "Nature" has been coded as feminine within the Western intellectual tradition; and if concepts of space can be derived from concepts of nature ... then it is scarcely surprising that socially produced space – should have been coded in the same way: a space to be mastered, domesticated and gendered. This is particularly intrusive in the sexualization of colonial landscapes, where two master tropes are characteristically deployed: on the one hand, a rich and fecund virgin land is supposedly available for fertilization; on the other hand, a libidinous and wild land has to be forcefully tamed and domesticated. (129)

Within this paradigm, the female body becomes troubling to the male gaze, for it is both a source of desire and a contention to his spatial authority. The female body is thus constructed as the obverse of the male; where the male body is whole, complete, bounded, inviolable, rational, the

female body is presented as fundamentally lacking, undisciplined, as "leaking" outside its own bounds:

> Men take on the roles of neutral knowers only because they have evacuated their own specific forms of corporeality and repressed all its traces from the knowledges they produce. In appropriating the realm of mind for themselves, men have nonetheless required a support and cover for their now-disavowed physicality. Women thus function as *the* body for men – correlative with the effacement of the sexual concreteness of their (womanly) bodies. If women are represented as the bodily counterparts to men's conceptual supremacy, women's bodies, pleasures, and desires are reduced to versions or variants of men's bodies and desires. Women are thus conceptualized as castrated, lacking, and incomplete, as if these were inherently qualities (or absences) of their (natural) bodies rather than a function of men's self-representations. (38)

Both Cohen and Majzels represent Montréal as a "City of Women" in which women are either venerated salvific figures or abject victims who are hunted down, raped, and tortured. The female body thus becomes an important element in the symbolic currency of Montréal's spatial imaginary. In Cohen's novel, for instance, the female body is figured not only as the

natural world awaiting a male plunderer, but as a threat to civil society. During a meeting of Jesuits the body of Catherine transgresses its own boundaries, contaminating, in the process, the program of appropriation of "savage" souls. Immediately after her baptism Catherine is invited to a religious feast in which the governor, the intendant, and several converts to Christianity are present. Listening to conversations about the scientific advancement of the "civilized" world of Europe, Catherine is transformed into the noble savage: "with a bowed head, she received the compliments which the quillwork on her deerskin gown evoked" (103). To her horror, she knocks over a glass of wine, which makes a prominent stain on the lavish banquet table which grows and spreads over the whole of the scene:

> A total chromatic metamorphosis took place in a matter of minutes. Wails and oaths resounded through the purple hall as faces, clothes, tapestries, and furniture displayed the same deep shade. Beyond the high windows there were islands of snow glinting in the moonlight. The entire company, servants and masters, had directed its gaze outside, as if to find beyond the contaminated hall some reassurance of a multicolored universe. Before their eyes these drifts of spring snow darkened into shades of spilled wine, and the moon itself absorbed the imperial hue. Catherine stood up slowly.

– I guess I owe you all an apology. (104)

Catherine's saintly body and language go beyond the priest's comprehension, and in her self-immolation and sexual liberty she accesses a form of bodily power which remains mysterious to them. She "stains" the place she inhabits with her femininity in an apocalyptic vision of female contamination cum salvation that reverses the history of genocide and conversion of Native communities. The scene also invokes and reverses the earlier image of the King whose finger transforms a savage landscape into a colonial settlement.

The unnamed narrator imagines Catherine as a contemporary body on the streets of present-day Montréal, a body that signals the "ambivalence of residues" (Kristeva 134) in its refusal to decompose. Originally a taboo centering on cleanliness and the consumption of food, remainders have entered into the symbolic order as "residues of something but especially of someone," polluting because of their association with "incompleteness":

> The remainder appears to be coextensive with the entire architecture of non-totalizing thought. In its view there is nothing that is everything; nothing is exhaustive, there is a residue in every system – in cosmogony, food ritual, and even sacrifice, which deposits, through ashes for instance, ambivalent remains. A challenge to our mono-theistic and

> mono-logical universes, such a mode of thinking apparently needs the ambivalence of remainder if it is not to become enclosed within *One* single-level symbolics. (Kristeva 76)

If Catherine's body as "remainder" poses a threat to the male body / space of the colonizers and Jesuit priests, it is also "necessary" in defining the proper and the improper and in constructing the binaries through which spatial and gender hierarchies are maintained. As symbol of transcendence and salvation from bodily corruption, the Saintly body is ironically represented through the most trivial of trinkets, "a plastic reproduction of your little body on the dashboard of every Montréal taxi" (5). In the religious discourse of the Jesuit missionaries, the body of the "savage" Iroquois is transformed into "une Vierge iroquoise – près des roses du martyre le lis de la virginité" (5). But even in a death deemed saintly, the body of Catherine, the Native other, will be excluded from the sacred grounds of the Church fathers in order to "avoid this singularity" (226).

While Edith is equated with Catherine and hence is the pre-colonial body "penetrated" by colonial incursion into the continent, she is now "owned indirectly by U.S. interests" (63). The "long letter from F." reveals that she was "was having trouble with her body" for "it kept changing sizes" (175). This links Edith's incongruous body to the "body troubles" (Sennett) of the nation, its difficulty in defining its own cultural and political borders.

Run down into the forest, she is attacked and raped by four men, representative of the "collective will" to tame both the land and its "errant" Native / female bodies. Unable to see the Native body as an integral part of the space which they have usurped, the men must de-humanize it, render it abject, and hence, exploitable: "They could no longer bear to learn that Edith was no longer Other, that she was, indeed, sister. Natural law they felt, but Collective Law they obeyed" (65).

If Edith represents the collective body before colonization, then F. comes to symbolize the phallic desire to colonize spaces and the bodies situated upon them. His revolutionary zeal at a political demonstration for Québec independence symbolically transforms itself into sexual assault upon her. This scene of phallocentric appropriation of bodies and spaces (among many others) are countered by the unbridled sexuality depicted in the "Telephone Dance" and in the final orgiastic scene with the "DV." Here, the "pan-orgasmic body," is not defined by male / female, inside / outside binaries but by a series of de-centred surfaces and folds, a "dance" in which the female is not penetrated other but active participant.

If the body has traditionally been seen as a unitary structure whose parts are interrelated and hierarchized, a bounded territory often compared to the nation, Cohen's depiction of an open, de-centred body not animated by rationality or by the centrality of the phallic signifier recalls the "body without organs" theorized by Deleuze and Guattari. Here the body is an

open, fluid, deterritorialized collection of unbounded parts, a loose conjunction of desiring machines. The bounded body, on the other hand, reflects capitalist urges of accumulation which prevents the spilling of excess property outside the self's domain.

The female body is a fluid one. Mary Voolnod and Catherine are presented as amorphous matter that invades male spaces of the city, symbolized by the "mucous eyes" of Catherine (220) and the St. Lawrence river, so central to Montréal's spatial imaginary. Catherine's diseased body "turns white" in the process of transformation necessary to all defilement and restoration of order, while river is equated with the feminine, a body that "leaks" into the city (40-41) or otherwise "washes away" the sins of the fathers.

In *City of Forgetting*, women also have "no place" in the city, for their womanly bodies are seen as a form of "excess" which threatens LeCorbusier's rationalized urban order. "Unruly" women in the city are untenable, disturbing, and must be controlled by religious, political and gender discourses which attempt to "put them in their place." But as a cross-dressing lesbian *flâneuse,* Suzy Creamcheez's echolalia turns these ideologies on their heads. She therefore functions as "a borderline case, an example of roving signifier, a transient wild-card of potential, indeterminate sexuality, trapped in transliteration, caught in desire" (Munt 117). In her decidedly aggressive re-appropriation of those urban spaces

which have traditionally been denied to women, Suzy's queer form of urban *flânerie* is a "rereading / rewriting that transports the female subject to a different space, to a world parallel to and critical of contemporary sociality" (Godard). Suzy Creamcheez's incongruities are suggested not only by her ambiguous physical display and speech acts, but by the manner in which she straddles gender and sexual identities:

> This is Suzy Creamcheez. Difficult to tell her age because she conforms to none of the ready-made female models. Young, yes, a great deal younger than Clytæmnestra, whom she has followed here. But not a girl. Hasn't been a girl for some time now. Torn jungle-green shorts over black tights, standard worn-down black-and-white hightops, and sleeveless greyish T-shirt under a paisley waistcoat straight from Sally Ann, bare arms and shoulders, muscular and tanned and thickened by the sting of mosquitoes and the slash of underbrush. You'd expect the shaved head and the three rings dangling from her pierced nose to complete the tough look she's obviously going for; instead, they evoke a kind of fragility. (11)

As opposed to the nineteenth century Parisian dandy whose "ostentatious inaction offers evidence of superior social status" (Ferguson 26), Suzy's form of homeless *flânerie* reveals the necessities of adaptation and

resourcefulness in contemporary urban survival. This means that not only must she resort to scavenging among garbage (25), stealing wallets along subway platforms (29), and killing squirrels for food (109), she must also contend with the various forms of male "logorrhea" that attempt to control women's voices, bodies, and mobility in the city. She is in this sense more urban warrior than idle stroller, answering to male aggression in kind:

> She lunges, not thinking about the knife tucked in her boot, kicking instead for the balls ... It's the screaming that puts him off more than the pummelling. Freezes him, freezes everyone in the street – the whores, the pimp, the passing students, Rudy. All frozen. By the immensity of her rage. (86)

While the free movement of women in the city may suggest their sexual availability to the male gaze, an object to be "'consumed' and 'enjoyed' along with the rest of the sights that the city affords" (Ferguson 28), it may also signal a transgression of gender-specific spatial practices and the patriarchal and heteronormative orders which subtend them. Suzy's presence on the street of Old Montréal elicits anxiety in LeCorbusier, who sees in her gender and outward street punk appearance a threat to his utopian urban vision which relegates to each body and space a utilitarian function: "some sort of punker horning in on his

territory ... my God ... it's a woman. His rising panic evaporates and is replaced by a kind of outrage. Who does she think she is?" (25).

LeCorbusier cannot put an end to the "disorganization" of the city (its poor, its vagrants, its chaos) because Suzy has stolen his prized "Modular," which represents the "masculine" aesthetic of architectural rigidity and the straight line. This is opposed to the "non-linear" way in which women move in the city, since they "get there any way they can" (98). This alludes to the dangers women face in urban spaces, but also to the larger circuitous paths they have had to take throughout history. But Suzy refuses to tread lightly, instead walking the city "slowly and with an exaggerated air of nonchalance ... stretching her arms like some morning jogger casually surveying the city" (11). Stationed atop Mount Royal, she wages war on the power-centres of the city, "spray(ing) the scene with the simulated rat-tat-tat of a machine gun and the whistle and crash of rockets" (11).

Suzy's transitory, strategic appropriation of the city as a homeless transient is contrasted to the institutionalization of spaces occupied by the office towers of the "financial and industrial conglomerates" (59) – Place d'Armes with its statues of the European founders of the city, or the Basilique Notre Dame and its gallery of apostles "radiating all the power of Christ's love down upon his city" (74). These sites interpellate urban bodies, implicating them as either docile or errant subjects in their

ideological frames. The built environment, consequently, becomes a form of control which "assumes symbolic importance, reinforcing a desire for order and conformity ... in this way, space is implicated in the construction of deviancy" (Sibley 86).

Suzy's homeless *flânerie* is seen as an unacceptable form of vagrancy; she refuses to be caught by the male scopic regime which attempts to render the female body immobile, invisible, and therefore, unthreatening and does not participate in the capitalist modes of production and consumption symbolized by the towers of the business district and the "bovine stares" (13) of its office workers. The "recycling" of urban refuse, garbage, and debris renders the homeless residual, abject, and marginal. Consequently, their vagrancy is equated with crime, disease, political unrest, and the unruly frenzy of the crowd. The ensuing urban panic can only be assuaged by policing those forms of public display and interaction which unsettle the hegemonic order, such as women holding hands in the city (147), male public cruising atop Mount Royal (132) or the funeral procession for Rudy Valentino which turns into a swarming crowd of political demonstrators (149).

At the end of Majzels' novel, a cataclysmic earthquake and street riots shatter the city. Suzy Creamcheez takes refuge in the remains of a library in the hope of escaping the riot police. She enters the abandoned building littered with books, plaster, and dust:

> The random collapse of walls and shelves has transformed the already arcane system of the library into an unreadable maze. Still, she feels safe here. The stillness among the toppled corridors of old books ... the musty smell, the smell of time ... What is she looking for? A clue? Something to fill the gaps in her memory? ... For the first time since she entered the building, it occurs to her that these are actual books around her and she might look more closely at them. (158).

The novel closes on this scene of ruination. The systems of knowledge represented by the library have become an "unreadable maze," that suggest the broken meta-narratives of modernity. Suzy Creamcheez, the figure who most personifies marginality and who delegitimates Le Corbusier's totalizing discourse, becomes the lone inheritor of the cultural ruins of modernism.

Monstrous Ghetto: The Jewish Body in the City

Perhaps more than any other "body type" throughout history, the Jewish body has been constructed as the abject. Irreconcilably other in its vestments, outward appearance, and discreet movements in the city, the Jewish body is both desired for that which it does not reveal and reviled for its obstinate refusal to assimilate. Richard Sennett points out that its

presence within the body politic of Renaissance Europe was seen as a defiling threat to the Christian order, and hence, deserving of spatial segregation and exclusion:

> when the Renaissance Venetians spoke of the dignity of "the body" in the city, they meant Christian bodies only, an exclusion which made it logical to shut away the half-human bodies of Jews ... the body politic practices power, and creates urban form, by speaking that generic language of the body, a language which represses by exclusion. (24)

The creation of the first "ghetto" and its concomitant de-humanizing representation of Jews as physically and morally corrupt spreaders of disease emerged in response to the decline of Venetian influence in trade and commerce with other parts of the world. The original Jewish ghetto literally "contained" the threatening "otherness" of its inhabitants, for while Jews in medieval Venice were permitted to move freely in the city during the day, after nightfall these freedoms were curtailed: "By dusk the Jew was obliged to return to the cramped Ghetto; at nightfall its gates were locked, the shutters of its houses that looked outward closed; police patrolled the exterior" (215).

The fact that Jews were not entirely segregated from the Christian population served the commercial interests of the city; while Jewish businessmen and money-lenders were permitted to operate during the

day, at night their "opportunistic" nature was feared and reviled and consequently, they were denied the spatial freedoms the rest of the population took for granted. As Sibley points out, "the segregated space of the Ghetto represented a compromise between the economic need of Jews and these aversions to them, between practical necessity and physical fear" (216). The "secretiveness" of the Semitic body in public space, a consequence of its physical exclusion from the city centre, becomes associated with Jewish identity itself. Site of abjection and veiled secrecy, the Jewish body is constructed in Venetian public discourse as the ultimate threat to civility:

> The fear of touching Jews represents the frontier of that conception of a common body; beyond the frontier lay a threat – a threat redoubled because the impurity of the alien body was associated with sensuality, with the lure of the Oriental, a body cut free from Christian constraints. The touch of the Jew defiles, yet seduces. (216)

By physically segregating the "transgressive" and "polluting" Jew, which was falsely blamed for the city's economic decline, "the city fathers hoped peace and dignity would return to their city" (216). Segregation "increased the Jew's daily otherness" (217) and their bodies appeared "to harbour a myriad of diseases due to their religious practices" (223). The Jew is thus

considered an abject body, a defiling human vermin that spoils the more privileged spaces of the city by its mere presence.

The Jew is not only constructed as polluting, but as residual, as having no "place" of his or her own. To varying degrees, Cohen, Majzels, and Robin show the ways in which the Jewish body (both individual and collective) is de-territorialized, victimized, and excluded from the collective body. In *Beautiful Losers,* Jewish victims of the holocaust have been literally transformed into residues – a horrific history of genocide which the unnamed narrator cannot *digest*. In his prayers to Catherine Tekakwitha, he implores her to save him from "history and constipation" (118); history here is literally the abject, that bodily excreta and defilement which cannot ever be fully (symbolically) expelled. Cohen's failed historian is "corrupt in stomach" (137), admitting "I do not want to write this history" (61); he cannot reconcile the writing of history with the millions of Jews who were murdered in the Nazi death-camps. The Jewish body is thus rendered inhuman and becomes nourishment for the Nazi machine: "Murder in the kitchen! Dachau farmyards! We are grooming beings to eat! Does God love the world? What monstrous system of nourishment! All of us animal tribes at eternal war! What have we won? Humans, the dietary Nazis! Death at the center of nourishment!" (42). This extreme form of exclusion renders the Jewish body residual and unrecognizable, like the "soap

collection" (Cohen 132) whose abjection lies in its uncanniness as both a banal signifier of life and its ob-scene quality as human residue.

Bodily residues come to be associated with the abject history of the holocaust, a collective wound which cannot fully heal. In a scene which the narrator dubs "homage to the lavatory" (106), F. has gathered a group of young friends in the school washroom in order to subject the narrator to yet another torturous ordeal. The occupant of each stall is described as a "squatting machine" (107), metaphorically linking them to the narrator's inability to digest history's injustices. As they trap the narrator and undertake a ritualized circumcision of his wart, F. declares that "to me a wart is a secret I don't want to keep. When I see a wart I think scalpel ... when I see wart I think Speedy Removal. I think Before and After" (110).

The wart represents the disavowed "secrets" of colonization and nationalism alluded to earlier in the novel; because the wart is part of the (collective) body but also alien to it, it disturbs the comfortable threshold constructed between the inside and the outside of the body, unsettles the boundary between self and other. F.'s brutal slicing away of the wart, its clean dissection, re-enacts the excision of those populations constructed as defiled: the genocide of Jews in the concentration camps of Nazi Germany, the extermination of Native tribes in colonization. "It is not lack of cleanliness or health that causes abjection," Kristeva declares, "but what

disturbs identity, system, order. What does not respect borders, positions, rules. The in-between, the ambiguous, the composite" (4).

* * *

It is significant that Régine Robin's urban wanderer in *La Québécoite,* like the narrator of *Beautiful Losers*, remains unnamed, suggesting not only the ambiguity of her cultural filiations – her ability to move across cultural boundaries – but that her identity has been effaced from history like the countless Jews who perished in the concentration camps of the Second World War: "Il n'y a pas de métaphore pour signifier Auschwitz, pas de genre, pas d'écriture" (141). The narrator's desire to connect her personal history with the larger one of the Jewish diaspora is an attempt to give herself a *proper* name while inhabiting the position of the *mineure*: "Écrire comme un chien qui fait son trou, un rat qui fait son terrier. Et, pour cela, trouver son propre point de sous-développement, son propre patois, son tiers monde à soi, son désert à soi" (Deleuze and Guattari *Kafka* 33).

La Québécoite traces the urban wanderings of a Jewish woman of Polish origin who migrates from Paris to Montréal as she attempts to come to terms with cultural alienation and deterritorialization. Each of the novel's three chapters corresponds to a different part of Montréal's urban topography, and each represents possible narrative trajectories and

identities that have yet to be negotiated. In the first section entitled "Snowdon," for instance, she imagines herself living with her aunt Mime Yente in this primarily immigrant, working-class neighbourhood: "Quartiers d'immigrants à l'anglais malhabile où subsiste encore l'accent d'Europe centrale, où l'on entend parler yiddish" (23). It is an urban landscape that is both alien and familiar, for while the Jewish shops and cafés she frequents provide "urban comfort" [25] by projecting traces of her cultural heritage, they are a simulation, a trace which remains elusive, ambiguous, and at times folklorized: "Ville schizophrène / patchwork linguistique / bouillie ethnique, plein de grumeaux / purée de cultures disloquées / folklorisées / figées / pizza / souvlaki / paella" (82). Her personal history and the larger one of the Jewish diaspora can only be reconstructed in fragments which "sediment" into simulacra of ethnicity.

In the second part of the novel, a walk through Outremont elicits the desire to integrate into the Québécois majority, the possibility of following yet another narrative trajectory: "Une autre vie, un autre quartier, d'autres réseaux sociaux, une nouvelle aventure, au sein de la bourgeoisie québécoise dans les hauts d'Outremont, dans une belle maison cette fois" (97). Finally, her deambulations "autour du marché Jean-Talon" see her integrating into the other immigrant cultures of Montréal, where she meets and marries a man from Latin America: "Autant la rendre aux ethniques, aux métèques avec lesquels elle est si bien" (173). Her "travellings

urbains" thus rejoin the personal and the collective, as the memories of the past and the urban desires of the present meld into a fragmented, peripatetic sense of self. As Sherry Simon writes, "l'histoire collective et publique, la mémoire individuelle et privée: ces répertoires de signes circulent selon des logiques parfois difficiles à cerner" (*Hybridité* 44).

Robin represents the urban landscape of Montréal as one marked by linguistic and cultural heterogeneity, a space that does not correspond to stable senses of national identity, linear history, or linguistic transparence. Manifestations of difference in the city, particularly in the figuration of the Jewish ghetto, attest to the ways in which spaces may have a variety of cultural codes and meanings that are conflictual or contradictory. As Michael Keith points out, "spatialities have always produced landscapes that are loaded with ethical, epistemological, and aestheticized meanings. Almost invariably these are contested" (26).

Robin's novel contests the expected meanings associated with particular sites in Montréal's urban topography by conflating the urban images and sensory experiences of Montréal, Paris, Budapest, and other cities into a spatial, cultural, and linguistic palimpsest. In this way, the temporal and topographic dissonance which structures the novel attests to Robin's aesthetic of exile and her struggle with Jewish history. While the architecture and spatial practices of the city reflect a desire on the part of the majority to monumentalize a particular version of Québec history, the

narrator's de-centred narrative resists their attempts at doing so. The city is thus characterized by indecipherability; its intersecting surfaces of signs, codes, and histories resist totalizing narratives.

By presenting a nameless *flâneuse* who traverses a number of linguistic, cultural, and ideological frames, Robin questions the essentialist assumptions which lie at the root of nationalist ideas of culture, with its myths of founding origins, its construction of linear history, its careful circumscription of cultural borders and identities. She seeks to find in the unfamiliar *moving* landscape of contemporary Montréal a point of anchor from the indeterminacies of history, a space of refuge from her own exile: "Québécité – québécitude – je suis autre. Je n'appartiens pas à ce Nous si fréquemment utilisé ici ... Ici ou ailleurs, je n'ai jamais été chez moi. Vous comprenez. Je n'ai pas vraiment de chez moi" (53-178).

The impure, the hybrid, the clandestine – all serve as antidotes to the exclusionary language of collective national identity, counter-discourses represented spatially through la *Québécoite's* circuitous movement in the city. Thus, if the Jew is "veritable vermine" (43) in that she represents a threat to the collective body (in the form of disease), such an abject body crosses the boundaries between the pure and the impure, since "l'errance est insituable" (79). If cultural contamination is a source of anxiety for the majority culture, it becomes a source of productive creativity for *la Québécoite*, a positioning which destabilises the more perverse

effects of "ce Nous si fréquement utilisé ici" (53), a discourse which, taken to its logical extreme, results in the pogroms and genocides seen throughout history. Her transitory appropriation of urban space, thus opposes "un pays, un drapeau, un hymne" to "Œcuménisme du pauvre, du poursuivi, de celui qui n'a pas le droit a la parole. En vrac. Éclaté" (66).

The Jewish body is interpellated in public spaces by the "graffiti antisémites sur les murs du métro" (89) as the narrator recollects a childhood in Paris during the Second World War where interdictions against the free circulation of Jews was posted all over the city: "INTERDIT AUX JUIFS et aux CHIENS" (22). In Weimar Germany, the city becomes a space of shadows, ghosts, and silence – a deadly enclosure for its trapped Jewish population: "Toits tordus, loggias vermoulus, impasses obscures, ruelles d'épouvante (47). The narrator's distrust of ghettos, both physical and cultural, emanates from her painful childhood memories of fear and persecution: "Tu ne sortiras pas du ghetto. Tout ramène à la dernière guerre. Au camp dans la neige avec mon numéro sur l'avant-bras gauche" (48). Indelibly marked upon the body, her Jewish otherness can never be effaced; she must therefore be vigilant, hide away that sign of abjection from the prying eyes of others:

> Depuis des siècles séparée d'elle-même, mise au ban, relaps, sorcière, hérétique, violée, fouettée, enfermée. Le ghetto aussi en elle-même pour se recroqueviller, se faire

> toute petite comme un chat, une boule, comme cette âme volant de monde en monde à la recherche de ses habits, de ses costumes, de ses masques. (67)

In her urban deambulations within Paris, the railway lines which criss-cross the city evoke both bodily mobility and entrapment, since the trains were used in the grim and efficient disposal of Jews: "après Grenelle – je ne sais plus la ligne se perd dans la mémoire / les juifs / doivent / prendre / le / dernier / wagon" (73). In the métro, she is interpellated by the gaze of anti-Semitism which constructs her body as polluting: "prendre le métro ta mère répétant comme en un rituel familier de te couper les ongles, de te laver les mains sinon on dirait dans les beaux quartiers que les Juifs sont sales" (28). Walking through the city, she is burdened with the terrible weight of the past and of those who perished in the death camps: "J'irais, de la cendre sur la tête, pour tout habit un sac, munie du livre de Job, j'irai pleurer le grand deuil du ghetto perdu" (81). Human ashes, metonym of the horrors of Nazi Germany, figuratively rain down upon the city.

Montréal is similarly presented as a city of death, "le squelette des mots morts suffoque / dans l'été visqueux / ville d'ombres!" (166). Its financial institutions dot the urban landscape "comme des mouches," feeding on the corpses of an exterminated community. Cemeteries become sites of pilgrimage, spaces of silence in which language becomes

useless: "Elle ne dit rien / Elle dit le rien" (31). If the cemetery is a sacred space that communicates collective memory, community, and history, for the narrator it comes to symbolize the "de-racinement" of the Jewish diaspora, a space of the monstrous and the grotesque: "Les multiples stèles des tombes sont comme les mille dents d'un monstre sous la violence du vent" (49).[26] Jewish collective memory is thus inhabited by the "absent" Jewish body and by the unexpiated ghosts of the Holocaust: "long panoramique sur les cadavres. Hordes d'orphelins sur les routes-désespoir spirituel des communautés juives" (43).

The narrator's fascination with the underbelly of the city – its back alleys, ethnic ghettos, and cemeteries – resonates with her antagonistic relationship with the state's power over the body. Her urban wanderings reflect her taxonomy of "history in pieces," her distrust of systems and the centralization of power. This translates spatially into her many attempts to manifest against centralizing forces at centralizing sites. The statue of Marianne, for instance, symbol of the French Republic, is the site at which she protests for workers' rights: "on montait sur la statue, la bonne Marianne au milieux de la place. On lui fixait la tête et le torse de grands drapeaux rouges" (97). The Bastille similarly becomes a site which symbolizes the power of the state, but also the ability of its populace to rise up against tyranny: "La Bastille les jours de quatorze juillet se métamorphosait. Il y avait partout des drapeaux tricolores, des lampions,

des buvettes ... Enfin venaient les orateurs. Tous rouges. Ils évoquaient 89, 93 et la Commune de Paris" (179). She juxtaposes these spaces with "Paris poulo, Paris pourri, Paris-poubelle, Paris-poivrot. Paris-putain" (58).

* * *

The need to hide away abject bodies, to relegate alien others to peripheral locations, is indicative of the "body-troubles" confronting societies intent on projecting the *sameness* of bodies across a diversified social space. The abject body thus lingers constantly at the threshold of the proper body, becoming a necessary part of the symbolic order in which the self is differentiated from the other through constant attempts to expel that which threatens it, whether it be its own bodily residues or a threatening stranger. "From its place of banishment," Kristeva affirms, "the abject does not cease challenging its master" (2).

In the following chapter, I will show how the traditional construction of the aboriginal body as a threat to Canadian colonial space carries over into the contemporary city. As we shall see in recent aboriginal theatre, the "urban Native" inhabits the peripheral space of the reservation and the city, victimized by the white spatial practices and discourses which dissect its (collective) body.

Chapter 3

Dis-embodied Voices: The Place of the Native in the Plays of Tompson Highway, George Ryga, and Daniel David Moses

Discussing the recent critical attention paid to First Nations playwrights, Alan Filewod has suggested that "Native Indians have long been the most severely oppressed of the minorities in Canada" (17). While the majority of theatrical productions in this country still "verify the white / patriarchal power structure of our society" (17), the plays of Tompson Highway, George Ryga, and Daniel David Moses invert the traditional (male) European gaze that has been placed upon aboriginal bodies while pointing an accusatory finger at a white society intent on effacing the indigene from its spatial imaginary.

The long history of social and economic exclusion of the Native in Canada practically assures that those Indians who attempt to escape the reserve find themselves utterly lost in the big city: drunkenness, homelessness, poverty, and white violence directed against them threaten their bodily dissolution. Consequently, their bodies are marked for exploitation, violence and ultimately, death. What emerges is the sense that the aboriginal does not "belong" in the Canadian metropolis, that white spaces have in fact become a threat to Native corporeality. Indeed, if the "savage" body was traditionally constructed as a threat to the colonial outpost and the settlement town, in these plays, it is white laws and white spaces which threaten aboriginal survival.

In this chapter, I will discuss the "place" which the urban Native occupies in Canada, arguing that the presence of aboriginal bones,

corpses and dis-embodied spirits in these plays constitute an exposition of "that which had hitherto remained comfortably invisible" (Boire 63), that is to say, the "dirty little secrets" of Canada's disavowed history of Native genocide, exploitation, and territorial exclusion.

The "Imaginary Indian" in Canadian Spatial Discourses

In *The Imaginary Indian: The Image of the Indian in Canadian Culture*, Daniel Francis undertakes a study of the ways in which the Indian has been created in white settler cultures, an image which he pointedly differentiates from "real" Native communities and individuals, since "the Indian began as a white man's mistake, and became a White man's fantasy" (5). The "imaginary Indian," Francis argues, tells us more about the process of European colonial incursion and expansion into the continent than it does about the historical veracity and cultural authenticity of the various aboriginal groups that were encountered in settlement. It is through the "prism of White hopes, fears and prejudices" (5) that Native populations "seem to have lost contact with reality and to have become 'Indians'; that is, anything non-Natives wanted them to be" (5).

Just as the negative, stereotypical images of Chinese immigrants served the specific purpose of providing a sense of collective identity and social predominance to the emerging middle class in Vancouver, here the imaginary Indian, whether bloodthirsty savage or "noble" innocent,

revealed the insecurities of an emerging colonial society intent on circumscribing its spatial borders and legitimating its social and economic predominance. Furthermore, by producing the image of the Native as inherently uncivilized, sub-human, and irrational, European colonists were able to not only distance themselves from such negative qualities – separate the "abject" qualities of the indigene from the "proper" ones of the civilized – but appropriate the lands that were occupied by them. "To dehumanize through claiming animal attributes for others," Sibley succinctly points out, "is one way of legitimating exploitation and exclusion from civilized society" (27).

While the image of the Native changed in relation to changing social, political, and military circumstances, it also reflected European views of the colonies. If the New World was seen as an Edenic paradise providing the bountiful resources of nature, Natives were pictured as "blessed innocents" (Francis 8) devoid of the corrupting forces of civilized society. Obversely, when the New World was seen as threatening natural landscape, the indigene was seen as a "frightful and bloodthirsty" (Francis 8) part of the natural world.

In the middle of the nineteenth century, the image of the "disappearing Indian" became prevalent among artists and intellectuals. North American Indian tribes were seen as being destined to die out due to the spread of disease, famine, violent conflict, and the belief that Native

customs and socio-economic organization were antithetical to an emerging colonial order:

> If any single belief dominated the thinking about Canadian aboriginals during the last half of the nineteenth century, it was they would not be around to see much of the twentieth... Natives were disappearing from the face of the earth, victims of disease, starvation, alcohol, and the remorseless ebb and flow of civilizations. (Francis 23)

The Indian was seen as a quaint historical artifact, representative of a romanticized colonial past. The artists, photographers, ethnographers, and poets who depicted these images of the archaic, costumed Indian believed that "they were saving an entire people from distinction ... preserving on canvas and later on film, a record of a dying culture before it expired forever" (Francis 23). The result of these Euro-centric views of the colonized bodies of Natives was that they were portrayed in the most stereotypical guises: in feathered headdress, buffalo skins, on horseback, or carrying traditional weapons. Following Said, Sibley argues that the stereotype is an "arrested, fixated form of representation which denies the play of difference" (18). If threatening others "disturb the observer's world-view," then stereotypes enable them to disavow that difference by removing them from the "scene" of encounter (18). In depicting Natives through such stereotypes, these artists rendered Native culture obsolete,

thereby eradicating any real threat the import of Native culture might have had on an emerging white settler society. Furthermore, Native adaptations to the influx of white culture, law, and society were elided in such representations and the result, Francis argues, "was often an idealized image of the Indian based on what the artist imagined aboriginal life to have been before contact" (24).

The Indian was thus preserved through the artistic production of whites who sought to record the very cultures which white society was excluding and eradicating. The lamentation for the "vanishing Indian" became one of the ways in which white society assuaged its own guilt in accelerating the demise of Native communities: "Having first of all destroyed many aspects of Native culture, White society now turned around and admired its own recreations of what it had destroyed ... by a curious leap of logic, non-Natives became the saviours of the vanishing Indian" (Francis 36).

The image of the "disappearing Indian" began to wane in the post World War I period in Canada, for it could no longer be substantiated by census reports or by the vigour with which Native activists fought for better conditions. Natives across the country organized for "improved education, secure hunting and fishing rights, [and] an end to land surrenders" (Francis 57) among other issues. Given such an environment, "it was hard to

characterize them as passive, doomed people when they were in the headlines and in the courts" (Francis 57).

Despite the widespread belief and acceptance of the image of the Indian within the dominant white cultures of Canada, Francis affirms that nothing was done to halt or reverse their inevitable decline. This is due to the fact that whites saw their own European heritage as inherently superior to the "savage" culture of Natives, which was viewed as antithetical to modernization, industrialization, and urbanization. The Indian therefore had to either be assimilated into the mainstream or disappear:

> The modern Indian is a contradiction in terms: Whites could not imagine such a thing. Any Indian was by definition a traditional Indian, a relic of the past. The only image of the Indian presented to non-Natives was therefore an historical one. The image could not be modernized. Indians were defined in relation to the past and in contradistinction to White society ... White society was allowed to change, to evolve, without losing its defining cultural, ethnic and racial characteristics, but Indian society was not. (Francis 59)

The Native is thus constructed as a generalized other, symbolically trapped in pre-modern spatial and temporal frames.[27] Because Natives were seen as a threat to white settler society, a variety of policing practices were imposed which curtailed traditional Native gatherings and

ceremonies. For instance, John A. MacDonald banned the potlatch, since it was thought that such Native festivities "encouraged barbarity, idleness and waste, interfered with more productive activities and generally discouraged acculturation" (Francis 99). Natives who participated in these ceremonies were arrested, for the "celebratory" Native body still suggested the threat of violence even in periods of relative peace: "Initially, missionaries and government officials feared the potential these ceremonies had for inciting warriors to acts of violence. In the excitement of the moment, it was argued, young men might decide to return to warlike days of old" (Francis 100).

Furthermore, these forms of corporeal display were seen as a threat to the established colonial order, for they ran counter to the logic of land settlement and the productive work ethnic central to European settler societies: "Dancing was supposed to promote indolence and immorality and was considered antithetical to the sedentary, agricultural life which the government was encouraging Natives to adopt" (Francis 100). While these forms of Native culture were overtly and covertly curtailed by the government and by various religious orders, later displays of the Indian appealed to a public that could watch the "savage" body up close without being directly threatened by it:

> Whites preferred their Indians in feathers and warpaint. The Performing Indian was a tame Indian, one who had lost the

> power to frighten anyone. Fairs and exhibitions represented a manipulation of nostalgia. They allowed non-Natives to admire aspects of aboriginal culture, safely located in the past, without confronting the problems of contemporary Native people. Frozen as they were in a historical stereotype, Performing Indians invoked a bygone era, they celebrated the triumph of White civilization. (Francis 102)

Another of the ways in which Native communities have been socially, economically, and spatially segregated in Canada is through the reservation system. These racially marked spaces suggest that Native bodies belong in this peripheral location, and any Natives outside these spaces – in Canadian cities, for instance – are, by definition, "out of place." Government representatives began pursuing a policy of "civilizing" Indians through the assimilation of Native populations into the larger white settler society. To this end, "reserves were created as places where Indians would be taught to behave like Whites" (Francis 200), while legislation codified these assimilationist policies through "a tangle of laws and regulations that would have the effect of erecting a prison of red tape around Canada's Native population" (Francis 200). The collective Native body is literally and figuratively imprisoned through legal doctrine and through the reservation system, which Francis qualifies as "an integral part of the civilizing process:"

> Reserves were initially intended as safe havens where Native people could live isolated from the baleful influence of their White neighbours. From the Native point of view, reserves secured a land base for their traditional lifeways. But in the nineteenth century, officials increasingly thought of reserves as social laboratories where Indians could be educated, christened, and prepared for assimilation. (203)

The Indian Act of 1876, "consolidated and strengthened the control the federal government exercised over its aboriginal citizens" (Francis 200), and its ultimate aim was "to assimilate Native people to the Canadian mainstream" (Francis 200), a solution which was seen by the Canadian government as being preferable to the "wholesale extermination" (Francis 200) attempted in the United States. The Indian Act not only defined who may or may not be considered Indian (through legal categories of status, non status, enfranchisement, etc.) but defined legal means by which the Native may strip himself or herself of status in order to "attain" full Canadian citizenship.

The Indian Act in effect constructed Natives as wards of the state and treated Native people "as minors incapable of looking after their own interests and in need of the protection of the state" (Francis 202). Despite commonly held beliefs in the "advantages" of being a status Indian (not paying taxes, for instance), the Indian Act had many drawbacks: "Indians

did not possess the rights and privileges of citizenship; they couldn't vote, they couldn't buy liquor, and they couldn't obtain land under the homestead system" (Francis 202).

The implementation of the reserve system also answered to white anxieties about the dangers which a mobile "savage" body represented for their emerging towns, villages, and cities. The mobility associated with traditional Native hunting was seen as dangerously at odds with European notions of settlement, homestead farming, and the appropriation and exploitation of land. The fact that the government attempted to limit Native mobility became part of a larger project of assimilating and spatially controlling "savage" others. As Francis points out, "farming would cause Natives to settle in one place and end the roving ways so typical of a hunting lifestyle and so detrimental to the sober, reliable routines on which White society prided itself" (203).

Reservations enable Native populations to be unproblematically evacuated to the boundaries of "proper" national spaces where they are no longer a threat. This form of spatial exclusion conveniently isolates Native communities from the economic centres which would see them elevated out of their dependance on the state, thereby leaving undisturbed the commonly-held image of the "disappearing Indian." Not only do Native reserves "evacuate" otherness to an abject space, they become a means of social control: "Planned settlements for Australian Aborigines, Native

Canadians and some European travelling people, for example, express the state's interest in separation and the correction of deviance" (Sibley 84). The "gathering" of Native otherness and their enclosure within reserves enabled, like the prison or the hospital analysed by Foucault, a panoptic gaze which both constitutes and controls the ab-normal or the threatening, relegating the errant body to the outer extremity of the "proper" collective body.

Government policies and the laws emerging from them encouraged widespread belief that Indians were "incapable of occupying any but the lowest place in society" (Francis 214), since common belief was that the Indian was "lazy, unstable, incapable of settling down to an orderly existence" (Francis 215). If Indians represented a threat to colonial survival at the beginning of European incursions into the continent, "appearing out of the forest to pillage and slaughter defenceless settlers" (Francis 222), that image was transformed, after centuries of conflict, colonization, religious conversion, and exclusionary laws, into an abject Native body occupying the fringes of Canadian society.

Incommensurable Spaces and the Aboriginal

Tompson Highway is arguably the most successful Native playwright in Canada. In *The Rez Sisters*, he lays bare the harsh realities of Canada's Native communities both on and off the reserve. With its

rampant social ills – unemployment, domestic violence, alcoholism, and substance abuse – the "Wasaychigan Hill Reserve" is representative of aboriginal realities on reserves across the country. In the play, a group of seven Native women pool their resources in order to make a trip to Toronto where the "BIGGEST BINGO IN THE WORLD" (27) will be held. The allure of the big city lies not only in the economic freedom which it represents, but in the possibility of escape from the drudgery of their lives on the reserve.

Philomena Moosetail, for instance, wishes to build "that toilet I'm dreaming about ... big and wide and very white" (5), while Annie Cook dreams of enjoying the nightlife of the city with her winnings: "take my money and go to every record store in Toronto ... go to all the taverns and all the nightclubs and listen to the live band while I drink beer quietly" (35). For Marie-Adele, who makes the trip in order to get treatment for her cancer, the Bingo winnings would enable her to buy "the most beautiful island in the world" (36) where she can retire and cook for her husband and fourteen children.

As the women feverishly raise money for the trip, we learn of the tragedies which have befallen them, including Zhaboonigan's condition of mental retardation, the death of her parents in a car crash, and her brutal rape by two white boys. Philomena Moosetail reveals that she was forced to give up her mixed-race child to adoption. We also learn of Emily

Dictionary's suffering at the hands of an abusive husband and the loss of her lover, Rosabella Baez, to suicide.

Dancing on the peripheries of each of these women's lives is Nanabush, the "agent of transformation" (Filewod 18) in the play and a trickster figure central to many First Nations' mythologies.[28] The trickster appears in various guises throughout the play: as a Seagull dancing in white feathers, as the Nighthawk dancing in black feathers, and finally, as the BingoMaster who is "dressed to kill: tails, rhinestones, and all" (100), a metaphysical white body which entraps and victimizes Natives with the destructive allure of the white city. While Nanabush is a shape-shifter, he also represents "a part of the Native soul which cannot be eradicated or appropriated by the colonizer" (Filewod 27), an "embodied memory," Perkins suggests, which "blurs the lines of presence and absence" (260).

When the women arrive in the city and suspect that the bingo contest is fixed, a riot ensues in which they attack the BingoMaster. Amidst the chaos, Nanabush visits Marie-Adele, who is in the terminal stages of her illness, and transports her to the spirit world. The bingo parlour is transformed into a funeral for Marie-Adele, who "finally hit the big jackpot" (105). Eventually, the women return to their lives on the reservation, as Nanabush dances on Pelajia's roof to the incessant beat of her hammer blows.

George Ryga's *The Ecstasy of Rita Joe* stages the "trial" of Rita Joe, a homeless urban Native who has been called forth before the Magistrate and charged with vagrancy and prostitution. Placed centrally on the stage and surrounded by various figures of authority (judge, police, Native elders) and by her white aggressors, Rita Joe is spatially contained by her incarceration, but is also symbolically constrained within the colonizing gaze of the state and of the white social environment which constructs her as abject. The prison cell in which Rita Joe's scandalous, mobile body is contained is a metonym of the reserve, that other form of imprisonment to which Native communities have been relegated. Just as the Magistrate expels the "offending" diseased, and sexually corrupt body of Rita Joe to the prison, the Indian Act imprisons aboriginal corporeality in the reservation.

Through a series of re-enactments, we learn of the hardships which Rita Joe faces on and off the reserve, including her poverty, homelessness, sexual exploitation and eventually, her brutal rape and murder at the hands of her three white aggressors. Jamie-Paul, her lover, suffers a similar fate, as he is beaten, stabbed, and literally cut apart when his body is thrown in front of an oncoming train.

In Daniel David Moses' "city plays," which include *Coyote City* (1988) and *City of Shadows* (1995), Indians are also socially and spatially excluded from the Canadian body politic, becoming dis-embodied ghosts

inhabiting white urban spaces. Alienated from traditional Native culture, Johnny, a down and out Indian, finds himself on the streets of Toronto where he becomes the victim of drunken violence. Lena, his delusional girlfriend who cannot accept the fact that her lover has been killed, purports receiving phone calls from him. She goes to the city in order to find Johnny's "missing" body, only to fall into the hands of Clarisse Chrisjohn, a Native prostitute who tricks her into working the streets for her.

City of Shadows sees the characters introduced in *Coyote City* becoming dis-embodied ghosts wandering aimlessly in an inverted urban landscape where "the dead retrace their paths with bare feet" (106). The characters' fragmented dialogue and desperate attempts to grasp at memory comes to represent the broken collective body of First Nations' communities and serve as Moses' warning of the perils faced by urban aboriginals in Canada.

Each of these plays situate Natives at the interstice of city and reservation, abject bodies caught between two incommensurable spatial models. Where the reserve is symbolized, in *The Rez Sisters*, by the organic circle of Native women, the "dirt roads" (7) of Wasaychigan Hill, and the erratic dancing movements of Nanabush, the city is represented by the paved "killer highways" which lead into the city and which ultimately prove fatal. It is this same straight line that is necessary to win the Bingo

grand prize upon which the play turns: "Twenty dollars, ladies and gentlemen, that's one line in any direction. That means, of course, ladies and gentlemen, the first person to form one line, just one straight line in any direction on their card, will be the very lucky winner" (101).

If the straight line represents a positivistic, rationalized discourse which seeks to impose the order of an urban grid upon the "untamed" natural world, for Natives, it symbolizes the difficulties of negotiating and *surviving* in white spaces: the Rez sisters get lost on the highway into Toronto, they get a flat tire, and they argue about where to sleep and whom they can and cannot safely talk to in the city. As Johnston suggests, "linear elements generally show characters becoming lost while circular elements signal regeneration" (255). This contrast between the straight line and more circuitous strategies of negotiating space (both physical and social) also resonates in Majzels' *City of Forgetting*, where Le Corbusier's linear, masculine, and imposing modernist aesthetic is contrasted to Suzy's strategic identity politics and her "fluid" spatial appropriation.

The Rez Sisters opens with Pelajia Patchnose pounding shingles into the roof of her modest home with her trusty hammer, wielding it as a symbol of female anger and political agency throughout the play. When Philomena joins her on the roof, Pelajia declares that she is sick of the reserve, since "everyone here's crazy. No jobs. Nothing to do but drink and screw each other's wives and husbands and forget about our Nanabush" (6).

The reserve is represented by Highway as a space in which nothing ever happens; idleness, unemployment, public drunkenness, and domestic violence are all too common on the "outskirts" of civilization, a peripheral location in which "the old stories, the old language ... Almost all gone" (5). Pelajia is tired of living in "plain, dusty, boring old Wasaychigan Hill ... Wasy ... waiting ... waiting" (2). The name of the reserve transforms into a lament of boredom which is only assuaged by the constant bickering, gossip, and rumour which lead to heated conflicts amongst the women.

If one of the purported aims of the Indian Act and its reservation system was to preserve and protect Native culture, language, and history, it in fact does the opposite. Lacking economic opportunities, the young residents of the Wasaychigan Hill reserve have fled to the city, for it is "the only place educated Indian boys can find a decent job these days" (7). It is also in the city that urban Natives becomes alienated from aboriginal history and culture.

While Pelajia is up on her roof repairing the shingles, she looks out over the horizon and sees "the chimneys, the tops of apple trees, the garbage heap behind Big Joey's dumpy little house ... If I had binoculars, I could see the superstack in Sudbury. And if I were Superwoman, I could see the CN tower in Toronto" (2). Pelajia's active *seeing* of civilization's "centre" from her position at its margins transforms the ostensibly banal communal project that the women undertake – that is, their "taking" of the

city" – into an attack on the discourses of a "white civilization" which has excluded them. Her gesture "unsettles the mimetic or narcissistic demands of colonial power" through the subversive strategy of "turn[ing] the gaze of the discriminated back upon the eye of power" (Bhabha 112).

The reservation is also equated with the Rez sisters' womanly bodies, particularly with their bodily excretions. Blood imagery not only points to anxieties about cultural boundaries and racial purity, but also stages the feminine body as a porous, violable surface that is "open" to phallic penetration and appropriation. When Philomena climbs up onto the roof to talk to Pelajia, she says that "this place is too much inside your blood. You can't get rid of it. And it can't get rid of you" (4). Philomena's rejoinder resonates with colonial and settler discourses which associate the aboriginal body with their "natural" environment; the assumption being made here is that Native Canadians "naturally" belong on the reservation and are "out of place" in the city.

In *The Ecstasy of Rita Joe*, Natives and whites also have spatial practices and discourses which are at odds with one another. Not only is the very notion of European individualism contrasted to Native communalism, but conceptions of private property and private space differ as well. Where the magistrate and the white society which he represents sees urban and rural spaces as utilitarian and fundamentally geared

toward economic exploitation and use-value, Natives see the spatial as an integral aspect of the identity of the community.

Urban spaces throw into relief the "genuinely fundamental differences of Native and non-Native conceptions of place, culture, and relationships of power" (Miller 46). For example, in a capitalistic urban logic in which each body occupies the space allotted to it by class and social function, vagrancy is marked as suspicious and criminal. For Rita Joe, idleness does not signal vagrancy but rest and recovery, for her "runaway subjectivity" [29] demands that she remain mobile in a hostile white urban environment if she is to survive: "What the hell kind of place is this won't let me go lie down on grass?" (50). She is also seen as being "out of place" by the Magistrate, and his invectives against her rejoins the commonly held view of the Native as being exterior to white urban society. The Magistrate's harsh judgement of Rita Joe suggests that modernity and urbanization are by definition antithetical to the aboriginal (collective) body, and that there is no such thing as a "modern" Native: "This is not the reservation, Rita Joe. This is another place, another time" (51).

Moses' *City of Shadows* also shows Natives "caught" between two incommensurable spatial paradigms, as the characters in the play have become dis-embodied ghosts situated in an inverted spirit world:

> The play is set on a street in a city in the land of shadows, the land just beyond this life, a street found by turning the

> wrong way down any alley in the old part of town. On that reserve between waking and dreams, where night is day and dark is light, the dead retrace their paths with bare feet. (106)

This "invisible" mapping reconstructs the city and disrupts the stability of white spatial predominance with an aboriginal palimpsest that lingers just beneath its modern-day surface; it is likened to a half-forgotten memory, a temporally distanced and disorienting conjunction of reservation space and city space that transgresses national and bodily boundaries. As in the novels of Lee, Choy, Majzels, and Cohen, the ghosts and spirits which inhabit white spaces come to represent the excised bodies removed "so abruptly from History" (*Beautiful Losers* 117), their corporeal destruction taken to its logical extreme of dis-embodiment.

While some of the ghosts in these plays represent the various mythological spirits (Nanabush, for instance) which intervene in human affairs, others come to represent the dis-enfranchisement of the Native in the face of a hostile white social order. Their "remains," figured as corpses, bones, and cemeteries, suggest that the Native body constitutes the "remainder" of colonization, that abjected other which can never be fully expelled. "The importance of the abject in the construction of difference and the fashioning of social space," Sibley points out, "is that other people and groups and the spaces they occupy are rendered abject through the

process of elision. They are presented as residues, they *become* residues" (120).

The "white" space of the city is one in which the aboriginal body is exploited and exposed to racial hatred, violence, and death. For Thomas, the Native priest in *Coyote City*, Toronto is "a place of great peril" (42), and when Lena approaches a man on the street for directions, he warns her that "you can't approach white people like that. We could get in trouble. They'll summon the police. They don't want to see Indians, Lena, they don't like us. They'll put us down into the gutter. They'll keep us in the darkness there" (43). While Thomas comes to represent European attempts to assimilate Native populations through religious conversion in his constant parroting of Christian doctrine, he correctly understands that whites see urban aboriginals in the most stereotypical light – as drunken vagrants lurking on street corners or in dark alleys. The Native urban body is "all too visible" in such a location, becoming an easy target for racist anger and violence wherein vigilante gangs attempt to "clean up" the city of its offending indigenes.

Johnny, for instance, feels lost and abandoned in the city, and his condition as "invisible" Indian makes him, quite literally, into a ghost: "Shit Lena, you know what it's like, this place? Nobody will talk to me. They look right through you, like you're invisible" (11). Susan Lobo writes, "To many outside the urban Indian community, it is an invisible population, both

because of the abstract and non-geographically clustered nature of the community and because of the existence of a series of stereotypes regarding Indian people" (93).

Johnny's "voice" reveals that "this city's the shits ... I can't take it, Lena. Shit I can't take it no more" (49). The equation of the materiality of the city and the abject excretions of the body suggests the Native's position in the urban environment's social and spatial hierarchy. It is in the abject space of the "Silver Dollar Saloon," an identifiably "Native bar" in downtown Toronto that Johnny succumbs to racist violence, as the penetration of his body by stabbing signals the evisceration of the Native collective body: "I started something at the Dollar. Some drunk used my own knife on me. The Swiss Army strikes again ... They keep on kicking at you, they're so drunk. Blood on their cowboy boots" (50). The blood being spilled on cowboy boots restages the colonial drama of European incursions into the continent, as the cowboys (settlers) literally kick the offending Native body outside the spaces they wish to appropriate.

Just as the Chinese community in Vancouver and the B.C. interior is inhabited by the ghosts of labourers who have been treated unfairly and left to die, Natives are represented as ghostly figures attempting to mediate the past wrongs they have suffered. Johnny is the sacrificial, abject drunken Indian, "bleeding his life onto the floor of the bar" (33), while Boo recalls the figure of Coyote, who sees urban Indians as zombies (40),

as the walking dead who have "lost" their Native ways. At the end of the play, Johnny, Lena, and Thomas become victims of the brutality of the city and its temptations, a space that "eats up" its Indians and spits them out as aimless dis-embodied spirits. Moses thus portrays Canadian urban space as dark and alienating – a Native spiritual purgatory. In *City of Shadows,* Jack, another urban Indian "ghost," feels like an outsider in the city:

> The dream always starts with me with my nose pressed tight against the window glass – It's like I'm a kid again – trying to see through glass – through my own fogged up breath – trying to recognize the streets the buildings, the main highways, anything – trying to tell where we are, what city, wanting it to be my home, still having to want it even though I grew up in the place. Wanting it cuz I've been gone so long I've forgotten – I've even forgotten what colour the shit is ... But I'll still be out of place, unrecognized, just another damned tourist, because they're speaking what I lost..what the fuckers took. (141-146)

He prefers to circulate in the city at night, for it poses less of a danger to him. Moses suggests a reversal of the "cleansing" of Native bodies which occurs in Canadian colonial expansion, as Jack attempts to configure an urban space devoid of those white bodies which pose a threat

to him. Like Austin Clarke's black immigrant *flâneurs*, the white space of the city is deemed a threat to their embodied identities; walking in the city, he literally becomes a "vanishing" Indian, and his absented body becomes a relic of the city's past which "don't cast no shadow" (152). Jack sees dead bodies just below the paved surface of the city's streets, inhabiting its historical strata like the unexpiated white guilt of Native genocide, exclusion, and extermination: "It's like the whole place, buildings, the sidewalk, are made up of bones, broken bones ... A bone china city, looking so pretty, – except for – fuck – the teeth of skulls grinning up at you from under your feet" (150). As in Régine Robin's *la Québécoite*, here the city becomes monstrous, a dark gaping maw which consumes the broken bodies of its victims.

The dis-embodied voices in *City of Shadows* are situated in an abject, gutter-space, and the rain which falls upon the city metaphorically cleanses the streets of its refuse: "The whole place just rises up over the horizon like ... like a flood of heaven I guess ... It washes away like the sin it is / this is the place, yes / washes down the gutter of the city in the rain ... the river's here, flowing under concrete / stronger than any heartbeat" (157-158). This image is similar to that in *Beautiful Losers* in which the St. Lawrence River not only enables the resurfacing of disavowed Native corpses, but washes away the crimes of colonization.

The Squaw and the Princess: Abjection and the Native Body

If "civilization" has been constructed as male in European colonial discourses and practices (particularly in its phallic gesture of territorial incursion and appropriation), then the "natural" world has been envisioned as feminine – as a fecund landscape ready to be plundered, tamed, and exploited. Where males are equated with the rational, noble calculations of mind, with the political agency that enables them to make their *mark* upon the world, women are equated with the irrational, with the "inert matter" of the body that is shaped by male industriousness. "By positioning women as the *body*," Grosz writes, men can "project themselves and their products as *dismembered*, pure, and uncontaminated" (42).

In *The Rez Sisters* and *The Ecstasy of Rita Joe,* not only are women's bodies "contaminated" by diseases (venereal disease, cancer), they contaminate white (male) spaces with their flowing red bodies. Furthermore, their penetration through sexual violence is both "a metaphor for cultural destruction" (Shackleton 48) of the aboriginal collective body and a shocking re-enactment of that traumatic scene of colonization which subsequently *fixes* them in their abjection. If the settler possesses a "proper" body upon which is indelibly inscribed the distinctive marks of European civilization, it is one that must be differentiated from the "improper" body of the indigene through a language of abjection,

corruption, and disease. Thus, to the image of a pure white femininity is opposed that of impure abject "squaw" :

> In all ways the squaw was the opposite of the princess, an anti-Pocahontas. Where the princess was beautiful, the squaw was ugly, even deformed. Where the princess was virtuous, the squaw was debased, immoral, a sexual convenience. Where the princess was proud, the squaw lived a squalid life of servile toil, mistreated by her men. Non-Native writers described Indian women hanging around the margins of White settlement, drinking and prostituting themselves. This stereotype of the Indian woman as a low, sexual commodity – a 'bit of brown' as the fur trade governor George Simpson put it – became increasingly common as Native people were pushed to the fringes of White settlement, neglected and powerless. (Francis 121)

The womanly bodies in *The Rez Sisters* are indeed associated with "a bit of brown": Philomena Moosetail is obsessed with purchasing the best toilet bowl that money can buy, Pelajia Patchnose complains that the dirt roads of "the Rez" are like "dirt all over your backside (7), and Nanabush defecates all over Marie-Adele's white picket fence (19). These constant references to bodily excreta metaphorically link the women to the abject spaces which they occupy and suggest their lowly position in the social

hierarchy. But that their bodies are open, leaking, and penetrable – the obverse of the inviolable, enclosed, penetrating male European body – suggests that Highway is chipping away at those gender and racial discourses which have constructed them as *other* within and outside of the Native community. As Rabillard suggests,

> the most powerful questioning of the colonizing bonds of sharply demarcated genders and cultures is effected in *The Rez Sisters* through the interplay of absorption and elimination. It is imagery that focuses the audience's attention inescapably upon the female body and, moreover, upon its most taboo aspects: its fluxes, flows, and unstable boundaries, the features that have seemed perhaps most fearful and foreign to a male-dominated culture and that, consequently, have been most firmly associated with feminine inferiority, vulnerability and even uncleanness. (11)

The squaw body is therefore constructed as a "racial shadow" (Goldberg 186) that lingers on the fringes of white civilization, threatening to white settler culture in that it represents the possibility of miscegenation, but also to Native communities in that its presence in public spaces challenges the male-dominated environment of the reservation. Associated with her abject social and economic destitution, she is equally considered

"out of place" in the settlement town and in the urban core. She must therefore be physically and figuratively "tamed" and expelled.[30]

The variety of broken female bodies that are put on display in *The Rez Sisters* implicates male perpetrators in the crimes committed against them. The sexual act constructs the female body as passive vessel for male desire when "white guys don't make you do things to them. You just lie there and they do it all for you" (87). Similarly, the "idiot child," Zhaboonigan, recalls being captured and subsequently assaulted by a group of white boys who cruise down the (paved) street in their car, hunting down indigenous others: [31]

> Boys. White Boys. Two. Ever nice white wings, you. I was walking down the road to the store. They ask me if I want ride in car. Oh, I was happy I said, "Yup." Took me far away. Ever nice ride. Dizzy. They took all my clothes off me. Put something up inside me here. *Pointing to her crotch, underneath her dress*. Many, many times. Remember. Don't fly away. Don't go. I saw you before. There, there. It was a. Screwdriver. They put the screwdriver inside me. Here. Remember. Ever lots of blood. The two white boys. Left me in the bush. Alone. It was cold. And then. Remember. Zhaboonigan. Everybody calls me Zhaboonigan. Why? It means needle. Zhaboonigan. Going-through-thing. (48)

Zhaboonigan's white attackers drive her to the outskirts of the city in order to rape and torture her. She is subsequently "left in the bush," seemingly, at least in the boys' view, where she belongs.[32] The reservation does not escape the threat of lingering violence and domestic abuse against Native women, as when Pelajia hears "what sounded like a baseball bat landing on somebody's back" (5), or when Emily escapes an abusive partner "the night he came at me with an axe and just about sank it into my spine" (51).

Rabillard suggests that women's bodies in Tompson's play are "open, vulnerable to penetration by the male in sometimes brutal sex acts; open to the breaking force of blows; defenceless against the proliferation of cancer cells overthrowing the body's internal boundaries and hierarchies" (7). Despite these scenes of bodily brutality, Highway reverses traditional gender hierarchies, for while the women are victimized by male desire and aggression, they also fight back. The Rez Sisters are fragile yet fiercely resilient, like Emily Dictionary, who is "one tough lady, wearing cowboy boots, tight blue jeans, a black leather jacket – all three items worn to the seams – and she sports one black eye" (37). This adjacency of strength and fragility is similar to that evoked by Suzy Creamcheez in Majzels' *City of Forgetting*. Also, Pelajia calls on her sisters to "start a revolution!" (15) in order to obtain more exciting bingos and better living conditions on the reserve, thereby challenging the male authority of the

band chief. Finally, several scenes throughout the play which feature women seated on their "thrones" dispensing wisdom and advice challenge traditional gender discourses. These include the "ghostly" Bingo Betty, "Queen of Tonga, big and huge like a roast beef" (16), and Philomena Moosetail, who sits on a toilet bowl that is shaped "like a sort of pedestal, so that it makes you feel [like] the Queen sitting on her royal throne, ruling her Queendom with a firm yet gentle hand" (117). Highway here inverts the hierarchy of the colonial body through excremental imagery, as the abject "squaw" performs both a mockery and a reversal of the Queen's authority over her subjects. As Kristeva points out, "excrement and its equivalents (decay, infection, disease, corpse, etc) stand for the danger to identity that comes from without: the ego threatened by the non-ego, society threatened by its outside" (71).

If the female body is a source of "corruption" in Highway's play (Marie-Adele's cancerous body, Gazelle Nantaway's sexual licentiousness, Philomena's obsession with toilet bowls and bodily excretion), it is also a body which "celebrates female flexibility and fluidity, the ability to take in the foreign body, the strange and the threatening" (Rabillard 7). Highway thus thwarts "the desire for purity, boundary, and definition that exercises the dominant culture in relation to the colonized Native North Americans" (Rabillard 4).

In Ryga's play, the Native body of Rita Joe is literally and figuratively imprisoned, as her incarceration symbolizes not only the limited spatial freedoms of women in public spaces, but the larger systemic imprisonment of Native communities across the country. The magistrate looks "threateningly" down at her from the top of his perch (40), suggesting the various forms of surveillance in the city which construct aboriginal bodies as deviant and criminal simply by virtue of being mobile. For Rita Joe, visibility in public spaces is dangerous; if her "squaw body" has been constructed as a sexual commodity for white males, it is ironically rendered criminal for answering to their desires: "the first time I tried to go home I was picked up by some men who gave me five dollars. An' then they arrested me" (17).

The magistrate makes clear that Rita Joe must efface her womanly body in public spaces, for if she draws attention to herself, she becomes an easy target:

> You can't walk around in old clothes and running shoes made of canvas ... You have to have some money in your pockets and an address where you live. You should fix your hair ... perhaps even change your name. And try to tame that accent that sounds like you have a mouthful of sawdust ... There is no place in being extraordinary. (52)

Fears of cultural contamination by racial others is commonly translated in public discourse into the language of disease. Rita Joe is not spared this treatment as she stands before the judgement of the Magistrate, and her condition of "perpetual condemnation" (58) stems not only from her being a woman and a Native, but because her vagrancy in the city as an itinerant prostitute is seen as a reflection of her moral and physical corruption:

> Have you any boils on your back? Any discharge? When did you bathe last? Answer me! Drunkenness! Shoplifting! Assault! Prostitution, prostitution prostitution, prostitution ... Rita Joe ... has a doctor examined you?... I mean, really examined you? Rita Joe ... you might be carrying and transmitting some disease and not aware of it! (77-78)

If Rita Joe is a threat in that she may contaminate the "purity" of white space and the white social body with her disease, she is also the avenging "savage" exacting retribution for the disavowed consequences of Native colonization. As Brian Park suggests, "Indians are society's guilt which may strike back as disease" (183). The rape and murder of Rita Joe at the end of the play brutally stages the exploitation of the female body in male-dominated spatial paradigms but also re-enacts the larger program of extermination of indigenous populations with the onslaught of colonization and nation-building:

> One murderer springs forward and grabs Rita Joe. The other two help to hold her, with nervous fear and lust ... they close in on her leisurely now, playing with her, knowing that they have her trapped ... dragging her down backwards, they pull her legs open and one MURDERER lowers himself on her. (123)

Rising off her "twisted, broken body," the murderers realize they have killed her and horrifically, one of them returns to the scene of the crime in order to rape her lifeless body. The murderers then turn to Jaimie-Paul, physically assaulting him and throwing his battered body in front of an approaching train. The mechanization of mobility, whether it takes the form of the train that was instrumental to the colonization of the Canadian frontier or of the automobile crucial to modern urbanization, proves dangerous – even fatal – to the indigene; it is "a destructive process culminating in an ultimately universal fatality" (Miller 57). Just as highways and railways cut through vast stretches of Canada's landscape, they cut through Native communities and cut open Native bodies. For instance, the highway on which Rosabella Baez's body is splattered "head-on into that truck like a fly splat against a windshield" (97), suggests that white incursions in North American space have become fatal to the aboriginal. Similarly, the train which runs through *The Ecstasy of Rita Joe,* which Boire qualifies as "one of the most scathing attacks yet written against Canadian

cultural imperialism" (63), is associated with the phallic penetration of European settlement in a "virgin" territory and its invariable movement westward. "Ambiguous and powerful" (Boire 62), the train has been used to represent "ideas and concepts as diverse (and contradictory) as freedom and mobility, imprisonment and enclosure, industrialization, mechanization, art, the fear of death, or the subconscious" (Boire 62). In Canada, "perhaps because of the middle-class' enjoyment of entrepreneurial triumph (and perhaps also because of Canada's pioneering colonial past), the train has remained for the most part a positive symbol of capitalist, industrial nation building" (Boire 62). But in placing the train at such a crucially fatal juncture in the play, Ryga casts an inquiring eye on its ideological invisibility, on the disavowed "blind spots" which have constructed it as the quintessential symbol of Canadian industriousness and nation-building:

> The death of Jamie under this phallic train functions as a grotesque symbol which is then specified in the particular penetration of Rita herself. His murder implies the "rape of the land"; her rape contains the murder of those people on the land. Both man and woman – an androgynous combination to suggest all Indian people – have been genitally assaulted in the play. (Boire 70)

In the final moments of the play, Jaime-Paul's death-scream is assimilated into the whistle of the train, showing that the train, and the white spatial predominance which it represents, has "completely assimilated the articulations, the utterance, the resistance of the indigenous man who dies in the process" (68).

* * *

Ric Knowles has suggested that Daniel David Moses' plays are primarily concerned with "optics," and with the "deconstruction of the panoptic technologies ... of the colonizing gaze" (187). One can argue that this is also true of the plays of Tompson Highway and George Ryga. Like Cohen, these playwrights reveal the disavowed program of spatial appropriation and the violent excision of Native bodies from a territory ostensibly modelled on European colonial paradigms. If the unrotting corpse of Catherine Tekakwitha resurfaces in contemporary Montréal as the "remainder" of colonization, then the Natives which inhabit Toronto's streets are the "not seen ... the repressed truth that must be revealed beneath an oppressive realism" (Knowles 190).

Chapter 4

Consecrated Ground: Spatial Exclusion and the Black Urban Body

This chapter will discuss the spatial exclusion and segregation of African-Canadian communities through racist discourses and practices which have constructed "blackness" as a threat to the purity of an ostensibly white Canadian urban landscape. As evidenced in the writing of Canadians of African descent, black bodies are seen as "residual" by the white majority, their very corporeality linked to a language of abjection and social pollution. Consequently, as individuals and as communities, they are pushed to the margins of the city and the collective social body and effaced from its dominant spatial imaginary.

The black community that has thrived in Africville, at the outskirts of Halifax, has been symbolically associated with the garbage dump which the city administration placed there, and the expulsion and relocation of its residents is symptomatic of a much larger "erasure" of black urban corporeality in Canada. Like the Native reservation, Africville has been represented and constructed in hegemonic public discourse as a "pre-modern" space inhabited by "uncivilized" abject others. Similarly, the "third-world" black bodies of more recent Caribbean immigrants are constructed as defiling, criminal, and "out of place" in the "first-world" white city.

* * *

There has been a long history of discrimination, exclusion, and racial segregation of Canada's black communities. The establishment and growth of the slave trade, enabled by European maritime technology,

made it economically feasible and efficient to establish a trade network of slaves between Africa and the New World. Labour supply in the Americas was affected not only by the lack of Native Americans' immunity to European diseases, but by European workers' inability to contend with the extreme heat and tropical diseases in the South American colonies. James Walker argues that contrary to the prevalent understanding that the slave trade was justified by a racialized discourse which constructed the black body inferior to that of whites, "it was the superiority of African labourers in the New World tropics that sealed their fate as slaves" (140).

While there were approximately 1400 slaves in New France before the conquest, these arrived through the British West Indies or through the American colonies in the South. The "Black Loyalists" arrived in Nova Scotia in 1783, attracted to the British colonies to the north by "the expectation that they would be accorded completely equal treatment with their white counterparts" (Walker 142). But this hope for equality was unrealized, since "their civil rights were curtailed and there were many restrictions imposed on them by a white majority that considered them more suitable for slavery than for equality" (Walker 142). Despite White Loyalists' overt racism and refusal to grant basic human rights to blacks, they welcomed the arrival of the "Maroons" from Jamaica, since "black labour was vital to pioneer enterprise in the Maritimes" (Walker 142). They established communities that were spatially segregated from whites until

they migrated back to Africa in order to found Sierra Leone in 1800. Following a second influx of blacks after the American War of 1812, the assembly of Nova Scotia attempted to stop all subsequent black migration. It must be remembered that at this point in Canadian history, the black population consisted of a combination of slaves, black Loyalists, and refugees from the American south.

Blacks fared no better in the West, for while they were present as "fur traders, cowboys, [and] broncobusters" (Walker 144), their increasing number provoked a hostile response from whites. As a result, "public petitions and municipal resolutions from all three western provinces urged Ottawa to ban further black immigrants and to segregate those already there" (144). Due to fears that a legislative ban on black migration could negatively affect Canadian-American relations and raise the ire of African-Canadians in Ontario and the Maritimes, "less overt measures were adopted" (Walker 144) in discriminating against them. For instance, Canadian government agents were sent into the American South to discourage black migration, and "medical, character, and financial examinations" were rigorously applied at border crossings [denying] black passengers entrance into Canada" (Walker 144). A clause written into the Immigration Act of 1910 denied entrance to "immigrants belonging to any race deemed unsuited to the climate or requirements of Canada" (Walker 144). While amendments to the Immigration Act in 1952 changed the

terms from "race" to "ethnicity," Walker points out that "the Supreme Court of Canada interpreted the two terms to mean the same thing and validated exclusion of prospective immigrants because of their 'race'" (144).

While they were always a small minority in Canada, particularly before the 1960s, "African Canadians participated in the original settlement of almost every region and major city in Canada," including Montréal, Halifax, and "virtually all the Loyalist communities" (Walker 145). Despite the fact that three separate armed corps of blacks won white approval for their "readiness to defend the Empire" (146) with their lives, black refugees were rewarded with inadequate farmland "too small to sustain economic independence" (Walker 146). In Montréal and Toronto, housing discrimination directed black communities to areas bordering railway yards, black churches, and the "least expensive districts" (Walker 148) of the city. Census reports and immigration statistics were also deliberately used as a weapon in excluding blacks in Canada through their "deliberate effort to underestimate the black population" (148). Blacks were understood as belonging at the bottom of the socio-economic scale, below other incoming immigrant groups and Native populations, and when jobs were scarce, white ire was directed against them, culminating in violence, the destruction of black churches, and physical expulsion. Thus, by the time of confederation, "economic circumstances and the precedent set by slavery had relegated most African-Canadians to a service and labouring

role; a 'place' had been allotted for blacks consistent with prevailing social considerations" (Walker 150).

African-Canadians were forced to occupy spaces in the city and in the workforce which strengthened their image as servile to whites (as domestics, porters, and manual labourers, for instance). These exclusionary employment and housing policies, seen also in the Chinese community in Vancouver, ensured that (black) visible minorities were unable to challenge the existing social-economic hierarchies of city and nation. A perverse effect of these exclusionary and racist policies is that eventually these communities come to be associated with the abject materials (laundry, food, dirt, domestic wastes) which they touched. The "servile black body" is thus produced by a white racist discourse which attempted to keep the "defiling other" at arm's length.

After the American Civil War, blacks fleeing north did not escape racial prejudices that constructed them as fugitives "tainted by slavery" (Walker 152). As we shall see in the literature of "Africadia" [33] the mobile black body of "runaway slave" narratives is reconfigured by later poets and writers into a body rendered criminal by virtue of its urban mobility in the white Canadian city.

The intersections of race and gender discourses demonstrate how important it was for the white majority, on the one hand, and males on the other, to sustain their own centrality in the economic, social, and symbolic

power networks of the nation. While white women were relegated to the home in the "cult of domesticity," black women, because of economic necessity, were forced to be wage earners outside the home and were consequently better educated in general than black men. This departure from the usual spatial constraints imposed on women comes to be seen as an aberration by the white middle class, one attributed to the transgressive nature of black identity: "What black families had grown used to as interdependency struck white observers as odd and unnatural; black women were depicted as masculine, black men as weak and ineffectual for their failure to support their partners, the black family as matriarchal and dysfunctional" (Walker 155).

The segregationist policies imposed on black communities in Canada were indicative of underlying fears of touching, defilement, and of the corruption of racial purity. For instance, movie theatres in Montréal and residential neighbourhoods in Calgary were segregated according to race (Walker 155). Racially segregated schools ensured that economically destitute black communities remained so, since its students acquired a generally lower quality of education. This ensured that "black children did not generally receive an education equivalent to that obtained by whites; they entered the workforce with inferior qualifications, which limited their occupational horizons, their incomes, and their status in the broader society" (Walker 160).

Despite new patterns of black immigration in the 1960s in which highly educated individuals arrived from the various nations of the Caribbean, these groups continued to suffer from various forms of racist discourse and exclusion:

> Some of the most widespread discrimination occurred in public accommodations, transportation, and places of entertainment. Hotels, saloons, lake steamers, stage-coaches, and theatres in the Maritimes, Ontario, and the West habitually refused service to blacks or relegated them to segregated facilities. Occasionally, racial separation was enforced by mob violence. (164)

While white mobs cite racial and national purity as a way of justifying the exclusion of blacks, white panic over unbridled black sexuality instigated the "Imperial Order of Daughters of the Empire" to ask that "blacks be kept out or white women would not be safe" (Walker 166). They warned that "lynchings would occur if the government did not act to protect white womanhood" (Walker 166). Even black war veterans did not escape segregationist policies, as their bodily remains were interred in a black-only section of the Camp Hill military cemetery in Halifax (Walker 165).

Black communities, however, resisted the "place" which had been imposed upon them within the hierarchy of Canadian society. African Canadians "seized the rhetoric of British rights to assert their demand for

equality" (Walker 164), for as taxpayers they were entitled to the same quality of education as whites. Contrary to the mythology of an open and inclusive society, Walker points out that racial exclusion and black segregation were perfectly legal under Canadian Law until the 1940s, when the Supreme Court of Canada ruled otherwise, and then only under considerable pressure from various black political organizations and church groups across the country.

Despite common belief to the contrary, the history of blacks in Canada has not been characterized by multicultural acceptance or inclusiveness. From the historical disavowal of slavery to tensions emerging from racial profiling, the black body in Canada has consistently been spatially and socially excluded, put under constant surveillance as a threat to middle-class civility and characterized as a contaminant to its cultural hegemony.

Constructing Blackness

"Blackness" has traditionally been signified negatively in the black / white binary, constructed as either that which lacks civilization or, obversely, that which defiles the civilized. This binary has been employed in spatial discourses and practices which seek to exclude racial others or otherwise relegate them to subordinate social spheres. Used extensively as justification for the enslavement of "dark" races, these colours (black /

white) are "readily associated with defilement and purity" (Sibley 22), and have been central to the "process of regulating and dominating the colonized" (Sibley 19). In terms of colonial / post-colonial identity and political agency, the colour black has consistently been constructed as the abject in the language of purity and defilement: [34]

> In white Northern European cultures, associations with dirt, blackness and nature have created negative stereotypes of Africans, Afro-Caribbeans, people from the Indian subcontinent and Gypsies which have informed constructions of national identity that omit these groups and represent them as threatening. Their abjection is related to colonial histories but also to those things which threaten the boundaries of the (white) body and with which colonial minorities have been elided in the process of dehumanizing them. White signifies both purity and order and black signifies defilement and disorder in racist discourse, so representations of blackness create anxieties about borders – of the body, the neighbourhood and the nation – which are deeply rooted in states with colonial experiences. (Sibley 124)

Black bodies are symbolically associated with all the negative implications which the colour itself has given rise to in the history of

Western civilization, including death, a "source of defilement, a state which threatens life, and of the corpse, which signifies decay and contagion" (Sibley 22). Black has also been closely associated with fear of darkness and with the unknown. This is particularly true in an urban context, where the black body, particularly the youthful male black body, has been associated with the criminal and the transgressive. The negative associations of blackness, concomitant with fears about darkness, render the black nocturnal body the most dangerous form of urban corporeality: "the association between black and dirt, between dirt and disease, emphasizes the threatening quality of blackness. Removing blackness, injecting light, removes fear, but this fear may be a fear of others as much as a fear of darkness" (Sibley 23). If blackness is the abject, that "unseen" which must be symbolically evacuated, it is also, ironically, the "all-too visible": the black body in white space is invisible in terms of the imaginary geography of the nation, but "hyper-visible" (Walcott 44) to those who see such a body as a threat that must be kept under constant surveillance.

Frantz Fanon sees blackness as being tied to relations of domination, a "direct result of colonialist subjugation" (17) and its concomitant "epiduralization of inferiority" (11). The "myth of the bad nigger" (92) is tied to relations of domination between colonizer and colonized in which the black body takes its consistency, its definition even,

as the abject – its condition of being "caught" by the white gaze and thrust aside, expelled, and *fixed* into objecthood:

> I move slowly in the world, accustomed now to seek no longer for upheaval. I progress by crawling. And already I am being dissected under white eyes, the only real eyes. I am *fixed*. Having adjusted their microtomes, they objectively cut away slices of my reality. I am laid bare. I feel, I see in those white faces that it is not a new man who has come in, but a new kind of man, a new genus. Why, it's a Negro! (116)

Blackness is also associated with the excretions of the body. Laporte writes that "to the white man, the black man has the colour and odour of shit" (59), and their mutual hatred is based on "a reciprocal recognition: the white man hates the black man for exposing that masked and hidden part of himself. The black man hates the white man's need to pull himself up from the earth" (59).

In the Canadian context, Rinaldo Walcott suggests that "writing blackness" has been difficult in this country for blacks have been "an absented presence always under erasure" (27). He refers here not only to the historical denial of slavery and the systemic racism operating in this country, but also to the erasure of the collective memory of the black communities of Atlantic Canada, which George Elliott Clarke resurrects under the banner of *Africadia,* his attempt to "map a black Canadian

geography that is longer and older than the post 1950s black migrations from the Caribbean and more recently continental Africa" (16). Both Walcott and Clarke attempt to revive the "missing" black body in Canadian space, restore it to the nation's spatial imaginary. "Blackness," they agree, like other formulations of ethnic or group identities, is a roving signifier, always subject to modification and change:

> I mean to signal blackness as a sign, one that carries with it particular histories of resistance and domination. But blackness is also a sign which is never closed and always under construction ... [it] allows for a certain kind of malleability and open-endedness, which means that questions of blackness far exceed the categories of the biological and the ethnic. (Walcott 27)

George Elliott Clarke similarly recognizes that,

> *Blackness* remains an absolutely relative epistemology ... here the diversity of black communities proves that "black" is essentially a politically and *culturally constructed* category, which cannot be grounded in a set of fixed transcultural or transcendental racial categories and which therefore has no guarantees in Nature. In Canada, some are born black, some acquire blackness, and others have blackness thrust upon them. (*Odysseys* 16)

Like the Native corpses in *Beautiful Losers* and *City of Forgetting* or the forgotten ghosts and graves of Chinese labourers in the novels of Sky Lee and Wayson Choy, the African-Canadian body represents another of the "dirty little secrets" of Canada's colonial and nationalist past – an abject body which must be hidden away, denied, and disavowed in the construction of a coherent white spatial imaginary.

Africville and the Racialization of Defilement

One cannot speak of the physical, social, and symbolic exclusion of blacks in this country without mentioning Africville. A black township located on the outskirts of Halifax, Africville has become central to black constructions of Canadian space, for the forced evacuation of its residents was but one instance of the larger, systemic erasure and disavowal of the black experience in Canada, an attempt at "cleansing" Canadian territory of its non-white elements. With the destruction of Africville, Walcott argues, "the desire to render black peoples and blackness an absented presence in Canada has been made literally and symbolically clear" (44).

Africville became an area of the city in which the administration placed its undesirable industries and public works projects; slaughterhouses, tanneries, oil storage facilities, and a foundry encircled the township, while a prison and an infectious diseases hospital were established in the area. The city dump, incinerator, and railway lines also

cut into Africville, and the various administrative strategies used to dehumanize its residents produced space as "a repository for all that the dominant group wanted to contain and distance itself from" (Nelson 217). This includes not only all manner of industrial and domestic wastes – garbage, refuse, and criminals – but blackness itself.

The denial of public services, adequate housing, and electricity produced a "self-fulfilling prophecy" (Nelson 217) of destitution and failure, an urban slum which "legitimates dominance by offering a concrete example of filthy, intolerable conditions, a notion of helplessness and a lack of self-determination that are seen as inherent to its inhabitants" (Nelson 217). As David Goldberg has suggested, slum or ghetto spaces are characterized by "dislocation, displacement, and division" and function to distance the social and spatial practices of dominant groups from subordinate ones. Slums are consequently "the primary mode by which the space of racial marginality has been articulated and reproduced" (190). While this is also true in terms of class, it is particularly nefarious in the case of visible minorities in urban space, since the adverse economic environment of the ghetto and its general condition of neglect and poverty comes to be associated, in hegemonic public discourse, to the "degeneracy" of its residents: "The *racial* slum is doubly determined, for the metaphorical stigma of a black blotch on the cityscape bears the added

connotations of moral degeneracy, natural inferiority, and repulsiveness" (Goldberg 191).[35]

The writing which emanates from the Africville experience consequently constructs black urban bodies as residual and abject. In his poetry, David Woods describes how its residents "wander in bowed status" (135), slavish black bodies moving about in a white city with "minds estranged from themselves" (135) for they lack the education and opportunities available to whites. Africville is represented as a space in which violence, physical corruption, and death are commonplace, where black bodies are "cadavers arranged like logs / Moving along a stink river / Not ours / but blowing on – lost forever" (136). In another poem titled "Harney Barton at the Tavern," the black body both signals and is marked by a collective history of oppression, as a drunk Barton performs a minstrel show for his fellow bar mates:

> He is a little ridiculous
> But that does not matter,
> His dance is understood
> by all those gathered,
> From the sturdy labourers
> of Hammonds Plains,
> To the young hookers
> from "the Square,"

His feet tell their tales

Of simple lives gone wrong,

Of wasted beauty and ruined

families

Of the simple and the poor—

Lost in an uncaring community. (138)

In George Elliott Clarke's "Campbell Road Church," Africville becomes a dream deferred, a promised land that is no longer attainable for it has been neglected and left to whither for too long by the city administration:

an ancient CN porter lusts for Africville

beautiful Canaan of stained glass and faith

made shacktown of shattered glass and shame

rats rustling like a mayor's robe

he rages to recall

the gutting death of his genealogy

to protest his home's slaughter

by butcher bulldozers

and city planners molesting statistics. (146)

In "Salvation Army Blues," poor black urban dwellers "stumble, punch-drunk / down these drawn and quartered streets / tense hands manacled / to empty pockets" (150). The dire economic circumstances of

the residents of Africville produces vagrant bodies that linger on the peripheries of the city – idle, and hence, suspect.

Frederick Ward presents a condensed history of the "slavish" black body occupying Canadian space, from the slave narrative of "Mary," who escapes the bondage of the American south, to the poor, homeless vagrants who must survive in the back alleys of Halifax's streets. Mary crosses the border from the United States into Canada armed only with "my fears and a hatchet" (17). Her black slave-body, which is physically inspected by her owners who "checked my teeth ... snatched what be theirs from 'tween my legs to beat and chew on it" (17), becomes a metonym of a black collective body suffering under the control of white racial injustice, raped by white claims on their bodies. Territory here becomes a source of physical danger, as Mary must hide her blackness from a threatening white space and the laws which govern it. Hers is a "runaway subjectivity" in which the ability to stay mobile in the face of a hostile environment becomes crucial to her survival, a theme which recurs also in the poetry of Gloria Wesley-Desmond: "Them dogs be chasin / My ol'man / see him runnin / Through the trees" ("Jump the Broom" 70).

Just as the black slave-body must submit to the transgression of her bodily boundaries, the residents of Africville submit to the transgression of the familial home once the city administration decides to evict them. In "Dialogue # 1," Ward relates the perceptions of an elderly black woman as

she hears the first bulldozers begin their grim work of destroying the humble homes of Africville. She is visited by city inspectors who forcibly remove her and her belongings, entering her home like

> shadows come'd right round me. Come'd in here without asking pardon fer themselfs and took things from they place whilst I mumbled and pointed. I touched me breath and tried to slow them to take care. Some of them apologized fer moving me. But they made off with me evidence. I ACCEPTS! But I expects they'd least done the least, ceptin they ain't. THEY MOVED ME IN GARBAGE TRUCKS! (19)

The dehumanization of the black (collective) body becomes necessary for the appropriation of their land, just as the construction of the Native as sub-human becomes necessary to colonial expansion and territorial appropriation. Furthermore, the equation is made between the garbage strewn in and around Africville – which may be seen as a necessary "residue" of white middle-class prosperity – and its black residents:

> Doggone thing's only been here a few years, and already people associate it with us. Or us with it. They take our school away and give us a friggin garbage dump! Well, when bad times hit you, you can just lay down and die. Or you can keep on goin' and make the best of it. So we try to make the dump work for us. Just because somebody throws

> something away, that don't mean you can't use it. Looks like a mountain of trash and junk, doesn't it? But it's not all bad. There's all kinds of scrap metal in there that you can collect and sell. (Saunders 62)

Like the Roma, the vagrant gypsies of Europe who are "generally represented as defiled or abject in relation to the culture of the majority because of the association between Gypsies and residual matter, like scrap metal" (Sibley 121), the residents of Africville are associated to the refuse by which they are surrounded, becoming, at least in white middle-class minds, human garbage.

In a long poem entitled *Back Alley Tramp*, Gloria Wesley-Desmond shows the abject physical conditions of Africville, but also the difficulty of those who are transient, homeless women on its streets: "Alone, haunting the bleakness / Of the alley / Alone, except / For a few restless hungry / Creatures rubbing their Dirty backs over some / Over-turned can; and / Slinky rats speed along" (67). She rails against the "window pane stares / of people locked inside" (67) for it is they who are to blame for her abject condition: "You gave me these boundaries / Of alley dirt and fears / I'm your product / I'm your child / Your back alley tramp" (67). Here the errant black body is "produced" by the racist discourses and practices which relegate her "polluting" black identity to the outside of the proper spatial contexts of home, security, and domesticity.

In *A Visit to Africville*, Charles Saunders writes that railroad tracks "slash through our community like a big pirate's sword" (53). While the railway historically provided one of the few sources of employment for blacks in Canada, their visibility as porters relegated them to subservient positions in the community and produced the image of black bodies as servile. While black bodies are denied the spatial freedoms of whites, they are, ironically, allowed to travel across the continent as porters and servants on the trains: "travelled all over Canada and down in the States, they did. Kept those sleepin' cars cleaner than the Sheraton Hotel. They'd come in their uniforms with the shiny brass buttons, and they'd be like heroes comin' back from the war. Best job a coloured man could get back in the old days" (54). Just as Chinese labourers are allowed employment on steam ships that cross the Pacific, here blacks are allowed a regulated form of mobility tied to their economic and symbolic positioning at the bottom of the social hierarchy.

George Elliott Clarke describes Africville as the "long-gone 'slum by the dump' which the City of Halifax vomited beside Africville in the 1950's" (*Odysseys* 289). The township here is described in terms of the abject, as that residual matter which a white city must expel if it is to assure the unharried boundaries of its own collective identity. The eviction of the residents of Africville was justified by the city administration through arguments for sanitation, public health, and the welfare of its black

residents. However, Clairmont and Magill argue that pressures within the white business community for lands to develop as industrial infrastructure at the outskirts of a growing city ultimately sealed the fate of the black community.

Leslie Saunders recognizes that a marginalized black community "cut off from the structures and activities of urban Halifax" taints the space of Africville as "pre-modern," and its continued presence there "was an affront to the modern city that Halifax was becoming" (108). Its destruction and complete removal from city maps in 1970 was "the culmination of a moral panic at the possibility of an independent, sovereign blackness" (Nelson 231). For Clarke, the evacuation and destruction of Africville represents "the ignoble and total defeat of the first Africadian nationalism – a silent, brooding, glimmering nationalism that represented, not the craving for a nation, but rather, the yearning for a space – a green space – in which the free self could be realized" (*Odysseys* 293). Africville is described by Clarke as a mangled collective body suppressed from Canadian territory, one which refuses to remain silent:

> Africville itself was transformed into a cultural myth, the product of romanticism and nostalgia, a *pays* to mourn, a source of collective rituals ... the African Cultural Renaissance and its conscious nationalism are the dry

bones which have put on flesh and wailed from the dust of Africville. (*Odysseys* 295)

In his own writing, Clarke attempts to "counter amnesia" by providing "a history of the black body and state violence in this country" (Walcott 22). His *Execution Poems* was inspired by the true story of his cousins, George and Rufus Hamilton, who were hung in July of 1949 for the murder of a Fredericton taxi driver. In this collection, the black body is mangled by poverty, domestic and racial violence, and an unjust socio-economic environment. But the "truth" of this crime, Clarke seems to suggest, is one that has been too easily attributed to the inherently "criminal" nature of the black man, one which does not take into account a long history of social and economic oppression or the destitution which drives one to steal and murder. "Have you ever gone in your life, going / two days without eating, and whenever / you get money, you're gonna eat and eat / regardless of all the bastards in Fredericton" (13).

Execution Poems is discursively framed by Fanon's concept of *négritude* in its opening poem, "Negation" where the "meagre" black body in its "tarnished" corporeality is placed in contradistinction to the "shining" white body of "Her Majesty" (11) the Queen, embodied metonym of law, justice, and the civilized. The narrator is that abjected other who is of little account in white eyes, "le *nègre* negated" (11), a "whisky-coloured provincial, uncouth / Mouth spitting lies, vomit-lyrics, musty, Masticated

scripture" (11). The words of the "Negro" are likened to the abject, his "vomit-lyrics" to the expelling of that which offends. While the narrator is not a slave, his body metaphorically belongs to the Queen, for it falls under the purview of her colonial authority and is therefore *fixed* by her gaze. Nevertheless, he is "Her Majesty's Nasty, Nofaskoshan Negro" (11), a modern-day Caliban who dares challenge the authority of his master. It is his "black face" that will "preface murder for you" (11), suggesting a form of historical revisionism in which the black body is finally given voice – a counter-discourse to the "official" history of the crime included at the end of *Execution Poems* in the form of newspaper clippings about the event. Because this white take on black crime effaces the brothers' identities, showing only "the condemned men's shadows" (44), Clarke "speaks for" his absented cousins, thereby attempting to resurrect their broken bodies in an Africadian spatial imaginary.

The various images of black bodies castigated, tortured, and cut away, of the blood of violence flowing freely throughout *Execution Poems,* reflects not only the realities of growing up in an environment of poverty, racial discrimination, and domestic violence, but also symbolizes the excision of black history and the black collective body from Atlantic Canada. It is a community in which women were "bullwhipped till blood / lava'd down their backs and leapt off their heels" (15); and while Rue wanted to be educated in the works of "Pushkin, Colette, E.B. Browning,

and Alexandre Dumas – all those secretly Negro authors" (17), he is instead educated in this: "A boy's right arm stuck to a desk with scissors; a father knifed in the gut while shaking hands with a buddy; two Christians slashed with gasoline and set ablaze in a church; a harlot garrotted in her bath" (17). While the boys' father beat their mother for "he thought her being Mulatto / was mutilation" (16), their mother eventually, "fainted scrubbin some white house's blackened crap-box / She got a heart stoppage and drooped, *kaput*" (16). Perversely, she dies in a white home, bent to the task of cleaning the foulness produced by white middle-class bodies, abjected by her handling its residual matter.

The lack of opportunities for black Nova Scotians means that "Everywhere I saw a Crimea of crime, calamities of houses rigged from tar paper and rape, windows blinded with newsprint or burlap sacks. I could only start the stove with sparks and fear, watch yellow terror eating yesterday's bad news" (17). Misery is hidden away from public view, behind secrecy and closed doors:

> Steps shear from beefy, rancid houses, T-bone into sidewalks.
> Or: ramshackle stars screw into air, then accordion into heaps
> of brick-broken bottles, trash, jalopy remains. Rubble
> architects the North End, some left over dying
> from '17's Explosion, when seamstresses got smashed
> by heavy machines crashing through floor after floor,

and schoolkids' eyes shot out, gaudy with glass.

A Canaan of syphilis: Halifax. (23)

The black body in such abject conditions is "guttural," its face "makes a mess of light / It's like a black splinter lancing snow" (19). Indigo, a vagrant drunk, is described as "toxic, shabby, cross-eyed" (23) as he takes out his anger on two small white boys who "accost him as n-i-g-g-g-e-r" (23), his revenge fantasy becoming savage breaching of corporeal boundaries and symbolic defilement of the white collective body:

Those two boys disintegrated under his blows,

slicking them with red awfulness. Sampson holds

two blond heads aloft like hauled-up weeds.

He flings two fair splintered bodies into the gutter.

His eyes have fallen; nobody looks at him:

Doors have always been flung in his face, in his face. (23)

Sent to the "penatenrinary – the petty tyranny" (24) for his crimes, the police guards goad him with their rifles, provoking him to attack them. Instead, Indigo remains meek and docile until one of the officers grows impatient and takes matters into his own hands: "one morning he was sitting with the Bible / and his head popped open; / his black scalp puffed up fatally scarlet" (24).

Rue's drunken anger and frustration similarly elicits a revenge fantasy in which he attempts to defile white space:

I want to muck up their little white paradise here.

I want to swat their faces 'til I'm comfortable in my gut.

I want to give em all headaches and nausea:

I'll play *fortissimo* Ellington, blacken icy whiteness.

I'll draw blood the way Picasso draws nudes –

voluptuously. (32)

Like "F." in *Beautiful Losers* who wishes to "hammer a beautiful coloured bruise on the whole American monolith (199), Rue here wishes to "mark" white space with his black stain – legitimate his abject otherness in a space dominated by whites.

The transgressing black outlaw-body thus answers to the expectations of a white majority that constructs him as other – as animalistic, drunken, and murderous sexual predator. The murder of the taxi driver is not only drunken opportunism, but *also* the result of centuries of oppression. As Rue says, "Here's how I justify my error: / The blow that slew Silver came from two centuries back. / It took that much time and agony to turn a white man's whip / into a black man's hammer" (35). Because they are uneducated and speak "cankered English," they have become alienated from their own history, becoming transgressive criminals sullying pure white snow with the red of crime. Their "blood-stained hands / must be legislated into grass (39) by the authority of the Crown that invariably demands that "green slime scum over your black souls" (39).

The "hanging niggers in Fredericton" (41) become a public spectacle, a "theatrical ritual" (Foucault *Discipline,* 14) of execution in which transgressive black bodies are excised from the community – the brothers' united bodies rendered inhuman in the brutal plunge from the gallows pole, become a grotesque "strange fruit" hung "back-to-back in York County Gaol" (12).[36] The function of this "spectacle of the scaffold," as Foucault has demonstrated, is to "reveal the truth": "a successful public execution justified justice, in that it published the truth of the crime in the very body of the man to be executed" (*Discipline* 44). This macabre spectacle not only satisfies the mob's lust for retribution but enables a differentiation between docile white bodies and the transgressive bodies, grotesque bodies of black criminality.[37] The hanging effectively expels the black aggressor from white space:

> We'll be *disjecta membra* of Loyalist New Brunswick.
>
> We'll furiously spew up air as we fall.
>
> We'll try to eat your faces through our hoods.
>
> We'll plunge our bodies into pools of air,
>
> into coffins snug as our shadows,
>
> the shallow graves of mourning news. (41)

Clarke seems to be suggesting here that the cousins do not go meekly to their deaths, for they attempt to "eat" the white faces which have condemned them in their rage. Just as blacks are denied a history, the

newspaper reporters who wrote about the hanging could not see the men's faces, effectively de-humanizing them: "Barred from the interior of the gaol and scene of the double hanging, newsmen from a vantage point near the two-storey grey-stone building could see only the condemned men's shadows as they glided from the upper corridor and guyed down the stairs" (44).

The spaces which black bodies occupy in "Africadia" are abject ones: ramshackle homes, streets, back alleys, gallows, and graves. While they are regarded by the white majority as a threat to white space and racial "purity," it is the brothers who are most threatened by a spatial order which constructs them as errant and criminal, as modern-day runaway slaves. George Elliott Clarke recognizes the intersections between black corporeality, spatial exclusion, and the construction of a national mythology based on the idea of two founding nations. Black (individual and collective) bodies are disciplined by the scrutiny of a white gaze threatened by their alterity. The black body in Canadian space is therefore a suffering body, abject body – rendered docile through the various strategies used to exclude it from the body politic. It is also rendered a passive, disciplined body penetrated by white racist discourse, "their scalpel eyes slicing into us, their shrapnel voices exploding our dreams, their heavy metal hands ripping into us - with a crabby penmanship that dates back to the Dark Ages" (*Odyssesys* 6).

The "Polluting" *Wessindian* in Multicultural Toronto

The black body "under scrutiny" reflects not only the realities of Canada's oldest black communities, but some of its newer ones as well. As Canada's largest urban centre, Toronto is the city in which more recent articulations of black identity have taken root. In her collection of short stories entitled *Her Head a Village*, Makeda Silvera, for instance, represents the harsh realities of urban life for the Caribbean immigrants who come to Canada searching for a land of opportunity and social mobility, only to discover that they are forced to occupy liminal spaces in the city (in ghettos or back alleys, or as live-in domestics in white homes). Furthermore, they occupy a symbolic space "between" the first and third worlds, a postcolonial and transnational black spatial imaginary which effectively evacuates their "authentic" Caribbean blackness from the white space of Canada. Walcott points out,

> For black Canadians, living the in-between is conditioned by their inside / outside status in the nation-state; whether indigenous black or otherwise, in-betweenness in Canada is conditioned by a plethora of national narratives, from the idea of "two founding peoples," to multicultural policies, to immigration policies ... the simultaneity of being here and not being here is, in effect, an in-between position. The prospect of in-betweenness is, however, not only produced by the

> state: it is also something black folks have chosen through their multiple diasporic and outer-national political identifications. (48)

The mainstream construction of a Canadian spatial imaginary demands that the territory circumscribed by Canada's boundaries must be "protected," both physically and symbolically, from alien (and therefore threatening) others. This is particularly true of black bodies, for the black body brings with it a whole series of social and symbolic connotations (inferiority, defilement, criminality, irrationality) which threaten the privileged white body.

If the nation is figured as a collective body which expels or neutralizes the other as the abject, then the threshold between the inside and the outside of the body politic in Silvera's "Caribbean Chameleon" is located at the immigration desk at Pearson International Airport. It is here that the scopic regime differentiates between the docile, unthreatening white bodies of Canadian tourists returning from a sojourn in the "festive" islands of the Caribbean and the black bodies of immigrants and live-in domestics. The black body is positioned outside the threshold, scandalous in its attempts to import its third world blackness into first world whiteness. "Despite that the discourse of generosity and benevolence prevails within the Canadian national imaginary," Manning points out, "the categories of 'us' and 'them' remain standard practices at ports of entry" (xvii).

The narrator is a Jamaican domestic worker returning to her job in suburban Toronto, one whose rich vocal rhythms and outward appearance are reproduced through white tourist consumption. While the tourists' vestment suggests their facile appropriation of Jamaican cultural codes, attire, and attitude, they are "dressed to kill," (28) suggesting the implicit role they play in the ostracization of the black body, symbol of her all-too-authentic Jamaican identity: "Tourists with straw baskets, suntan, skin peeling, rum-filled stomach, tang of jerk pork Boston-style. Lignum vitae carvings, calabash gourds, a piece of black coral, earrings out of coconut shell ... you can get anything, no problem, as long as there are U.S. dollars" (27). The souvenir trinkets which they bring back with them signal their consumer cannibalism and echo the cycles of exploitation in which black domestics are imported into white spaces for their cheap labour. They represent a form of anthropophagy in which a toned down, controlled, and domesticated version of Caribbean blackness is ingested and neutralized. "The contradictory longing both to possess and excrete the other without digesting the problematic effects of such a consumption reinforces a negation of the other as a historical subject-in-process, rendering the other a victim of imitation, a two-dimensional object in a sea of whiteness" (Manning 70).

The ease with which white tourists traverse border spaces – their international mobility – is contrasted to the constricted spaces and reduced

mobility which "errant" black bodies are allowed. The gaze of the immigration officer creates the third world subject as trespasser: "JA customs officer has eyes deep in passport, behind desk, trying to figure out whether dis a banana boat passport or what" (28), while white tourists are ignorant of the economic necessities which push Jamaicans toward Canada: "Ah, a well-spent vacation. Why do they want to leave?" (28). When the Jamaican woman is asked the particulars of her trip, she is eyed with suspicion:

> "Did you stay with family? "No mam, I visit dem, but I stay in a hotel." Suspicion. "Hotel?" "Yes mam." "Take off your glasses, please." Officer look lady in black polka dot pant suit up and down. "What date did you leave Canada for Jamaica?" Woman in black polka dot pant suit start breathing hard. "I have me landed papers right here." "Open your suitcase, please." Suitcase get search. Hand luggage search. Handbag search. Sweat running down woman black face. Line long behind her. Officer call for body search. Woman in black polka dot pant suit trembling. Head start itch. Line longer. Black and white in line. Woman in black polka dot pant suit sweating with embarrassment. (31)

As the interrogation increasingly angers her, she loses her temper and the immigration officer becomes "frighten like hell" (31) for "he don't

understand the talking of tongues" (31). Her heavy Jamaican accent and black skin are interpreted as signs of her irreducible otherness, while the invasion of her bodily space and the search through her personal effects are ways of controlling her and filtering out her threatening blackness. Rather than being seen as a normal response to the injustice of being treated unfairly, her outrage is seen by the immigration officers and the white tourists as mad spectacle – as the outward manifestation of the inward "savage-ness" of the unruly black woman: "Officer shout for Royal Canadian Mounted Police to take mad woman away. 'TAKE HER AWAY. TAKE HER AWAY,' Take this wild savage. Monster. Jungle Beast" (32). The African is equated to the jungle, to the barely human, and the theatricality of the scene strikingly demonstrates the dynamics of power and bodily identification at play in the crossing of protected boundary spaces. "Confronting the black race." Laporte writes, "the colonialist state faces the ultimate challenge: how to acknowledge its failure to master all things, while managing to keep its failure masked" (65).

In Silvera's "Canada Sweet, Girl," the Canadian spaces occupied by immigrant labourers and domestics are contrasted to the ease and spatial privilege of white suburbia. The protagonist awakens from a nightmare in which "men dress up in uniforms dragging me through the streets of Toronto to di Strathcona Hotel. I find miself wash up in cold sweat, mi hands trembling, head hurting and mi screaming" (33). The protagonist lies

in bed "like a corpse," finding it difficult to face her work day of menial labour. The transition to Toronto and the difficulty of being a domestic worker is seen as a curse or punishment: "I lay in bed, staring at di ceiling in my small one-bedroom asking what sin mi commit. What sins my mother or her mother commit? What is it we do that vex God so?" (33).

If downtown Yonge Street is a space of spectacle and multicultural consumption in which black bodies do not particularly arouse suspicion, the protagonist's West Indian blackness is refused in the "clean" suburbs of the city where she seeks employment: "Sometimes I take di bus to places that had names like Agincourt, Don Mills, Mississauga. One time I even go on a interview close to where Punsie live, a place called Pickering. Same answer everywhere, 'No Canadian experience' (34). Unable to find work, she becomes a transient in the city, lacking money, a roof over her head, and legal papers. The immigrant black body becomes vagrant, belonging literally in no-place: "To batter bout pon Toronto streets with no place to go no easy" (36).

Bev, a waitress at the coffee shop in which the protagonist rests, finds her a job and invites her to stay at her place. But as an illegal immigrant, she has no access to the social safety net in Canada and is forced to live a precarious existence of subterfuge and silence: "I can't collect no unemployment insurance, I don't have no landed papers, so I have to prepare myself for di worse, if it come" (38). When she learns of

her mother's death in Jamaica, she cannot risk leaving Canada for she is an illegal immigrant, and therefore must "stay right here and mourn for Mama" (41). She is rendered spatially immobile, trapped by her condition "between" Canada and Jamaica.

Black immigrants, domestic workers, and refugees in Silvera's Toronto not only occupy the underbelly of the city, but their physical mobility is defined by necessity. Welfare lines, food banks, and subway trains are the spaces which this nameless and silenced community trudge through in their daily grind for survival. In another short story titled "Welfare Line," refugees "adopt all kinds of name and identity to stay on" (75) and are identified by a number, not by a proper name: "'You know we don't use workers' names. I need your worker's number.' Di girl mek mi feel like a damn fool" (77). The subway becomes a descent into a purgatory when the protagonist, loaded with bundles of clothes and food from the welfare office and food bank, is looked at with derision by whites. In a reversal of the mainstream construction of Canada as a "white space" peppered with multicultural colour, here Silvera presents whiteness as a suffocating hegemonic order, a defiling and overwhelming threat to black identity and corporeality. Furthermore, Jamaican oral tradition coupled with an exhausted woman's desire to express her frustration and displeasure at living in poverty in Canada is read by the white subway riders as madness:

> The subway pack. People everywhere with big shopping bags – Simpsons, Eaton's, the Bay all about. I get a seat eventually and sit down. Mi get tired of reading the ads on the train, and of the quiet. Our Christmas back home is boss, singing and jollification everywhere. The train is like a funeral home, so I start to open some of the packages they give me at the Children's Aid. All white dolls coming out of these packages. Everything white. White Barbie, white Ken. So mi begin to talk to miself about all this whiteness around me and in the bag. Some people in the train staring, but I don't care. After standing in the welfare line today I'm entitled to talk to myself. Is my garbage bag. Is my business. So let dem look with dem starchy face. (80)

Another writer of Caribbean origin who presents the "body troubles" of the nation is Austin Clarke. Not only is the "Wessindian" community which Clarke writes about socially and economically trapped within the city, it is threatened by a suffocating whiteness which renders it spatially immobile, suspect, and criminal. George Elliott Clarke has pointed out that Austin Clarke's protagonists see themselves as falsely persecuted, aristocratic figures whose precarious economic and social downfall may be attributed to the racist system in Canada which relegates them to the bottom of the social hierarchy: "Clarke's black immigrant characters are

either would-be or used-to-be aristocrats. Their access to the status symbols of the WASP Canadian Establishment is frustrated by a polite, tight, *white-iste* caste system ... the move to Canada is a shock of class and social privilege, a bracing plunge into a lower standard of living" (*Odysseys* 239-40).

Clarke constructs blackness through the careful staging of the black body in white Toronto, one whose excretions and olfactory "otherness" comes to symbolize both its visceral attachments to the Caribbean and its condition of abjection within white urban Canada.[38] In a short story titled "Griff," for instance, the protagonist is "a black man from Barbados who sometimes denied he was black" (99). Despite his "blasted black man" body, he put on the airs of British sophistication and the "civilized bearing that came with it" (99). He enjoyed taking his wife out to the Cancer Calypso Club located in "the entrails of the city where pimps and doctors and lonely immigrants hustled women and brushed reputations in a brotherhood of illegal liquor" (100). After a night of particularly ribald drinking and dance, he heads out into the city, riding in streetcars filled with white riders who "seemed to realize his blackness more intensely; white people looking at him hard – questioning his presence it seemed. It might be nothing more than the way his colour changed colour, going through a kaleidoscope of tints and shades under the varying ceiling lights of the street cars" (101). [39]

This cannibalistic gaze and racial objectification is similar to that which Fanon experiences in his encounter with the white gaze: "sealed into that crushing objecthood, I turned beseechingly to others ... the attitudes, the glances of the others fixed me there, in the sense in which a chemical solution is fixed by a dye" (109). The attempts by white commuters to "fix" the black body into a stable, immobile abject otherness is contrasted remarkably to the "kaleidoscope of tints and shades" of Griff's black skin as it is traversed by a series of neon lights, suggesting that blackness is "fluid" and can be applied "like paint to anyone who lapses in class or morality" (G.E. Clarke, *Odysseys* 242). The changing shade of Griff's black skin may also suggest his own attempts to deny his blackness, to shed the negative connotations associated to his colour; his attempts to elevate himself above his acquaintances at the Calypso Club – particularly the almost blue-black Jamaican construction worker who dances with his wife, and the sense of himself as a British subject and its attendant privileges, suggest that blackness sits uneasily on his skin.

Despite the fact that he considers himself more British subject than black Barbadian immigrant, Griff is unable to stomach the fact that white eyes stare him down in public transit. In the course of his ruminations, he turns the fantasy of his own "whiteness" on its ear:

> To him, it was staring. And his British breeding told him that to look at a person you didn't know (except she was a

> woman) was *infra dig*. *Infra dig* was the term he chose when he told Clynn about these incidents of people staring at him on the streetcars. The term formed itself on his broad thin lips, and he could never get the courage to spit it at the white people staring at him. (101)

Despite the fact that Griff senses that he is spatially constrained by white eyes, forced to exhibit his sweating, stinking blackness only within the underground confines of the Calypso Club, he nevertheless imposes similar spatial constraints on his wife. While he allows her to dance with other men at the club, he does so only insofar as it makes him seem a "good sport" to his bar mates; but when his wife's public displays with a man blacker than himself infuriates him, he takes her outside the club and proceeds to calmly and brutally strangle her.

In another short story titled "The Man," the protagonist is an aging immigrant *flâneur* who wanders the streets of Toronto obsessively collecting newspaper clippings and writing letters to "great men and women around the world" (125), hoping he will make some small social or political impact in a world in which he has become peripheral. Each morning he leaves his apartment, that "centre of gravity from which he is spilled out at eight each morning" (122) and wanders among the ethnic shops of Kensington Market. Clarke configures the black body in urban space as one which transgresses physical and symbolic thresholds, be it

in its peripatetic life in a white city, or in its corporeal smells and excretions which spill beyond its own bodily boundaries, thereby "polluting" the white space of an ostensibly multicultural Toronto.

If the Man is an urban *flâneur*, his idleness comes not from bourgeois comfort but from lack of employment. He is lonely and secretive, living "like a bat. Secret and self-assured and self-contained as an island, high above the others in a rooming house; cut off from people, sitting and writing his important letters" (122). He is a pathetic dandy who walks the streets of the city observing and recording, unable to fully participate in the day-to-day economic realities which surround him. Hence, "when morning comes, at eight o'clock he hits the streets, walking in the same two square miles around his home, rummaging through libraries for British and American newspapers, for new words and ideas for letters (122).

One evening during one of his walks, the Man is spotted by a policeman on the street and is interpellated by him: "A policeman looked through the window of his yellow cruiser, stopped him in his wandering tracks, and said, 'What the hell're you doing up here, *boy*" (123). Because he found himself wandering into an area of the city that is both economically and socially unattainable to him, he is literally stopped in his tracks – his dishevelled, black body rendered a criminal stain upon white middle class respectability."Git in! Git your black ass in here!" (124). This "coded" language used by the policeman (Foster 7) suggests the escaped

slave narratives of the American south. Rather than questioning the Man about his reason for being in the area, the officer simply speeds off with his bewildered captive in his charge to Don Mills where he deposits him. The police officer thereby symbolically cleanses the white space of Forest Hill of the defilement represented by the protagonist's black body. "Many policing practices," Walcott writes, "situate blackness outside the nation as criminal, deviant other. At the same time, these policies work to contain blackness within the nation; because, as the argument goes, black bodies must be managed, policed and controlled" (123).

On his return home, the Man takes out his anger and frustration on his pillows, which he has carefully fashioned into the body of the policeman who had humiliated him: "It was soon after this that he became violent ... each morning at seven when he woke up, and late at night before he went to bed, after he washed his mouth out with salt water, he kicked the 'policeman' twice" (124).

Where white urban bodies in Toronto are marked by neutrality, black ones are marked with excess, with their all-too-visible blackness. The Man wanders into a rich neighbourhood of shops and boutiques and realizes suddenly that his body will undermine any attempts to remain invisible:

> Once he dashed into Hold Renfrew. It was the last desperate haven. The water was heavy on his nerves, on his bladder.

> His eyes were red and watery. He barely had strength to speak his wish. Experience with this urge had cautioned him, as he stood before the glass case of ladies' silk underwear, that to open his mouth at that moment, when the association of this urge with ladies' panties was in full view, meant a relaxation of his grip on the water inside him. Then it would pour out onto the carpeted floor of Persian silence, perhaps even dribble onto the feet of the young clerk whose legs he could see beneath the thinness of her almost transparent dress. (130)

In the confrontation with the sanitized white female body, the leaking black body is a contaminant which symbolically links back to the psycho-sexual dynamics of slaves and their white female owners, as well as the sexual taboos arising from them: "The young woman saw his stiffness and posture, and with a smile and a wave, showed him the nearest haven" (130).[40]

The Man is attracted to the seductive power of a well-turned phrase, and through his obsessive letter-writing to prominent world leaders, he seeks to symbolically escape from the sweat and drudgery of manual labour in the sweatshops of his homeland. But it is his black body, not his ability with language, that *fixes* him and limits his mobility in the city, relegating him to the stalls of Kensington market.

Where language once signified an opportunity to escape sweat-shop labour, in Canada it becomes ineffectual and useless, much like the bits of old paper stuck in his pockets, the bulging boxes of paper in his apartment, or the Chinese characters on street signs in Kensington market which remain mysterious to him. Rather than celebrating the visual display of black bodies and black culture "when others filled the streets and danced in a Caribana festival and wore colours hot as summer in a new spring of life" (128), he chooses to remain true to language and "cut himself off from those frivolous, ordinary pleasures of life that had surrounded his streets for years" (128). The Man is critical of the festive black body which metaphorically links to narratives of a slave corporeality devoid of language. But the white majority embraces such carnivalesque public displays, for they do not overtly challenge white spatial and social hegemony.

The Man is thus located *on the outside* of the university system (128) just as he is spatially segregated outside the neighbourhoods of middle and upper-class Toronto. His body betrays him to white eyes in its fleshy corpulent excess but also in its ethnic excess; it is in the darkest recess of his litter-strewn apartment the he attempts to hide the evidence of his own corporeality:

> He was safe inside his room. Relieved and safe. He did it in the pail. He keeps this pail in a corner, under a table, on

> which is a two-ringed hotplate. In times of urgency he uses it, and in times of laziness and late at night. He adds soap flakes to the steaming liquid to hide its smell and composition, and when he carries the plastic pail down, the woman on welfare cannot smell or detect his business. (130)

The Man is a collector of urban refuse, the yellowed pages of his notes and the newspaper clippings in his apartment are placed in contradistinction to the limitations of black corporeality in a white city. The objects that surround him seem to echo and mock his debased situation. Pacing in his apartment, he seeks out bits of information among the scattered books and papers which are stored in "plastic bags imprinted with barely visible names of stores and shops" (132). Seizing upon one bag, he notices the faded label of the "Dominion" supermarket where he purchases his meagre provisions, thereby activating a symbolic language in which the black body straddles both the former British colonies of the West Indies and Canada's "Queen City." When he removes his clothing, he peels off layers of sweaters as though they were layers of skin:

> He takes off his jacket. It is two sizes too large. Then he takes off his red woolen sweater; and another one of cotton, and long-sleeved; and then a third, grey, long-sleeved,

> round-necked and marked PROPERTY OF THE ATHLETIC DEPARTMENT UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO. (133)

The irony of his de-vestment lies in the fact that he so values the legitimating knowledge represented by the University that he willingly participates in this "ownership" of his body despite the fact that he will never have access to the University, let alone work there: "He is a man of words, and the printed claim of ownership on his third pullover never ceases to amaze and impress him" (133).

Like Cohen's failed historian and archivist, the Man suffers from "literary constipation" (133), often praying "for an easier movement of words from the bowels of his brain" (133). This striking inversion of bodily functions signals the "body troubles" typical of societies intent on disavowing bodily specificity and difference. The Man attempts to wash away his "ethnic stench" and attain that summit of words and ideas of which the University, the jumble of papers, and the letters to world leaders are but examples. Also, the official stationary he receives in response to his inquiries to the "great personage[s]" of Britain and the West Indies becomes fetishized: "He continues to feel the paper between big thumb and two adjoining fingers, rubbing and rubbing and feeling a kind of orgasm coming on" (135). His writing implements come to symbolize his black identity, the *noir* of the "PARKER SUPER QUINK INK. PERMANENT BLACK" momentarily reversing the denigration which the word conferred

upon him throughout his life: "He likes the *noir* of the ink he uses, as he liked the *noir* in the Nugget which gave his shoes longer life and made them immortal and left its proud, industrious, and indelible stain on his fingers" (136). But unable to sustain his own self-illusion, he decides to overturn the hotplate in his room, for "fire cleans everything" (137). In burning down his prison-like apartment, the Man metaphorically effaces his polluting blackness from white Toronto.

* * *

The black body in Canadian urban space is either disavowed (much as the long history of slavery in this country has been disavowed), or treated as a threat that must be managed, policed, or rendered harmless through the celebration of the non-threatening, festive black body. If the discourse of multicultural inclusiveness promises economic opportunities and a better future for its Caribbean immigrants, the economic necessities of urban survival in Toronto and its systemic social inequalities make for a nightmarish urban landscape for its black immigrants. For the black community in Halifax, Africville is described in terms of garbage and disease, an abject space on the peripheries of a white city that eventually comes to be associated with black identity itself.

Erin Manning suggests that blackness functions as "the signifier of disappearance - that which is always out of sight, out of history, and out of

circulation" (67). By excluding blackness from public discourse, by "placing blackness elsewhere," she argues, "Canadian history has and continues to obfuscate the black presence in Canada, which dates as far back as the sixteenth century" (67). This forgetting and disavowal of black realities and histories in Canada ensure that blackness does not "divert attention from the white narrative of the 'founding fathers' (67). "What is ultimately at stake," writes Walcott, "is the space and place that bodies, both actual and symbolic, occupy in the nation's imagination. Black Canadian literature's unruly bodies will continue to insist upon a space where justice and freedom are possible" (54).

Conclusion

In her discussion of the political, social, and cultural connotations of "home" and territory in Canada, Erin Manning suggests that the "vocabulary of the nation," is one which "produces the distinction between qualified and unqualified bodies" (xv). If qualified bodies are those which unproblematically correspond to the constructed image of the body politic – the male, white, citizen, those which do not are "recalcitrant bodies" that resist the "narrative of the enclosure" (56) by which an imagined community of like-minded and like-bodied individuals is constituted:

> The recalcitrant body emerges in the interstices of the state, the home, and the nation, residing at its limits ... such recalcitrant bodies provide us with an opportunity not only to theorize unhomed bodies and spaces, but also to engage critically with the discourse of security at the level of the body and the nation. (56)

Just as securing public spaces demand the control, surveillance, and suppression of "unhomed" bodies, securing national space similarly demands that unruly bodies be policed. The "errant" bodies discussed in this thesis are represented as residues lingering on the peripheries of city and nation – made to conform through inspection, segregation, exclusion, and bodily violence. The "recalcitrant body" in Canadian urban literature is that which hovers at the margins of the collective body, the threatening yet

"necessary" other through which the proper, docile body is recognized and normalized. Native, Black, Oriental, Jewish, and female bodies are consequently constructed as abject, criminal, and defiling – characteristics which attach to their very corporeality and bodily representation. The indelible presence of these "absented" bodies undermine the mythologies attached to territory, landscape, and nation:

> they show up attempts to both conceal and deny otherness within the nation and to produce racial sameness as the basis of the nation-state. Canadian fictions of sameness seek to make acceptable the massacre and continued disenfranchisement of Native groups and the continued oppression and resistance of formerly colonized peoples who have migrated to the satellite nations of former colonial powers. It is these Others who have most clearly challenged the fictions of nation-state sameness as a racialized code that produces Canada as a "white nation." (Walcott 116)

The image of Vancouver as an outpost of Empire where white settlers may find their fortunes necessitated the physical and symbolic removal of the Chinese labourers instrumental in the growth of the city. In the novels of Robin, Majzels, and Cohen, the "recalcitrant body" takes many different forms: suppressed historical artefact (the native body), spatially contained and constrained female body (the *flâneuse*), and

ethnically marked and ghettoized Jewish body. My discussion of African-Canadian writing has similarly shown that the black body has either been effaced from Canadian spatial mythologies or seen as a contaminant that lingers on the peripheries of white civility.

This thesis has attempted to restore the place of the "marginalized body" within urban Canada. In the novels, plays, and poetry analysed in this dissertation, one may trace a pattern of spatial exclusion and abjection of those who do not correspond to the view of Canada as a colonial outpost of Empire or to its modern construction as a first-world white nation drawing on its European traditions. From the disavowal of slavery, restrictions on immigration, the internment and ghettoization of immigrant groups, and the relegation of Natives to the pre-modern spaces of the reservation, the social, political, and spatial discourses and practices of the nation have continually attempted to cleans itself of these "abject" others, disavow the "dirty little secrets" of its own history.

In conclusion, I invoke Dennis Lee once again, who suggests that Canada is "a space which is radically in question for us" (398), reflecting the postcolonial condition of a settler society in which an indigenous language of expression is absented and supplanted by the language of Empire: "The words I knew said Britain, and they said America, but they did not say my home. They were always and only about someone else's life" (399). If "colonial mimicry" has imposed a language and a spatial

imaginary on mainstream Canadian society, the discourses of modern nation-building have, in turn, supplanted the languages, the spatial constructs – the very bodies, of its most marginalized groups.

Notes

1. The fact that the Benjaminian *flâneur* was always a male figure reflects the restrictions placed on women's presence and mobility in public spaces in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. For engaging discussions of the female *flâneuse*, see Janet Wolff's "The Invisible Flâneuse: Women and the Literature of Modernity"" (1985), Melinda Harvey's "From *Passante* to *Flâneuse*: Encountering the Prostitute in Dorothy Richardson's *Pilgrimmage*" (2001) and Sally Munt's "The Lesbian *Flâneur*" (1995).
2. See for instance, *Montréal imaginaire: ville et littérature*. (Eds. Pierre Nepveu and Gilles Marcotte. Montréal: Fides, 1992), *Vancouver: Representing the Postmodern City.* (Ed. Paul Delaney. Vancouver: Arsenal Pulp Press, 1994), and *Culture of Cities: Under Construction* (Eds. Paul Moore and Meredith Risk. Oakville: Mosaic Press, 2001). See also "Writing Canadian Space / Écrire l'éspace canadien." (*Studies in Canadian Literature* 23.1), which includes numerous articles on the representation of contemporary Canadian urban spaces.

3. Frye asks his famous question in the conclusion to his *Literary History of Canada*: "It seems to me that Canadian sensibility has been profoundly disturbed, not so much by our famous problem of identity, important as that is, as by a series of paradoxes in what confronts that identity. It is less perplexed by the question 'Who am I?' than by some such riddle as 'Where is here?'" (826). Thirty-Five years later, *Essays on Canadian Writing* explored Frye's ongoing legacy and influence in their Fall, 2000 issue, titled "Where Is Here Now?"

4. Don Mitchell writes that "the concern within cultural geography for understanding spatial differentiation and the construction of identity has also led to an explosion of research on the cultural-geographic politics of sexuality, gender, race, and national identity ... identity is always a (spatial) social practice – not just a set of ideas or ideologies floating somewhere above and beyond the actions of people" (62). Among some of the more important recent theoretical developments in human geography are *The Production of Space* (Henri Lefebvre, 1991), *Space, Place and Gender.* (Doreen Massey, 1994), *Geographical Imaginations* (Derek Gregory, 1994), *Place and the Politics of Identity* (Michael Keith and Steve Pile 1993), and

Mapping the Subject (Steve Pile and Nigel Thrift, 1995).

5. Colonial mimicry refers to the "ambivalent relationship between colonizer and colonized ... the copying of the colonizing culture, behaviour, manners and values by the colonized contains both mockery and a certain 'menace'... mimicry reveals the limitation in the authority of colonial discourse, almost as though colonial authority inevitably embodies the seeds of its own destruction" (Ashcroft et al. *Post-Colonial Studies: The Key Concepts* 140). Colonial mimicry has been especially important in Bhabha's intervention in (post)colonial debates, particularly in *The Location of Culture* (1994).

6. For a discussion of the implications of anglophone writing in Montréal, see "Écrire en anglais au Québec: un devenir minoritaire?" *Québec Studies* 26 (1998-1999).

7. Itwaru writes, "It is a reading and an experiencing in which versions of ourselves in the world ... are simultaneously and constantly being invented, by ourselves as well as by others ... It is here where present consciousness with its attendant ambiguities, anxieties, and disorientations, *invents* meaning in the need to reduce confusion. Such persons' search for meaning within the country named Canada is also the search

for Canada as a domain of experience integral to the development of a sense of self. (9-12)

8. Michel Foucault writes that "the heterotopia is capable of juxtaposing in a single real space several spaces, several sites that are in themselves incompatible. Thus it is that the theater brings onto the rectangle of the stage, one after the other, a whole series of places that are foreign to one another; thus it is that the cinema is a very odd rectangular room, at the end of which, on a two-dimensional screen, one sees the projection of a three-dimensional space" ("Of Other Spaces" 25). I would argue that the ethnic ghetto works in a similar fashion by juxtaposing dissimilar social and cultural contexts onto a single geographic space.

9. The gaze has been theorized extensively in the context of power relationships. In *Birth of the Clinic*, Foucault has argued that the gaze of the doctor functions as a scopic regime which not only creates a particular type of subjectivity (the patient), but imbues power over the patient's body, movements, and treatment. The power of the gaze comes from the ability to study, catalogue, describe, and *know* the subjected other. Orientalism also functions as a scopic regime in that it creates

a particular type of subjectivity through the gaze. Edward Said writes that "knowledge of the Orient, because generated out of strength, in a sense *creates* the Orient, the Oriental, and his world ... the Oriental is depicted as something one judges, something one studies and depicts, something one disciplines, something one illustrates. The point is that in each of these cases the Oriental is *contained* and *represented* by dominating frameworks" (40).

10. Foucault has demonstrated how various forms of subjectivity have been created through the institutionalization of power. In prisons, hospitals, and asylums, a new type of subject was created through the application of minute processes of surveillance, discipline, regimentation, and examination, producing subjected, docile bodies. The ethnic ghetto, as an institutionalized form of spatial discourse, also produces embodied subjectivities (the Oriental other, the resident alien) through various forms of surveillance and control.

11. If the railway has been a foundational myth of the nation whose linking of east and west has come to symbolize Canadian industriousness and mastery over its immense landscape, its symbolic significance to excluded groups is quite

different. For the Natives in George Ryga's *The Ecstasy of Rita Joe*, the railway becomes a physical threat which destroys the "savage" body of the indigene, while for African-Canadians who served as porters, the railways have come to represent economic precarity and limited social mobility.

12. Tom Conley's *The Self-Made Map: Cartographic Writing in Early Modern France* provides an engaging discussion of maps as discursive tools in the construction of individual and collective identities. Conley suggests that mapping coincides with "the birth of the subject and of subjectivity in early modern Europe" for such representational schemes "afford[s] an almost instantaneous view of its own development of the subject and subjectivity through its affinities with extension, with natural boundaries, with vernacular idioms, and with the conflicts of warring states" (6).

13. As opposed to a positivistic conception of the map which assumes an unproblematic correspondence between "real" space and its representation, Deleuze and Guattari have argued that the map is "open and connectable in all of its dimensions; it is detachable, reversible, susceptible to constant modification. It can be torn, reversed, adapted to any kind of

mounting, reworked by an individual group or social formation" (*Thousand Plateaus* 12).

14. Richard Phillips writes that "To unmap is to denaturalize geography, hence to undermine world views that rest upon it" (143).

15. The Pacific Rim as a nation-building spatial paradigm briefly achieves national consciousness with the influx of an affluent Chinese business community when England ceases political control over Hong Kong. Otherwise, the Pacific Rim is more commonly understood and constructed as a network through which "undesirable" illegal refugees make their way to the shores of British Columbia. Glenn Deer examines the reception of Asian "illegals" and suggests that "Asians in North America, whether fresh off the rusty boat of a snakehead (a smuggler of people) or a fourth-generation descendant of Asian Canadian pioneers, continue to be interpellated as stereotypical and simplified *Others* by an historical narrative that includes acts of exclusion, internment, disenfranchisement, and discriminatory taxation" (6).

16. Kristeva argues that the corpse is the most abject of all materials for it is the most threatening: "The corpse (or

cadaver: *cadere*, to fall), that which has irremediably become a cropper, is cesspool, and death; it upsets even more violently the one who confronts it as fragile and fallacious chance. A wound with blood and pus, or the sickly, acrid smell of sweat, of decay, does not *signify* death. In the presence of signified death – a flat encephalograph, for instance – I would understand, react, accept. No, as in true theatre, without makeup or masks, refuse and corpses *show me* what I permanently thrust aside in order to live. These body fluids, this defilement, this shit are what life withstands, hardly and with difficulty, on the part of death. There, I am at the border of my condition as a living being. My body extricates itself, as being alive, from that border. Such wastes drop so that I might live, until, from loss to loss, nothing remains in me and my entire body falls beyond the limit—*cadere*, cadaver. If dung signifies the other side of the border, the place where I am not and which permits me to be, the corpse, the most sickening of wastes, is a border that has encroached upon everything. It is no longer I who expel, 'I' is expelled ... imaginary uncanniness and real threat, it beckons to us and ends up engulfing us" (3).

17. In *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, Judith Butler puts into doubt the "ontological integrity" of the subject by citing the performative aspects of identity – the manner in which an individual's repeated acts or assumptions about gender are *solidified* into an identity of presence: "Gender is the repeated stylization of the body, a set of repeated acts within a highly rigid regulatory frame that congeal over time to produce the appearance of substance, of a natural sort of being" (33). Just as certain modes of self-representation come to "define" or characterize a female gender, so too certain repeated rituals, practices, cultural narratives, and modes of self-representation "congeal" into specific ethnicities. In order to maintain this ethnic inscription, these must constantly be repeated, re-enacted, and resignified – in other words, performed.

18. "In racist discourse," Sibley writes, "animals represented as transgressive and therefore threatening unsullied categories of things and social groups, like rats which come out of the sewers and spread disease, have in turn been used to threaten minority groups ... to animalize or de-humanize a minority group in this way, of course, legitimates

persecution" (10).

19. To be "interpellated" is to be "called forth" as a subject by an ideological apparatus. Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin illustrate the process in the following way: "When a policeman hails you with the call 'Hey you!', the moment you turn around to acknowledge that you are the object of his attention, you have been interpellated in a particular way, as a particular kind of subject. Ideological State Apparatuses interpellate subjects in this way" ("Postcolonial Studies" 221).

20. Michael Keith and Nigel Thrift write, "codified in the aesthetics and ethics of meeting someone's eye/I, the scopic regime still remains a scene of ambiguity, uncertainty and conflict: transfixed by the interrogating gaze, people shuffle their feet and look away - to different places" (48).

21. Sibley writes that "the material environment of the suburb – gardens, verges, streets, houses, trees and shrubs – may convey a desirable sense of order, reflecting the domestic order of the home and feelings about cleanliness, tidiness and form boundaries which contribute to an individual's sense of well-being" (118).

22. Samira Kawash provides an engaging discussion of the

construction of homelessness and the homeless body in public discourse and in specific urban policies and practices. She argues that visible homelessness has become "a symptom and a symbol of the failed promises of progress and prosperity" (320) and the "increasingly violent" forms of exclusion of the homeless arise out of anxieties about "propertylessness." Because public space has been normalized as "a bourgeois public sphere" in which each body is implicitly and explicitly called to participate in "productive" ways, homeless bodies are constructed as either "victims or parasites outside the pale of society" (321). The homeless body is thus "a threat simultaneously ideological (the presence of the homeless challenges the definition of the public) and physical (the homeless body, by occupying space, becomes itself a threat)" (325). The "war on the homeless" (which includes laws against vagrancy and architectural practices which deny spaces of respite for homeless bodies) is seen by Kawash as "a mechanism for constituting and securing a public, establishing the boundaries of inclusion, and producing the abject body against which the proper, public body of the citizen can stand" (325).

23. Majzels wrote *City of Forgetting* soon after the murder of fourteen young women at the École Polytechnique in Montréal, a traumatic and brutal explosion of urban violence against women which is echoed in the gender warfare seen in the novel.

24. In "City of Verse," a survey of the urban poetry of Montréal, Pierre Nepveu suggests that one of the dominant metaphorical strategies of both English and French language poets is that of "the city-as-body, though it is a wounded body, ill, in pain ... in making a poetic investment, the city, this large 'body without organs' [Deleuze's phrase], comes apart, vomits up bits of itself, clenches its teeth (70-77).

25. Martha Radice uses the term "urban comfort" in her sociological study of the spatial appropriation at work in the anglophone community of post-Quiet Revolution Montréal. She suggests that "urban comfort" plays a crucial role in the ways in which this minority group constructs itself in relation to a predominantly francophone urban environment: "A good part of their sense of the city must come ... from their subjective, sensory, emotional, and symbolic experience of urban places, evoked by such phrases as 'feeling at home' or 'feeling out of

place'" (7). I would suggest that "urban comfort" also functions in relation to other minority groups, since the urban literature of immigrant writers is as much about coming to terms with deterritorialization from the homeland as it is about re-territorialization within the Canadian metropolis.

26. In "Of Other Spaces," Foucault describes the cemetery as a "strange heterotopia" whose historical meanings shift with commonly-held beliefs about the body, death, and the soul. If prior to the nineteenth century the cemetery was placed inside the walled borders of the city adjacent to churches and private homes, after industrialization and the application of scientific principals to all aspects of the body (including its disposal), "everyone has a right to her or his little box for her or his own personal little decay" (25). Located outside city limits or in peripheral locations within the city, the cemetery was "no longer the sacred and immortal heart of the city, but the 'other city' where each family possesses its dark resting place" (25).

27. Chanady similarly argues that not only are indigenes represented by the colonizer as inhabiting "pre-modern" spatial and temporal frames, their alterity is constructed as a "lack" which effaces their cultural and social specificities: "L'Autre

n'est point saisi dans sa spécificité, mais dans une ressemblance et sa différence par rapport à nous-mêmes. Cette différence est construite comme un contraire considéré comme un manque, une lacune ou une négativité, ou bien, chez d'autres penseurs, comme un contraire idéal ... Puis-qu'ils sont construits comme des représentants de notre passé, ils ne peuvent évidemment pas évoluer ... car l'altérité ne peut être conçue comme une vie alternative véritablement contemporaine de la notre" (65).

28. Preceding the play, Highway notes the centrality of the trickster in Native mythology: "The 'Trickster' is as pivotal and important a figure in the Native world as Christ is in the realm of Christian mythology. 'Weesageechak' in Cree, 'Nanabush' in Ojibway, 'Raven' in others, this Trickster goes by many names and many guises. In fact, he can assume any guise he chooses. Essentially a comic, clownish sort of character, he teaches us about the nature and meaning of existence on the planet Earth; he straddles the consciousness of man and that of God, the Great Spirit" (xii).

29. In a study of Evelyn Lau's writing, Claire Chang suggests the term "runaway subjectivity" in describing "transgressive" bodies

which must remain mobile if they are to survive in urban spaces.

30. Jeanette Armstrong provides a striking portrayal of the Native American woman as "squaw," and the ways in which she has been victimized throughout colonial and post-colonial history in this country. Hers is an abject body upon which men vent their desires, angers, fears, and frustrations:

I am a squaw
a heathen
a savage
basically a mammal
I am a female
only in the ability
to breed
and bear papooses
to be carried
quaintly
on a board
or lost
to welfare

I have no feelings

The sinuous planes
of my brown body
carry no hint
of the need
to be caressed
desired
loved
Its only use
to be raped
beaten and bludgeoned
in some
B-grade western. ("Indian Woman" 229)

31. Highway has explained in a talk at the University of Victoria in 1992 that this fictionalized rape is based on an actual event which took place in a small town in Manitoba: Helen Betty Osborne, a young Native girl, was gang-raped and murdered by young White men – and penetrated fifty-two times with a screwdriver. Although many people in the town knew about the incident, only one youth of the four was brought to trial, and he received a very light sentence" (Nothof 37).

32. The "ejection" of urban Natives to the outskirts of Canadian cities is, unfortunately, all too common. This is particularly true in Manitoba and Saskatchewan, where controversy has erupted after allegations that police forces in varies cities, including Winnipeg and Saskatoon, have detained allegedly drunk Natives. In what has been perversely referred to as "Starlight Tours," Natives are driven to the outskirts of the city in the dead of winter and left there, forced to make their way back to the city on foot. This illegal practice resulted in the much-publicized death of Neil Stonechild, a 17-year-old Native youth found frozen to death in a remote field on the outskirts of Saskatoon.

Http://www.cbc.ca/news/indepth/firstnations/starlighttours.html.

33. This term was coined by George Elliott Clarke, who writes in the "Confession" to *Fire on the Water*: "I use the term 'Africadian,' a word I have minted from 'Africa' and 'Acadia' (the old name for Nova Scotia and New Brunswick), to denote the Black populations of the Maritimes and especially of Nova Scotia. Other appellations – 'Afro-Nova Scotian,' 'Black Nova Scotian,' etc. – are unwieldy. Moreover, if Africadians constitute a *state*, let it be titled *Africadia*" (8).

34. Frantz Fanon's *Black Skins White Masks*, Edward Said's *Orientalism*, Homi Bhabha's *The Location of Culture,* and bell hooks' *Yearning: Race, Gender, and Cultural Politics* are all seminal works which discusses "blackness" in relation to (post)colonialism, nationalism, and subaltern identity politics.

35. This process of identification of an abjected other with their environment is similar to what Barnor Hesse has defined as "spatial nativization." Quoting Clifford, he argues that "people are compressed into prefabricated landscapes, the ghetto, the shanty town, and undergo a process of 'representational essentializing ... in which one part or aspect of people's lives come to epitomize them as a whole" (175).

36. The jazz classic, "Strange Fruit," sung by Billie Holiday,

hauntingly evokes the suffering black body after it has been captured and lynched by the racist mobs of the American south. The "pastoral," which Clarke has argued is a clearly identifiable tradition in Africadian writing, is offset by the jarringly grotesque image of hanging black bodies:

Southern trees bear strange fruit
Blood on the leaves and blood at the root
Black bodies swinging in the southern breeze
Strange fruit hanging from the poplar trees

Pastoral scene of the gallows south
The bulging eyes and the twisted mouth
Scent of magnolia sweet and fresh
Then the sudden smell of burning flesh

Here is a fruit for the crows to pluck
For the rain to gather, for the wind to suck
For the sun to ripe, for the tree to drop
Here is a strange and bitter crop. ("Strange Fruit")

37. Elizabeth Grosz suggests that society "carves meanings onto and out of bodies; it does not, as it professes, 'enlighten the masses' by reason and education but instead ensures its cohesion through coercion and cruelty. All cultures, all modes of civilization practice a kind of ritualized body-inscription that is no more or less painful or primitive than in our own forms of initiation ceremonies" (34).

38. Smell disturbs because it is associated with the residues of the body and with the transgressing of bodily (and ethnic)

boundaries. Laporte suggests that "civilization despises odor and will oust it with increased ferocity as power strives to close the gap between itself and divine purity. This ferocity reaches its peak when imperialism punishes colour. Smells have no place in the constitutive triad of civilization: hygiene, order, and beauty. In the empire of hygiene and order, odor will always be suspect" (84).

39. Citing the experience of Franz Fanon (*Black Skin White Masks*. London: Pluto Press, 1967) as he walks down a street and is observed with fear and trepidation by a white child, Michael Keith and Nigel Thrift unpack the operations of embodied signification involved in such an encounter: "In the colonial situation Fanon dissects, the black man's visibility has a double effect: his skin allows him to be seen and marked as different (from whites), but it also separates him (from whites) in a way which makes him unknowable (to whites). As a strategy of colonial rule, the colonial master-subject separates and defines the colonial slave-subject, only to find that this makes the colonial slave-subject radically unknowable ... the exchanges between coloniser and colonised involve the ambivalence of desire and fear, the failure of not only

identification and anti-identification, but also mutual misrecognition in the field of meaning, which amount to extraordinary efforts to police the boundaries between coloniser and colonised in and through the practice of power" (43).

40. George Elliott Clarke has pointed out that in Austin Clarke's stories, "women, whiteness, and hence, white women symbolize attractive, glistening surfaces that can entrap and destroy the unwary, meaning, for Clarke, black male immigrants ... Clarke creates protagonists who view white women as symbols of Canada - that is to say, of a vamp who entices 'her' thralls with phony promises of *bourgeois* comfort" (*Odysseys* 243).

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