Université de Montréal

"The Hybridity of Violence: Location, Dislocation, and Relocation in Contemporary Canadian Multicultural and Indigenous Writing"

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Résumé :

Cette thèse explore la relation entre les littératures autochtones et multiculturelles du Canada. Même si les critiques littéraires examinent les littératures dites mineures de plus en plus, ces dernières sont rarement étudiées sans la présence médiatrice de la littérature canadienne considérée comme étant dominante. Afin de produire une telle analyse, cette thèse mobilise le concept d'hybridité en tant que catégorie d'analyse de texte qui, en plus de son histoire raciale et coloniale, décrit convenablement les formes d'expérimentations stylistiques que les écrivains autochtones et multiculturels emploient afin de représenter et questionner leur marginalisation. Ne voulant pas reproduire les interprétations fétichistes qui réduisent les littératures autochtones et multiculturelles à leurs représentations de concepts d'altérité, j'examine ces textes dans leurs relations avec différents discours et débats ayant marqué les études littéraires canadiennes, notamment, le long poème canadien, l'écriture des prairies canadiennes, la littérature urbaine, le multiculturalisme, et les premières nations. Ma méthode d'analyse repose sur la façon dont chaque texte étudié alimente ces catégories d'analyse littéraire tout en les modifiant radicalement. De plus, je développe un cadre conceptuel et théorique permettant l'étude de la relation entre les textes autochtones et multiculturels sans toutefois confondre ou réduire les contextes d'où proviennent ces littératures.

Ma thèse et ma méthode d'analyse se concrétise par l'interprétation des textes écrits par Armand Garnet Ruffo, Suzette Mayr, Rawi Hage, et Jeannette Armstrong. Le chapitre d'introduction détaille la façon dont la relation entre les textes autochtones et multiculturels a été appréhendée jusqu'à présent. J'y élabore mon cadre théorique qui joint et réinterprète de manière critique diverses théories, dont celle du postcolonialisme, de l'hybridité, et de la mondialisation, et la façon dont ces théories se rapportent aux études littéraires canadiennes. Dans mon deuxième chapitre, j'analyse le long poème d'Armand Garnet Ruffo, *Grey Owl: The Mystery of Archie Belaney*, en m'attardant particulièrement aux stratégies d'expérimentations stylistiques et génériques que Ruffo développe afin de rendre le genre du long poème canadien autochtone et de questionner l'identité de Grey Owl. Mon troisième chapitre examine *Venous Hum*, un roman de Suzette Mayr. Ce texte remet en question la tradition de « prairie writing », le multiculturalisme canadien, et le conservatisme albertain à travers son style expérimental, son usage des métaphores et du réalisme magique. Mon quatrième chapitre interprète le roman montréalais *Cockroach*, de Rawi Hage, en examinant la

façon dont ses unités locales, nationales, et globales rencontrent le colonialisme et contestent les discours nationaux une fois que sa critique de la mondialisation se trouve réarticulée dans une approbation des discours d'interventions humanitaires de l'occident. Mon dernier chapitre explore le roman de Jeannette Armstrong, *Whispering in Shadows*, afin de démontrer les limites de ma méthode d'analyse. Puisque l'hybridité sous-entend inévitablement la notion d'assimilation, son application dans le contexte de l'œuvre d'Armstrong s'avèrerait réductrice. Pour cette raison, ce chapitre utilise des concepts autochtones définis par Armstrong afin de développer une méthode de lecture non-hégémonique.

Ma thèse examine donc la façon dont chaque texte déploie le concept d'hybridité pour à la fois contester et enrichir les discours critiques qui tentent de contenir ces textes. Elle contribue aux études postcoloniales de la littérature canadienne en élargissant leur champ habituel pour inclure les complexités des théories de la mondialisation, et en examinant quelles stratégies littéraires les textes autochtones et multiculturels partagent, mais mobilisent à des fins différentes.

Mots clés: littérature canadienne, hybridité, mondialisation, théorie postcoloniale, race, long poème canadien, écriture des prairies canadiennes, littérature urbaine, Armand Garnet Ruffo, Suzette Mayr, Rawi Hage, Jeannette Armstrong

Abstract:

This dissertation explores the relationship between indigenous and multicultural writing in Canada. While critics have paid increasing attention to minoritized literatures, indigenous and multicultural literary strategies are seldom examined together without the mediating presence of settler or dominant Canadian literatures. In order to perform such an analysis, this dissertation deploys the concept of hybridity as a category of literary analysis that comes from a history of colonial violence, but which adequately describes the forms of stylistic experimentation which indigenous and multicultural writers use to dramatize and subvert their marginalization. In order to avoid fetishizing indigenous and multicultural texts as markers of reified "otherness," I examine them in relation to specific discourses and debates in Canadian literary studies, such as the Canadian long poem, prairie writing, city writing, multiculturalism, and indigeneity. Methodologically, my dissertation examines how each text under discussion contributes, yet radically reconfigures and particularizes, each of these literary categories. In addition, I develop a conceptual framework through which the relationship between multicultural and indigenous texts can be approached without rehearsing the conflations that have marked Canadian literary criticism.

To this end, I provide close-readings of texts by Armand Garnet Ruffo, Suzette Mayr, Rawi Hage, and Jeannette Armstrong. My introductory chapter details the manner in which the relationship between indigenous and multicultural writing has been approached in Canadian literary studies so far, and elaborates my conceptual framework through critical re-interpretations of postcolonial, globalization, and hybridity theory as they relate to the field of Canadian literary studies. In my second chapter, I analyze Armand Garnet Ruffo's long poem *Grey Owl: The Mystery of Archie Belaney*. I focus on the generic and stylistic strategies Ruffo develops in order to indigenize the genre of the Canadian long poem and question Grey Owl's identity. My third chapter examines Suzette Mayr's *Venous Hum* as a text which challenges prairie writing, Canadian multiculturalism, and Albertan conservatism through stylistic experimentation, metaphor usage, and use of magic realism. In my fourth chapter, I interpret Hage's Montreal novel *Cockroach* as a text whose local, national, and global scales intersect with colonialism and contest national narratives as the novel ultimately replicates Western humanitarian intervention. My final chapter explores Jeannette Armstrong's *Whispering in Shadows* in order to illustrate the conceptual limits of this dissertation. Since hybridity always

assumes (partial) assimilation, its application in the context of Armstrong's work would bear coercive results. For that reason, this chapter draws on Armstrong's definition of indigenous concepts in order to develop a non-hegemonic method of analysis.

My dissertation then examines the manner in which each text mobilizes hybridity in order to challenge and supplement the critical discourses that seek to contain them. It contributes to postcolonial Canadian literary studies by opening up the field to the complexities which competing definitions of the global generate, and by examining what literary strategies indigenous and multicultural texts share, yet deploy to different ends.

Keywords: Canadian literature, hybridity, globalization, postcolonial theory, race, Canadian long poem, prairie writing, city writing, Armand Ruffo, Suzette Mayr, Rawi Hage, Jeannette Armstrong

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Chapter 1: Introduction: Revisiting the Relationship between Indigenous and Multicultural Writing: CanLit, Postcolonial Theory, and Competing Hybridities

This dissertation examines the relationship between contemporary Canadian indigenous and multicultural writing without putting them in direct comparison with Canada's settler literature. As I began to research the critical material relevant to this project, I noticed that indigenous, dominant, and multicultural/diasporic writing are often examined within a similar conceptual model, notably because all three literatures can be read through postcolonial theory. Yet, the predominant concerns of this criticism are to establish similarities between all three subject-positions,[1] find thematic connections,[2] and compare indigenous and dominant texts, or dominant and multicultural writing.[3] Rarely do critics analyze how indigenous and multicultural literatures intersect outside of their unequal relations with what is considered to be dominant or centrist Canadian literature. For these reasons, my project was initially conceptualized through a series of overlapping questions: What is Canada's relationship with postcolonial theory when it maintains colonial relations with its indigenous communities? What are the connections between multicultural communities and indigenous peoples when the former benefit from Canada's ongoing colonial project? What is the relationship between racialized writing and dominant Canadian literature, and how do

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[1] For example, Cynthia Sugars contends in *Unhomely States* that indigenous, dominant, and multicultural writing in Canada have to recognize the fact that their home lies elsewhere, or, in the case of indigenous peoples, that colonialism has alienated them from their home ("Introduction" xiii; xx). Laura Moss' *Is Canada Postcolonial?* configures all three subject positions as united in that their answer to the title question is always "it depends" (8). See also Northrop Frye's *The Bush Garden* and *Mythologizing Canada*, Margaret Atwood's *Survival*, Graham Huggan's *Territorial Disputes*, W.H. New' *Land Sliding*, and E.D. Blodgett's *Five Part Invention* for different ways of constructing (and criticizing) the field of Canadian literature through certain narratives.

[2] See for instance Heather Zwicker's "Canadian Women of Colour in the New World Order," where indigenous and multicultural writers are examined through their troubled relationship with home. See also Albert Braz's "Outer America: Racial Hybridity and Canada's Peripheral Place in Inter-American Discourse," where he sees similarities between the Métis and other hybridized and diasporic communities.

[3] See edited collections such as *Unhomely States*, *Home-Work*, *Literary Pluralities*, *Cultural Difference and the Literary Text*, *Is Canada Postcolonial?*, and *Narratives of Citizenship*.

differently racialized texts relate to each other? This dissertation then arises out of a need to address that while indigenous and multicultural texts share common concerns because of their unequal relations with dominant Canadians, the cultural production which emerges out of their subject position cannot be subsumed under a single conceptual framework.

My dissertation is not structured around comparisons that would risk conflating radically different contexts and literary strategies. The texts I analyze, Armand Ruffo's *Grey Owl: The Mystery of Archie Belaney*, Suzette Mayr's *Venous Hum*, Rawi Hage's *Cockroach*, and Jeannette Armstrong's *Whispering in Shadows*, do share various thematic and stylistic concerns: they explore issues of racism, and contest their marginalization through diverse experimental techniques such as generic hybridity, magic realism, and metaphor usage. They are also easily fetishized by a global market that constructs "otherness" as a desirable commodity (Dobson 74; Fish 378; Godard, "Notes" 230; Kamboureli, "Fred Wah" 123). Yet, the manner in which they mobilize generic and stylistic experimentation, as well as their ability to subvert the literary and critical categories that seek to contain them differ vastly depending on each writer's particular context. These connections and disruptions between the literary texts subsequently led to a different set of questions: How can I develop a methodology to examine indigenous and multicultural texts without conflating particularities? How can I analyze these texts configured as "other" to the dominant without contributing to their fetishization? And since multicultural and indigenous texts meet through postcolonial discourse, how can I deploy postcolonial terms of analysis, which are highly contested by indigenous critics, without developing a hegemonic reading practice?

The relationship between indigenous and multicultural writing my dissertation elaborates is therefore not identified through thematic connections between literary texts. It is

rather one which I conceptualize through an adaptable framework that draws on debates within Canadian literary criticism, terms borrowed from postcolonial and hybridity theory, and on the manner in which these terms have influenced Canadian literary studies. This conceptual framework is "adaptable" because its application is dependent upon the text itself – it is not a theoretical grid that dictates how each text should be interpreted, but one which explores how categories of literary analysis in Canadian literary studies and in theories of hybridity unfold differently depending on the context in which they are applied. My dissertation then argues that each text under discussion constitutes an intervention in a genre or literary category specific to Canadian literary criticism: the long poem, prairie literature, urban writing, and the place of indigenous literatures within the Canadian canon. These texts "intervene" because the manner in which these fields have been historically defined, or the assumptions under which they operate, pose specific challenges to the texts. Ruffo's long poem revisits the coercive potential of the multiple forms that interact within the Canadian long poem, while Mayr's novel challenges traditional definitions of prairie literature as rural, masculine, heteronormative, and unraced. Hage's novel, with its incisive critiques of multiculturalism and Quebec, exposes the gaps national narratives can create, as neither multiculturalism nor the two solitudes can encapsulate the protagonists' troubled experiences in Montreal. Armstrong's *Whispering in Shadows* encourages a reconsideration of indigenous writing as a literary category in order to present it as a literature informed by global, transnational, national, and local connections. In other words, the works belong within these categories and debates, but cannot be contained by them, as their stylistic and generic instability fractures a seamless application of conventional categories of literary analysis. The texts then always generate

(productive) tensions because they resist hegemonic narratives, even the ones which they seem to create.

The original idea for this dissertation came out of Mary Louise Pratt's concept of the contact zone. While the term has been mobilized in a multicultural context (Wah, *FI* 94-95), Pratt initially defined it as a cultural zone of *colonial* encounters to describe the literary strategies deployed in an indigenous text (8).[4] Specifically, this term relates to the unequal relations of power between invader-settlers and indigenous peoples (7).[5] I found this concept appealing because of the violence and inequality it stresses. The framework I initially elaborated was to overlap the contact zone with theories of critical multiculturalism in order to address multiculturalism in conjunction with Canada's colonial legacy. The concept of violence, crucial to hybridity's theoretical history, could then be examined as ongoing even when hybridity is used to describe the subversion of colonial discourse, or an empowered identity that brings together disparate cultural elements. The often celebratory discourse around hybridity was always problematic for this project, as hybridity's grounding in racial categories entails that, in an indigenous context, it leads to a loss of legal status (L. Smith 22; Lawrence and Dua 121). The contact zone also proved inadequate because, despite its literary origins, its attention to cross-cultural encounters puts a certain emphasis on the nature of those encounters rather on the strategies they enabled. As a concept, hybridity also centres around issues of culture that risk obscuring literary techniques because of its insistence on identity politics.

[4] Guaman Poma de Ayala's *New Chronicle and Good Government and Justice* (1615), written in Spanish and Quechua, embodies Pratt's theory: it describes the violence of colonialism, revisits and rewrites Christian history from an Andean perspective, but does so by "using the European's own tools [writing and line drawing]" (Pratt 7). The relevance of this literary example is that Pratt's theory was initially developed to address the literary representation of cross-cultural encounters, and the hybrid textual strategies this encounter created.

[5] Although not explicitly mentioned in Pratt's theory, the slave trade and relationships between slaves, indigenous peoples and European colonizers also applies well to the concept of the contact zone.

Because my dissertation aims to examine the varied literary strategies indigenous and multicultural texts mobilize, I soon abandoned the concept of the contact zone and greatly modified the context in which hybridity operates. Hybridity in my work describes generic interplay and stylistic experimentation more than it relates to issues of assimilation, race, culture, or identity. This does not entail that hybridity operates as a race-neutral concept in this dissertation. On the contrary, the historical definition of this concept influenced my choice of literary texts, since all four contain occurrences of physical, racial, or epistemological violence. By epistemological violence I mean demands for static authenticity, instances of cultural appropriation, as well as the instrumentalization of a literary text by critics who wish to ensure that an oppositional narrative remains bound within existing categories. All the literary texts I discuss are caught between empowering and threatening possibilities and literary strategies. The texts deploy generic hybridity, metaphors, intertextuality, and stylistic experimentation in a way that challenges coercive discourses, such as those of authenticity, assimilation, and official multiculturalism. At the same time, because the texts construct and, in that process, replicate the discourses they oppose, they remain at risk of reifying them or of becoming the very hegemonic narratives they contest.

The texts therefore present an ambivalence that prevents them from being easily categorized. Ruffo and Armstrong's texts do not represent all indigenous literary texts produced in Canada, nor do Mayr and Hage's novels represent Canadian multicultural literature. What a close-reading of each of these texts does provide is the varied trajectories through which indigenous and multicultural literatures can be apprehended not merely as works oppositional to dominant forms of Canadian literature, but as texts that radically reconfigure, supplement, and expand the field of Canadian literature. The methodology my

dissertation develops is then encapsulated in my subtitle, "Location, Dislocation, and Relocation." Each text I examine is first located within a literary genre or debate relevant to Canadian literary criticism, but because each text questions these categories and highlights their limitations, the categories face a certain dislocation. Through this process of dislocation, the text performs a relocation, in which the literary categories under which Canadian literary criticism operates are critically revisited and expanded.[6]

In order to elaborate how I revisit the relationship between multicultural and indigenous writing, this chapter outlines how this relationship has been apprehended so far, through the concept of diaspora as well as through critical and literary editorial practices. I also point out what new critical opportunities are possible now that differences have reshaped the way in which comparative analyses operate. I subsequently examine how postcolonialism and postcolonial thought have been mobilized, contested, and reformulated in Canadian studies in order to justify my focus on hybridity as a category of literary analysis. While this concept now occupies the status of a master discourse in postcolonial studies, I argue that it remains a useful term to discuss ambivalent and destabilizing literary strategies in texts also concerned with colonialism, racism, and their current global manifestations. My use of hybridity throughout this dissertation derives but differs from its previous theorizations, as I use the term to analyze how the texts' literary strategies destabilize interpretations and literary

[6] This methodology certainly resembles Deleuze and Guattari's method in *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature*, but my application of location, dislocation, and relocation differs from their concepts of deterritorialization and reterritorialization. For them deterrritorialization relates to language usage (Kafka 33), while reterritorialization, that is, the moment when language "cessant d'être organe d'un sens… devient instrument du sens" (37), is undesirable. In my dissertation, relocation is not dangerous, conservative, or reactionary. Rather, it is a way in which genres and literary categories can be re-examined critically in order to develop non-hegemonic readings. My method is thus similar to that of Deleuze and Guattari in intent, but the concepts I deploy should not be conflated with theirs.

categories. In that way, hybridity troubles seemingly coherent interpretations through the very textual and thematic structures the text deploys to support those interpretations.

1 The Relationship between Indigenous and Multicultural Writing: Problems of Diaspora, Canadian Criticism, and Literary Anthologies

While both indigenous and multicultural writing should lend themselves easily to comparative analysis, several factors complicate such analyses. As Blodgett and Kamboureli note in different contexts, indigenous peoples are excluded from the Policy of Multiculturalism (1971) and its later articulation as the Multiculturalism Act (1988) (Kamboureli, *MD* xxviii; Blodgett 208). This exclusion means, for Blodgett, that the two types of literature should not be examined together (208). Critics often seem puzzled by this exclusion, but it is important to note that integrating indigenous peoples within multicultural discourse would effectively construct them as immigrants, as just one more Canadian "ethnic" group (Ignace and Ignace 142). Many indigenous critics are prompt to remind readers and other critics that the Policy of Multiculturalism was created by the same government that sought to implement the White Paper (1969), a bill that would have effectively terminated legislations on indigenous status and reservations (140-141; Lawrence and Dua 135).[7] According to Dobson, this discrepancy allows indigeneity to trouble multiculturalism (75), but other critics prefer to establish conceptual frameworks through which these two subject-positions can be examined.

For Blodgett, the comparison between these texts is legitimated because indigenous and multicultural peoples share certain concerns, such as a focus on alterity (208), their victim

[7] Despite this significant opposition on the part of indigenous peoples, Sneja Gunew has asserted that Canadian Aboriginal peoples "seem to align themselves much more readily within multiculturalism" ("Postcolonialism" 210) than Australian Aboriginals.

status vis-à-vis history (216), and a loss of agency and language (224). Similarly, Kamboureli states that indigenous and multicultural populations share a similar alienation from the land, but for different reasons. While immigrant populations do not yet feel at home, indigenous peoples continuously see their land rights denied, withdrawn, or violated (*MD* xxxii), an argument which Arun Mukherjee and Heather Zwicker echo in their focus on land, alienation, and dispossession (Mukherjee, *PML* 70; Zwicker 143). In contrast, indigenous critics such as Kateri Akiwenzie-Damm and Emma Larocque insist that it is precisely their relationship with the land that makes all indigenous peoples "fundamentally different from anyone else" in Canada (Akiwenzie-Damm 84; Larocque 88). These insights emphasize that the desire to establish connections always risks subsuming important differences. For instance, if many non-Native critics are prompt to stress indigenous peoples' alienation from the land, indigenous peoples insist on their continued connection with it. The conceptual frameworks that have been elaborated so far through the use of diaspora theory, literary criticism, and literary anthologies are then always troubled by the interventions of indigenous writers and critics.

For many critics, the concept of diaspora is useful to examine both indigenous and multicultural cultural productions. Historically, diaspora has been defined as "diametrically opposed" (Kamboureli, *MD* xxxii) to indigeneity, as it indicates displacement, while indigeneity signals a form of rooted belonging (Harvey and Thompson 1). Regardless, critics such as Jonathan and Daniel Boyarin, Graham Harvey, Charles D. Thompson, James Clifford, and Sophie McCall[8] believe that applying the concept of diaspora to indigenous contexts can

[8] For Sophie McCall, it is not all indigenous contexts that can be analyzed through the combination of concepts of indigenous sovereignty and diasporic affiliations, but precisely the Métis one, as well as the relationships between home and community which some "off-reserve" people might maintain ("Diaspora" ¶2).

lead to productive results.[9] They argue that the term is fitting because colonial projects effectively created indigenous diasporas through the reservation system (Harvey and Thompson 3) and by denying sovereignty to indigenous nations (McCall, "Diasporas" ¶2). While indigenous diasporas do highlight the continued violence of colonialism, the concept can be problematic. For instance, James Clifford argues that "tribal predicaments can be diasporic" (253), because "if tribal groups survive, it is now frequently in artificially reduced and displaced conditions, with segments of their populations living in cities away from the land" (254). Clifford's statement then assumes that the only way for indigenous peoples to not be diasporic is to live in "pre-contact" conditions, and that they cannot be "at home" if they live in a city. His comment therefore performs an imperial gesture upon indigenous peoples, as it imposes a set of assumptions on their lifestyles and sense of belonging.

The concept of diaspora is also complicated by the fact that indigenous critics employ the term diaspora in different contexts than those outlined above. In "Oratory on Oratory," Lee Maracle uses it to describe Canada's non-Native population (55).[10] For Renya K. Ramirez, diaspora is a useful concept to analyze the relationship indigenous peoples maintain with their home community when they relocate to a city or have become landless, and to articulate a sense of pan-indigenous consciousness (11). In contrast, Neal McLeod finds the concept useful to describe both the physical displacement (spatial diaspora) and the cultural alienation

[9] Maximilian C. Forte's edited collection *Indigenous Cosmopolitanism* and Canadian critic Deena Rhyms also align indigenous and diasporic concerns, although they do so through the concept of cosmopolitanism. For Forte, cosmopolitanism enables critics to stress the "rooted and routed"-ness of indigenous communities. This conceptualization allows indigenous forms of mobility to operate without resulting in assimilation. However, the complex debates on cosmopolitanism, as well as the term's Eurocentric, elite, and intellectual tradition (Rhyms ¶1), render its application problematic.

[10] Emma Larocque also alters the terms under which non-Native Canadians usually construct themselves. For example, she claims that the "original settlers" are indigenous peoples, as they constitute the "deeply rooted" (7) presence in this land (7). She subsequently renames non-Native Canadians "re-settlers" because of their immigrant status (7).

(ideological diaspora) the Cree community has faced because of colonialism. At the same time, McLeod complicates the affiliation between multicultural and indigenous concerns when he observes that

> Canada has often been the land where people from around the world have come to avoid persecution and oppression in their homelands; it is my contention, however, that Indigenous people within Canada have also been placed into a state of exile within this country. (19)

His comment therefore points to the liberating function of the Canadian state for many diasporic peoples, yet its continued violence against indigenous peoples. In addition, diaspora also raises questions from a multicultural perspective. Since diaspora entails a certain "agonized relationship to home" (Fleischmann and van Styvendale xxvii), it is inadequate to describe literary texts that deny diasporic connections in favour of national or regional identities.[11] The concept of diaspora is then too limited to encapsulate the relationship between multicultural and indigenous writing, as it risks becoming too prescriptive and dictating what forms these texts should take.

Editorial practices in Canadian criticism have also faced specific challenges in examining the relationship between indigenous and multicultural writing through postcolonial approaches.[12] As both Sugars' *Unhomely States* and Moss's *Is Canada Postcolonial?* emphasize, it is difficult to pinpoint the meaning of postcolonialism in a Canadian context, as it can address multicultural writing, the relationship between invader-settlers and imperial

[11] For instance, Mayr's *Venous Hum* denies diasporic connections. Similarly, Kogawa's *Obasan* deplores the racialization of Japanese Canadians and advocates for an inclusive form of citizenship, and Ondaatje's *In the Skin of a Lion* is more interested in how immigrant communities contributed to the building of Toronto than to the ties these communities maintain with their homeland.

[12] Postcolonial frameworks of analysis are frequent not only in diasporic and multicultural analyses but also in studies of indigenous texts (see Dee Horne, Helen Hoy, Renate Eigenbrod, and Judith Legatt).

power, as well as the relationship between First Nations and dominant Canadians. Sugars' edited volume seeks to emphasize these contradictions, but her anthology is looking for "central arguments" ("Introduction" *US* xiv) in postcolonial Canadian studies, and finds one in the concept of the unhomely. She contends that all Canadians, regardless of subject-position, are somehow not at home, or have been made to be not at home in Canada (xiii). In other words, all Canadians fit within the same narrative. In addition, neither Sugars' *Unhomely States*, her *Home-Work: Postcolonialism, Pedagogy, and Canadian Literature*, nor Moss's *Is Canada Postcolonial?* offer insights into the relationship between multicultural and indigenous writing, since the focus tends to be on a minority literature's relationship with dominant Canadian literature and criticism.

Yet, what complicates the connection between these two categories can be teased out through these anthologies: Sugars' *Unhomely States* contains Thomas King's "Godzilla versus the Post-Colonial" and Maracle's "The Post-Colonial Imagination," while Moss includes Judith Legatt's response to these two articles in her edited volume. Both King and Maracle challenge the notion that indigenous literatures can be read through postcolonial methodologies. They argue that the term suggests that colonialism has ended (Maracle, "Post-Colonial" 205), puts too much emphasis on colonialism (King, "Godzilla" 185), and performs an imperial function in that it prescribes the content of First Nations texts (190). Legatt challenges their arguments, as she interprets the alternative methodologies Maracle and King propose as postcolonial (113). Legatt is aware that the similarities she perceives might be caused by her own subject position, which couldbe preventing her from seeing the distinctions which King and Maracle emphasize (116). The debate however sheds light on what complicates the relationship between diasporic writing, which lends itself easily to

postcolonial methodologies, and indigenous writing, for which the term is more complex. Indeed, it is the reluctance of some indigenous writers to be read through postcolonial theory which signals the fractures, rather than the similarities, between indigenous and multicultural subject-positions.[13]

The manner in which indigenous texts and diasporic/multicultural writing has been brought together in Canadian literary studies also highlights the risks critics face when examining their relationship. For instance, as multiculturalism came to define a category of literary texts, anthologies such as Hutcheon and Richmond's *Other Solitudes* and Kamboureli's *Making a Difference* emerged as pedagogical tools to approach texts oppositional to what had previously been constructed as Canadian literature. Published in 1990, *Other Solitudes* constructs multicultural writing as a response to and challenge of Hugh MacLennan's novel *Two Solitudes* (Hutcheon, *OS* 1).[14] This anthology's omission of indigenous writers corresponds to the exclusions of the Multiculturalism Act.[15] Nonetheless, Hutcheon and Richmond subsume all different subject-positions, be they First Nations, multicultural, or invader-settler subjects, through the signs of immigration and multiculturalism. Thus, Richmond quotes Atwood's "we are all immigrants to this place even if we were born here" ("Preface" n.p.), while Hutcheon states that "even the native peoples were and are plural – in other words, multicultural" (*OS* 10). Such statements rob both multicultural populations and indigenous peoples of their oppositional power by conflating

[13] A critic such as Arun Mukherjee demonstrates the willingness on the part of multicultural and diasporic populations to be aligned with postcolonialism (*PML* 7), a theoretical framework she finds inappropriate for invader-settler contexts (217). In contrast, this impulse is resisted by indigenous critics such as Thomas King, Lee Maracle, Bonita Lawrence, and Linda Tuhiwai Smith.

[14] The reference to *Two Solitudes* here enables *Other Solitudes* to become the "new" national narrative that seeks to resolve tensions between different groups.

[15] As stated in the Act, the provisions "do not include… any Indian band, band council or other body established to perform a governmental function in relation to an Indian band or other group of aboriginal people" (CMA, 2d).

multiculturalism, a state-sponsored policy, with a form of pluralism that forces what is different to return as the same, as being all somehow "immigrant."[16] For that reason, Kamboureli criticizes Hutcheon and Richmond's project, as well as Hutcheon's response to her critics in "Multicultural Furor." For Kamboureli, Hutcheon and Richmond construct ethnicity as inherent to Canadian literature (*SB* 165), a strategy which renders difference invisible (165).[17]

However, Kamboureli's own anthology, *Making a Difference*, contains conceptual problems. It differs from Hutcheon and Richmond's in that her anthology encompasses both multicultural and indigenous writers, whose subject positions come to represent minoritized writing and difference. Were her anthology simply called *Making a Difference*, the presence of indigenous texts would not raise questions, since it would imply a focus on texts that have been minoritized or marginalized. However, the subtitle "Canadian Multicultural Literatures in English" effectively erases the distinction between indigenous and multicultural writers. For Kamboureli, the subtitle was meant to point out that Canada's history is "haunted by dissonance" (xviii), since "Canadian multicultural literature" suggests that "Canadian literature" does not yet reflect the diverse make-up of the country. The anthology is therefore conceptualized as a genealogical project that emphasizes that because of its colonial past, the

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[16] In *Diamond Grill*, Fred Wah strongly opposes this conceptualization of all Canadians as "immigrants" precisely because it departicularizes what makes immigrant experiences distinct from those of dominant Canadians (125). Robert Budde makes a similar critique. He argues that Canada's failure to address issues of displacement as they relate to race lies in the state's ability to reduce the issue by stating "that we are all raced and immigrant and different" (253). Instead, Budde argues that the conversation should lead to a recognition that racism and exclusions have been instrumental in Canadian nation-formation (253).

[17] This desire to subsume difference into a single narrative can be clearly identified in the section "First and Founding Nations Respond." While the interviews with Tomson Highway and Jacques Godbout barely address multiculturalism as represented in the anthology, Robertson Davies is outrageously eager to claim both an indigenous ancestry ("at the end of the eighteenth century, I had some Red Indian ancestry" [362]) and a "truer" immigrant past than that of current immigrants who receive federal funding to maintain their culture: "We had to give up everything when we came here. *We* came here out of sheer necessity. Nobody paid us to stay Scots or English or Irish or Welsh" (363).

country has "always been a place of diversities" (xxiv). The anthology then adeptly leads to a reconceptualization of "centrist" literature, since she focuses on the ways in which ethnicity is either produced or subsumed in Canadian literature.

Yet, it also becomes problematic because the dissonance of these literary texts does not only lie in their relationship to what has been considered dominant literature, but also in the fraught relationship that exists between the literary texts and subject positions represented. F. P. Grove for instance, may have been an immigrant, but he also actively participated in the project of settlement that displaced indigenous peoples. In *Fruits of the Earth*, he writes from the perspective of a settler hostile to non-Anglo immigration in general, and Jewishness in particular.[18] Constructing strategic alliances between the texts is then always complicated by these internal tensions: dialogue is fraught at best between varied writers such as Grove, A.M. Klein, Pauline Johnson, or Hiromi Goto.[19] The inclusion of indigenous peoples under the rubric of multicultural writing is also unexplained. Kamboureli does note that indigenous peoples are politically excluded from the Multiculturalism Act, but she nonetheless incorporates them within this discourse, much like Hutcheon and Richmond had done: "the land we now call Canada was already multicultural and multilingual before the arrival of the first Europeans" (xxviii).[20] In other words, the anthology ultimately subsumes both indigenous and multicultural texts under the same narrative, which constructs the national makeup of the

[18] Abe expresses a preference for WASP neighbours over other immigrants, although he also mentions that he would rather have "niggers and Chinamen come" (40) than remain alone in the area. Additionally, the Jewish character in this novel is portrayed as feminized, and is the target of ridicule in the community (184-85). The racial connotations in Grove's novel then reinforce the dominant constructions of ethnicity instead of reconfiguring them from the perspective of an immigrant.
[19] The anthology *Telling It: Women and Words Across Cultures* also faced similar challenges, as the attempts to build alliances were met with instances of racism and homophobia. For example, SKY Lee mentions that while she feels a great connection with indigenous women, she is painfully aware that this connection cannot be fully reciprocated (181). Her intervention here demonstrates that dialogue is not always possible, or only partially so.
[20] Hutcheon and Richmond made the same argument (*OS* 10). However, to call indigenous peoples multicultural is to forget the fact that indigenous peoples in what is now Canada were multi-national rather than multicultural, since they did not consider themselves as different cultures within one nation.

country as “multicultural.” This narrative can be problematic since, although multiculturalism can be used to describe the presence of multiple cultures within a same space, its application in an indigenous context has been resisted by many indigenous critic, who view the term as associated with immigration (Ignace and Ignace 142; Lawrence and Dua 135).[21] While *Making a Difference* does aim to reconceptualise Canadian literature as well as the processes which create an artificial distinction between majority and minority literature, the anthology forgets that indigenous literatures not only question the genealogy of centrist Canadian literature, but also challenge their affiliation with multicultural writing.

These editing practices, whether critical or literary, always construct indigenous and diasporic peoples as sharing similar concerns because of their fraught relationship with invader-settlers. Yet, for many indigenous critics, multicultural writing is closer to dominant Canadian literature than it is to theirs. While similarities do exist between all three categories, the conflation of indigenous and multicultural concerns erases the fact that diasporic peoples are settlers in Canada, as their ability to immigrate is dependent on the appropriation of land from First Nations (Lawrence and Dua 134). Marie Lo addresses this issue in her study of Native representations in diasporic texts, where she emphasizes that the traces of imperial representations these texts contain complicate their affiliation with First Nations and indigenous writing (108). For Lawrence and Dua, it is this similarity between invader-settler and diasporic writing which is responsible for First Nations’ silence on the subject of multiculturalism (135). In an indigenous context, multiculturalism can then become threatening because it invalidates land claims and obscures the specificity of indigenous experiences (135).

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[21] See also Margery Fee’s “What use is Ethnicity to Aboriginal Peoples in Canada,” where she notes that the insistence on national specificity in an indigenous context can have negative repercussions in the political realm.

For instance, diasporic peoples can, and have, deployed the indigenizing language associated with invader-settler literature. In settler literature, indigenization was seen as a necessary strategy to legitimize European presence in Canada, and establish a distinct Canadian tradition (Sugars, *US* "Introduction" xxi). Thoroughly criticized by Terry Goldie in *Fear and Temptation*, settler indigenization was also mobilized by early twentieth-century diasporic groups such as South Asians, Japanese, and Jewish Canadians (Lawrence and Dua 135).[22] Recently, Karina Vernon has also examined and criticized the use of the label "indigenous blackness" in Canadian studies, where the term is used to distinguish the long-standing black presence in Canada from recent immigration (140). While indigenization in this context is meant as a strategy of resistance rather than as an appropriative gesture, Vernon argues that even when marginalized groups deploy indigenizing metaphors, it results in an erasure of conquest and colonization (148). In light of Lawrence, Dua, Lo, and Vernon's critiques, the effects of these conflations between indigenous peoples and diasporic communities in literature need to be critically examined.

In rethinking the relationship between indigenous and multicultural writing, I do not intend to reiterate the issues explored during the appropriation debate, although this debate is important to my analysis of Ruffo's *Grey Owl*. Nor do I wish to create a "hierarchy of victimage" (Khoo 177) or to establish strategic alliances as many Asian-Canadian critics advocate (Miki, "Global"; Cho, "Diasporic"; Lo; Khoo; Wong). These strategic alliances

[22] Lawrence and Dua examine instances of indigenizing language in newspapers (135), but literary representations also contain imperial traces. For example, A.M. Klein's poems "Indian Reservation: Caughnawaga" and "Meditations upon Survival" both explore the relationship between First Nations and Jewish communities, but Klein speaks of indigenous peoples through the rhetoric of the "vanishing Indian." Joy Kogawa's *Obasan* opens with an indigenizing metaphor, where Naomi's uncle "could be Chief Sitting Bull squatting here … all he needs is a feathered headdress, and he would be perfect for a postcard – 'Indian Chief from Canadian Prairie' – souvenir of Alberta, made in Japan" (2). This indigenizing metaphor aims to legitimize the presence of Japanese Canadians in the country, but is based on a dehistoricized and decontextualized appropriation of Sitting Bull.

would function were indigenous writers and critics as eager to develop them than their diasporic and multicultural counterparts. However, few of them have engaged in this debate, or represented the relationship between indigenous and multicultural peoples in their texts: there is Lee Maracle's short story "Ying Chin" and a brief passage in her novel *Daughters are Forever*, Marie Clements' play *Burning Vision*, and another short moment in Maria Campbell's *Halfbreed*.[23] In contrast, multicultural/diasporic texts such as *Obasan*, *Itsuka*, *The Kappa Child*, *Venous Hum*, *Cockroach*, *Out of My Skin*, *Disappearing Moon Café*, and *Exile and the Heart* all engage with indigeneity. A comparative framework which aims to analyze strategic alliances then soon faces the fact that indigenous writers are reluctant to engage with multicultural issues. For that reason, my dissertation deploys categories of literary analysis such as generic hybridity, unstable metaphors, repetitions, intertextuality, as well as postcolonial and globalization theory to explore the contexts of oppression and subversion each text presents. Thus, the conceptual framework my dissertation proposes consists of detailing the specific contexts in which those literary strategies are mobilized and what effects they subsequently generate. If contamination and abjection can act as effective strategies of resistance in multicultural texts such as *Venous Hum* and *Cockroach*, the same does not apply to Ruffo and Armstrong's works, where hybridity can only be empowering when it describes genre and style. My application of postcolonial theory and hybridity then differs from the manner in which these terms have been deployed in Canadian literary criticism, inasmuch as my dissertation does not attempt to contain indigenous and multicultural subject-positions within the same narrative.

[23] In this memoir, Campbell relates that she spent some time with a Chinese Canadian family as a young adult, where she managed to evade, for a time, the racism she faced everywhere else. For Susan Gingell, Louise Bernice Halfe's *Blue Marrow* also explores the relationship between indigenous and multicultural peoples, as the listed names of the grandchildren are multicultural (13).

2.1 Postcolonial Theory and CanLit: National Narratives and Reading Practices

Postcolonial theory, as applied to Canadian literary studies, has undergone numerous and frequent transformations. While it has been used as a framework of critical analysis in a great number of articles, monographs, and edited collections,[24] works which seek to pinpoint the usefulness of the postcolonial in Canadian literature stress its importance as a national narrative and as a reading practice. It is difficult to establish the origin of postcolonial theory in Canadian studies,[25] but as a national narrative, postcolonialism emerges out of the work of cultural nationalists such as Margaret Atwood and Dennis Lee. Because their work strove to establish a Canadian tradition distinct from American and British influences, it participated in a form of anticolonial discourse that was radical *at the time*.[26] Atwood's *Survival* in particular wished to articulate the essence of Canadian literature, and found it in the recurrence of certain literary patterns related to survival. Atwood's configuration of CanLit has been thoroughly criticized as homogenizing,[27] but the idea that the postcolonial constitutes a national narrative also features in the work of Diana Brydon, Laura Moss, and Cynthia Sugars. It can be used to examine competing forms of national subjectivities (Brydon, "Reading" 172), and to explore the commonalities between all Canadians. For Brydon, postcolonialism in Canada requires that critics and readers pay attention to their own subject position. Instead of wondering

[24] As mentioned earlier, critics have used postcolonial theory to discuss settler, diasporic, and indigenous writing, though Julia Emberley emphasizes that the discourse has been mostly deployed in a settler context (*DA* xiv).

[25] For instance, Sugars argues that the postcolonial begins with confederation ("Can" 117), while Donna Bennett suggests that postcolonial theory gained support in Canada because of the work of Australian critics in the 1970s, as well as with the publication of *The Empire Writes Back* (107-108). Sugars also points out that the discipline of Canadian literature has "radical, anti-colonial roots" ("Introduction" *HW* 6) because it initially faced prejudices from established scholars in British literature.

[26] See for example, Atwood's novel *Surfacing* and her critical volume *Survival: A Thematic Guide to Canadian Literature*, and Dennis Lee's *Civil Elegies* and his essay "Cadence, Country, Silence: Writing in Colonial Space." Similarly, in "Can the Canadian Speak?," Sugars analyzes the work or Margaret Atwood, Alice Munro, and Carol Shields through a postcolonial perspective. While I disagree that these writers can still be read as postcolonial, their early works certainly served that function inasmuch as they created a distinctly Canadian literature.

[27] See Frank Davey's *Surviving the Paraphrase* for his critique of thematic criticism, and bpNicholl's poem/comic strip "What is Can Lit?".

"where is here?" as Frye famously posited, Brydon argues that a new, more appropriate question would be "what are we doing here?" ("Time" 14). This question has the advantage of reminding indigenous peoples "that they were always there" (14), while reiterating to others that "their ancestors or they themselves came here as explorers, settlers, refugees, immigrants, or travellers" (14), and that those positions entail a certain accountability (14).

In addition, Sugars suggests that postcolonialism constitutes a better discourse than postmodernism to describe Canada and Canadian culture, as the coercive categories of nation and colonialism need to be complicated rather than simply subverted ("National" 17). In other words, critics who embrace postcolonialism as a national discourse do not advocate for the dismantlement of the nation ("Can" 117), but for its reconsideration in light of its multiple and contradictory subject-positions and narratives. These reformulations of postcolonialism as a national narrative inevitably create their own conflations and homogenizations. For instance, when Sugars argues that settler history is a "problematic legacy which all Canadians, regardless of ancestry, 'inherit' and respond to in a variety of ways" ("National" 26), she gives credence to King's argument that postcolonial criticism risks dictating the content of indigenous literatures ("Godzilla" 185). Deploying postcolonialism as a national narrative then always risks becoming prescriptive.

These applications of the postcolonial have however been met with a number of critiques coming from various perspectives. For Chrisman and Williams, Canada and invader-settler colonies such as Australia and New Zealand do not qualify as postcolonial because their subjects were of European ancestry, and therefore, active participants in the colonial venture

(4).[28] This critique is flawed because it omits indigenous peoples entirely from its assumptions, but it does point to a central problem which lies at the hearts of settler postcolonialisms. As Jennifer Henderson notes in relation to texts written by settler women, these women did not occupy a marginalized position, but constituted the norm (4). Incorporating the settler within postcolonial studies therefore risks misconstruing the nature of the settler identity as a victim of, rather than as profiting from, colonialism. Others criticize postcolonialism because of the connotation the term carries, as the "post" implies a linear progression and the end of colonialism (McClintock 292; Maracle, "Post-Colonial" 205; L. Smith 98).[29] Yet, as Sugars notes, "very few (if any!) postcolonial theorists" suggest that colonialism and racism are over ("National" 20).

Another common critique of postcolonial theory concerns the relationship between postcolonialism as a reading practice, and anti-colonial work performed in a material way (Slemon, "Afterword" ¶4; Parry 12). As Mukherjee notes, postcolonial criticism tends to feature "'the colonized' [fighting] European colonizers and not with guns or knives but with the textual weapons of irony and parody" (*PML* 22). For Huggan, this critique is exaggerated, inasmuch as postcolonial reading practices do not aim to conflate textual and material resistance, but rather posit an indirect link between the two (3). What these critiques emphasize is that postcolonial theory, both in its Canadian and in its international applications, is heavily contested. It can be appropriated to discuss a number of situations, which for some, such as Chrisman and Williams, Parry, and McClintock, defuses its potential to effect radical

[28] At the other end of the spectrum, Anne McClintock argues that settler colonies cannot be "postcolonial" because they "have not undergone decolonization and are not likely to do so in the near future" (295). These approaches to the postcolonial however understand the term historically rather than as a theoretical method of analysis.
[29] For McClintock and Thomas King, it is also the emphasis that the term places on colonialism, as well as the implied progression from pre-colonial, colonial, to postcolonial, that undermines postcolonial theory (McClintock 293; King, "Godzilla" 184).

change. These critics provide valuable insights into what makes postcolonialism fraught in a Canadian context, as it is crucial for Canadian critics to nuance their application of this theory in a settler context. For instance, to say that Canadian literature has "radical, anti-colonial roots" (Sugars, "Introduction" *HW* 6) is to disregard the fact that racialized writers have occupied a marginalized position within the field. If my dissertation has to include "indigenous and multicultural" writing in its subtitle, it is, after all, because these texts continue to be apprehended as "outside" dominant literature.

In addition, radical critiques of postcolonial theory as a whole, and invader-settler postcolonialism in particular, have emerged from indigenous and racialized subject-positions. Indigenous critic Emma Larocque uses the anti-colonial writings of Fanon and Memmi in *When the Other is Me*, but for her, "colonial texts are offensive. In fact, many of these texts constitute hate literature" (14). She criticizes Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin's *The Post-colonial Studies Reader* because its references to indigenous peoples are made entirely from the perspective of Euro-Canadians (166).[30] Larocque also stresses the problematic conflations which "postcolonial buzz labels such as 'essentialist,' 'subaltern,' 'hybridity,' or 'mimicry'" create (32), as they eradicate differences between all colonized peoples. The question of whether or not postcolonial terms homogenize all "colonized" peoples is a crucial one. As another indigenous critic, Kimberley M. Blaeser, argues, Western theory can have the same assimilative effect as "many boarding school teachings" (265). For her, theories that "stem from an other/another cultural and literary aesthetic" (265) can only provide an incomplete reading of indigenous texts (266). Armand Garnet Ruffo addresses this problem, and believes

[30] *The Postcolonial Studies Reader* can also be criticized because it generates a reductive picture of postcolonial theory. Most of the texts it contains have been trimmed down to a few pages and stripped of their nuances and complexities, which enables the editors to create a hegemonic interpretation of the field.

that Western theory can provide useful tools of analysis for indigenous writers and their critics, so long as the theory is firmly grounded within "indigenous ways of knowing" ("Introduction" 8).

These perspectives are interesting because they are far from consensual. For Linda Hutcheon, it is indigenous literatures, rather than invader-settler or diasporic/multicultural literatures, that constitute the postcolonial in Canadian literature ("Circling" 76). Diana Brydon criticizes this argument because it advocates a "cult of authenticity" ("White" 98). Thomas King contradicts Hutcheon entirely, as he insists that "postcolonialism might be an excellent term to describe Canadian literature, but it will not do to describe Native literature" ("Godzilla" 185). For that reason, King elaborates his own literary categories in order to allow for the continuity of traditions in indigenous literatures without placing the emphasis on the oppositional content of indigenous texts. Yet, Emberley warns that indigenous peoples should not be isolated from narratives of Canada as a postcolonial nation, since ignoring the ongoing effects of colonialism perpetuates its violence (*DA* xiv). The relationship between Canadian postcolonial studies and indigenous peoples also becomes complicated when Sugars uses the word "native" to discuss Euro-Canadian cultural production such as the works of Carol Shields, Margaret Atwood, and Alice Munro ("Can" 118).[31] These conflicting perspectives then entail that postcolonial theory cannot be uncritically applied to indigenous contexts, as it can easily conflate subject positions, and become coercive when misappropriated.

Postcolonial theory also faces challenges when used in a multicultural or diasporic context. Because the act of "writing back" is an important feature of postcolonial literature (Ashcroft et al., *EWB* 7), postcolonial frameworks enable the analysis of the relationship

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[31] Sugars' article opposes the word "native" to that of cosmopolitan ("Can" 120). Yet, she could have easily used the words local or national in order to avoid appropriating an indigenous subject-position.

between majoritized and minoritized literatures.[32] This process can be challenging for some since the emergence of minoritized writing in Canada destabilized the field just as it was beginning to consolidate (Cho, "Dreaming" 189). For instance, Mukherjee has criticized Canadian postcolonial critics because they focus on invader-settler contexts, which obscures the fact that Canada participates in colonialism and imperialism at the international level (*PML* 79-80). Mukherjee subsequently mentions that the tone of postcolonial theory is "too celebratory" (13) because it inevitably fails to account for differences (13).[33] For her, postcolonial theory should be reserved for indigenous and racialized peoples who emigrated from colonized countries (217). In other words, Mukherjee argues that there is an "enormous gap" between indigenous and Euro-Canadians (73), but does not believe that a similar gap exists between indigenous and racialized writing. Her arguments then run the risk of committing the same kinds of conflations she criticizes in settler uses of postcolonial theory. However, these tensions between competing interpretations of the postcolonial can remind readers and critics that the presence of minoritized literature in Canada demonstrates that nations are artificially constructed, since minoritized literatures encourage a critical re-examination of majoritized literatures (Pennee 78). Because racialized writing stresses the artificiality of the nation, it troubles both the tendency to apply postcolonial theory in a

[32] While the idea of writing back may seem old-fashioned in the context of contemporary writing, it remains useful to discuss the oppositional nature of many contemporary texts which revisit dominant narratives. For example, Hiromi Goto's *The Kappa Child* reconsiders the idealized version of prairie family life as portrayed in *Little House on the Prairie*, which can be considered a form of "writing back." It is however a form of writing back that does not assume that there is a centre in need of criticism, but rather one where the centre needs to be constructed and particularized in order to be subverted.

[33] This critique has been poorly received by other Canadian critics. Cynthia Sugars notes that most postcolonial critics always insist on those distinctions Mukherjee claims are overlooked ("National" 25), an argument which Brydon expands upon when she states that postcolonial theory should be used to highlight those differences ("Reading" 171). It is true, however, that Ashcroft et al. are somewhat overly celebratory in tone when they claim that marginality has become "an unprecedented source of creative energy" (*EWB* 12).

predominantly invader-settler context and the validity of postcolonialism as a national discourse.

These critiques intersect with the role multiculturalism has played in Canadian literary studies, as it is often this discourse, rather than postcolonial theory, which is employed to examine the relationship between diasporic and dominant writing. Much like postcolonialism, multiculturalism has been implemented as a national narrative. It has also faced similar critiques, since it is also deemed too celebratory when it displaces the coercive discourse of assimilation through "empowering" labels such as diversity and tolerance (Chow, *PE* 131).[34] This celebratory tone can be observed in Hutcheon's response to critics of *Other Solitudes*, where she justifies her incorporation of canonical writers such as Michael Ondaatje in an anthology of multicultural writing by asserting that she had hoped to "undo the kind of thinking that separates the 'central' from the implicitly 'marginal'" ("Multicultural" 12). This desire to eradicate the margins by demonstrating that Canadian literature was always-already marginal points to a need to analyze difference while denying its existence, as though Canada had always been multicultural at heart if not politically.[35] In Hutcheon's writing, multiculturalism and multicultural writing work together. Yet, the most incisive critiques of multiculturalism emerged out of multicultural writing,[36] since multiculturalism constitutes a hegemonic discourse, one which manages diversity in order to avoid disturbing the status quo (Kamboureli, *SB* 99). As Kamboureli's analysis of media discourse suggests, multiculturalism constructs a dominant "we" – non-multicultural Canadians – whose tolerance is tested by

[34] "Tolerance" is a particularly fraught concept. As Mackey mentions, the term reasserts dominance, since the decision to tolerate lies entirely "in the hands of the tolerators" (16).
[35] As Kamboureli notes, Hutcheon's celebratory attitude can also be seen when the latter mentions that those who criticize multiculturalism are cynical (*SB* 170).
[36] See for instance Mistry's "Squatter," Goto's *Chorus of Mushrooms* and *Hopeful Monsters*, Suzette Mayr's *Moon Honey*, as well as the works of Dionne Brand, M. NourbeSe Philip, Himani Bannerji, and many others.

multicultural demands (83).[37] In that way, multiculturalism becomes a contradictory discourse, one which establishes itself as a national narrative while ensuring that "minoritarian Canadians still remain other to the national imaginary" (84). Because of this coercive potential,[38] multiculturalism should not be conflated with the postcolonial (Brydon, "Cross-Talk" 59), as postcolonial thought brings tensions to the foreground instead of defusing them by maintaining the status quo.

In light of the complexities postcolonial theory and multicultural discourse pose, my dissertation uses terms borrowed from postcolonial theory, such as hybridity, imperialism, mimicry, globalization, colonialism, as well as critical multiculturalism in order to examine how literary texts reformulate them and undo their hegemonic and homogenizing potential. In other words, my dissertation resists the application of postcolonial theory and multicultural discourse as national narratives or as reading practices that strictly emphasizes oppositional attitudes. My goal is not to suggest an insurmountable difference between indigenous, settler, and multicultural writing, but rather to stress that the nature of postcolonial theory, and the manner in which its concepts can be deployed, vary significantly depending on the context in which they are applied. For instance, Sugars' argument that the settler is "the prototype of Homi Bhabha's "Mister-in-between," a subject position that has internalized the divide between self and other" ("Can" 123), greatly misinterprets Bhabha's work. The in-between status Bhabha describes relates to people who are colonized to resemble the colonizer, but cannot become English because of their race (131). The settler subjects to which Sugars refers

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[37] Eva Mackey's interviews with Canadians in the 1990s also signal that many Euro-Canadians construct themselves as victims of multiculturalism.

[38] Other critics of multiculturalism, such M. NourbeSe Philip and Himani Bannerji address multiculturalism's negative and assimilative effects. It is also important to note that multiculturalism outside of Canada often has the connotations of a market strategy that focuses on otherness and diversity (see Fish; Žižek; Chow *PE*). I will discuss critical multiculturalism in greater detail in chapter three.

were not made to assimilate while being maintained as "other" to dominant discourse, but were always part of this discourse.[39] Sugars is then conflating two radically different colonial experiences, which creates a rigid narrative meant to describe a homogenized colonial condition. For that reason, I argue that critics must reconceptualise postcolonial concepts when they use them in contexts which differ from the ones for which they were initially theorized. The homogenizations postcolonial theory creates[40] can then be avoided if critics pay attention to the ways in which theoretical terms can erase the critical edges of the literary text. My application of the postcolonial then sets itself apart from prior criticism since my dissertation emphasizes the tensions between the literary text and my theoretical framework in order to analyze how the texts critically reformulate postcolonial terms.

2.2 Globalization and Transnationalism: Supplementing Postcolonial Theory

Postcolonial theory has also been reformulated and supplemented because Canadian critics are increasingly interested in how this discourse intersects with globalization and transnationalism. This expansion of the field into the global is contested. Many critics are reluctant to engage with globalization; they feel that Canadian literary and cultural studies are too vulnerable to U.S.-dominated scholarship (Siemerling, "Trans-Scan" 139).[41] Nonetheless, a growing number of monographs and edited collections have been published in recent years to examine Canada from a globalization and postcolonial studies perspective, such as *Canada and Its Americas*, *Home-Work*, *Trans.Can.Lit*, *Transnational Canadas*, and *New North*

[39] The title of this particular article, "Can the Canadian Speak?," also raises questions, as it posits the Canadian as interchangeable with Spivak's subaltern.
[40] For Stephen Slemon, the main problem which postcolonialism presents is that "too many postcolonialists fitted too many postcolonies to the same conceptual straightjacket" ("TransCanada" 76), a comment which stresses the homogenizing potential of postcolonial theory when the same term can be used to describe too many situations. Yet, for Stuart Hall the fact that "Australia and Canada, on the one hand, Nigeria, India, and Jamaica on the other, are … not 'post-colonial' in the same way … does not mean that they are not 'post-colonial' in any way" (246).
[41] For example, Cynthia Sugars, Herb Wyile, and David Leahy all express reservations towards globalization and hemispheric studies in *Canada and Its Americas*.

American Studies. This new direction in postcolonial literary studies has subsequently elicited contradictory responses.

For some critics, globalization weakens the nation (Sugars, "Worlding" 45) or at least, encourages the repositioning and questioning of national narratives as they become globally and locally displaced (Miki, "Globalization" 93). For Hjartarson, globalization does not challenge but reinforces the nation (110), a critique which Dobson echoes when he stresses that the nation is not the victim of globalization, but complicit with it (164). According to Godard, the emergence of globalization signals that "Canadian culture has become synonymous with the culture of capital" ("Notes" 225), and that postcolonialism and multiculturalism merely serve to conceal the operations of global capital (231). Regardless of whether globalization reinforces or troubles the nation, juxtaposing it with postcolonial Canadian literary studies enables critics to look at Canadian literature without being bound solely to the national context. Engaging with globalization studies is crucial, as Canadian literature is in dialogue with many different contexts, especially when indigenous and racialized writers engage with pan-indigeneity, diaspora, and transnationalism.[42] Further, as Godard, Dobson, and Huggan emphasize, Canadian literature now yields to the demands of the global market, as its "multicultural diversity is readily exportable" (Godard, "Notes" 227; Dobson 74; Huggan xiii). In other words, it is no longer advisable to ignore the global implications of Canadian literature, though this interest in globalization studies should not foreclose discussions of the Canadian literary categories that recur in the texts.

[42] Mukherjee has made a similar argument in *Postcolonialism, My Living*, where she pointed out that "racial minorities' experience does not respect Canada's borders and because they have global links … their writing necessarily brings in these other places and their histories" (80-81). Her assertion can however be nuanced inasmuch as it is not merely racialized writing that has global affiliations, but texts from a variety of subject positions within Canada.

The reformulation of postcolonial theory through its intersection with globalization studies is crucial to my project, as it enables me to address the limitation of certain theoretical frameworks in Canadian literary studies. Unlike Slemon, who views the malleability of a postcolonial framework as a “straightjacket” (“TransCanada” 76), I argue that it is precisely the flexibility of postcolonial theory which makes it useful in examining the relationship between indigenous and multicultural literatures. As a method of analysis, it can foreground the contradictions and tensions the literary works create precisely because postcolonial concepts must always be contextualized and used cautiously. The literary text can also prevent the homogenizations postcolonial theory generates if the theory is understood not as a narrative that must be imposed on the text, but as being always questioned through the text. In addition, because an indigenous text must, as Ruffo asserts, be grounded within “indigenous ways of knowing” (“Introduction” 8), my readings of Ruffo’s *Grey Owl* and Armstrong’s *Whispering in Shadows* rely not only on postcolonial and global frameworks of analysis, but on indigenous reconceptualizations of literary theory and criticism. The flexibility of postcolonial theory is also ideal for my project since it allows me to address texts that look back, as well as texts that are future-oriented. Ruffo’s long poem and Mayr’s *Venous Hum* are both concerned with historical events and figures: Ruffo revisits Archie Belaney/Grey Owl and the narratives attributed to him, and Mayr explores Trudeau’s political impact on multiculturalism and homosexuality. They revisit these events but are not revisionary, nor do they constitute creative colonial discourse analysis. Rather, when they do present instances of colonial discourse, Mayr and Ruffo’s texts always put them under question and use them to destabilize narratives of authenticity and assimilation. These literary texts thereby enable a

reconfiguration of dominant discourses on indigeneity and multiculturalism through their formal and thematic strategies, where all hegemonic discourses are systemically destabilized.

In contrast, Hage and Armstrong's novels are partially future-oriented, as they are concerned with the outcomes and complexities of contemporary modes of living. Because postcolonial theory enables a discussion of colonialism (Moss 11), yet also intersects with globalization (Hjartarson 110; Miki, "Globalization" 93), the flexibility of this theoretical framework allows me to reconcile the spatial definition of the global, as theorized by Saskia Sassen, with those who define globalization as an extension of the colonial and imperial projects. Hage and Armstrong's texts then challenge critics who view globalization as external to Canada to reconsider the nature of the nation's seeming benevolence in the face of its ongoing colonial project. In that way, they contest postcolonialism as a national narrative because they expose the nation's complicity with neocolonialism. Canada is then no longer the "victim" Atwood had elaborated in her early anticolonial texts, but an agent in the very processes which, according to some postcolonial critics, are marginalizing the nation.

Postcolonial terms of analysis are also relevant to my dissertation because the literary texts I examine use oppositional literary strategies specific to "postcolonial" literatures. However, their particular contexts radically transform the manner in which this oppositionality operates. For Mukherjee, a postcolonial framework of analysis enables a discussion of what was "pejoratively called [the] 'sociological'" (*PML* 107) context of the work, instead of focusing solely on the text's stylistic and formal features. She criticizes these forms of analyses because she believes that they read literature as "a 'confection' to be admired for its taste and texture" (*OA* viii), a sentence which constructs the style of the literary text as bearing no impact on its content. The literary strategies Mukherjee teases out of racialized texts

necessarily address their unequal position in relation to the dominant. Mukherjee's terms of analysis can then be summarized to a form of oppositional irony directed towards dominant values (71) and a desire to question universalisms (*PML* 80).

However, Mukherjee's method of analysis relies on separating the form from the content of the literary texts. This division is artificial since the content of a work can be put under question by the form in which it is presented. For that reason, I use postcolonial textual analysis in a different fashion, since the texts I study are oppositional, but perform this contestation discursively, through style, generic interplay, intertextuality, and metaphor usage. In other words, they are not writing back from a place of anger or outrage as an earlier generation of postcolonial writers did.[43] Instead, these writers are creating the centre they wish to oppose. In Canadian literature, the tradition of "writing back" often consists of writing back "to other Canadians" (Moss 9).[44] The writers under discussion engage with this tradition in their tendency to instigate dialogues between their works and that of other writers. Through this technique, they point out and respond to the problematic assertions prior writers made. In addition, the oppositional strategies Ruffo, Mayr, Hage, and Armstrong also suggest that the centre is a diffuse and contradictory space. To that effect, they subvert discursive and classifying categories that seek to contain literary texts within familiar spaces, either to prevent them from disrupting the status quo, or to exclude them entirely because they do not fit the manner in which these discourses or categories normally operate. My application of

[43] While not all texts that "write back" to the imperial centre do so from a place of anger, texts such as Jean Rhys' *Wide Sargasso Sea*, J.M. Coetzee's *Foe*, Timothy Findley's *Not Wanted on the Voyage*, or Aimé Césaire's *Une tempête* constitute reconfigurations of religious and literary texts meant to question and emphasize the problematic contexts of these works of classic literature. In that way, they correspond more closely to what Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin call writing back to the imperial centre in order to trouble its cultural hegemony (*EWB* 7). However, because these critics read literary texts through a fixed paradigm, their analyses inevitably erase the more radical content the works present.
[44] For example, prairie writers who felt marginalized by "central Canada," such as Robert Kroetsch, wrote back to this "cultural centre" (Moss 9).

postcolonial concepts then differs from prior uses of the postcolonial in Canadian studies because I am not using it to expose the gaps the nation creates. Instead, the postcolonial terms I borrow allow me to examine how literary texts no longer need to position themselves as victims of a marginalizing power in order to articulate their opposition to certain discourses or to make a place for themselves in the field of Canadian literature. By constructing the centre to which they respond, the texts simultaneously elaborate their own narrative of how this centre operates. This enables them to enact formal and metaphorical strategies of subversion that always remain ambivalent in order to prevent their solidification into a hegemonic narrative.

Borrowing concepts from postcolonial theory subsequently allows me to revisit problems raised by the canon debate in Canadian literary studies.[45] This debate sought to establish which texts belong to the canon in Canadian literature, and proved contested inasmuch as it occurred at a time when postmodernism attempted to dismantle such notions. However, as Kamboureli argues, this debate was not opened up to include the contributions of racialized and ethnic writing within Canadian literature (*SB* 159). Cho echoes this critique when she asserts that racialized or minoritized literatures have a problematic relation to the Canadian canon ("Dreaming" 193). For her, the question is not whether or not these texts should be considered to be Canadian literature, but rather if Canadian literature can remain viable as a category when it is constantly challenged by the texts produced from minoritized positions (193).[46] Thus, she wonders if Canadian literature can be continuously destabilized "without falling into the temptations of overarching and ultimately empty inclusivism and

[45] This debate took place mostly through articles and responses written by Frank Davey and Robert Lecker. The questions they addressed concerned the nature of the Canadian canon, with Lecker arguing for a certain fixity (10), while Davey argued that the Canadian canon has always been multiple ("Critical" 678).
[46] Cho provides indigenous literature as an example of a literature that is unquestionably Canadian, yet constitutes "an urgent critique of Canada" ("Dreaming" 193).

ghettoizing factionalism" (193). For that reason, I propose that placing Cho's concerns in relation to Larocque's critique of colonial literature can provide a way to navigate this tension. Larocque reconsiders colonial literature in *When the Other is Me*. Instead of analyzing it solely as a manifestation of the pioneering spirit, or as containing clues regarding the state of alienation invader-settlers faced in Canada, she foregrounds its problematic and racist content.

With this strategy in mind, I propose that Canadian literature can withstand the challenges racialized and minoritized literatures advance, because prior configurations of Canadian literature can be critically revisited and reformulated. After all, if it was important for Atwood to establish the essence of Canadian literature in 1972, it is no longer necessary for texts to be "Canadian" in such cultural nationalist terms in order to be considered a part of Canadian literature. Some literary categories, such as the Canadian long poem and prairie writing, were initially defined in ways that were hostile to indigenous and multicultural subject positions. In particular, the epic form which greatly informs the Canadian long poem has historically erased and displaced indigenous subject positions, while prairie literature has long presented the region as unraced.[47] In contrast, the field of urban literature was not hostile to racialized texts in the way that the long poem and prairie writing were. Rather, the delay which has prevented this field from emerging is specifically connected to the fact that city writing is often racialized, and was therefore categorized as multicultural or diasporic literature. The process of location, dislocation, and relocation my dissertation establishes then allows me to account for these exclusions through the literary texts, and examine how they then expand the field through the reconfiguration of their genre or literary category.

[47] Unraced is here used in the sense of "white," since early prairie texts such as Grove's works and Ostenso's *Wild Geese* did present the region as multiethnic. The category of prairie literature has gradually been expanded to include writers of Asian ancestry, but the historical presence of blackness in the prairies remains an emergent category. See for instance the work of Karina Vernon.

The literary texts also prevent their own solidification into a coherent and all-encompassing narrative because they are suspicious of master narratives. In short, my dissertation develops a method through which the relationship between indigenous and multicultural literature can be apprehended, as well as strategies through which Canadian literary categories can be questioned and reimagined. However, it does not seek to establish itself as an all-encompassing narrative of Canadian literature, nor does it wish to determine a single argument regarding how this relationship can be examined. In fact, I remain suspicious of the categories on which my analyses depend in this dissertation, particularly since the notions of "multicultural" and "indigenous" literatures create certain assumptions regarding the content of the literary texts. Categorizing the texts through these markers of ethnic origin can dictate that the texts must be read in relation to their multicultural or indigenous content.[48] A writer such as Eden Robinson, who sometimes writes stories about Euro-Canadians, would then be isolated from the field of indigenous literatures because the content of her texts does not correspond to preconceptions about indigenous content.[49] Configuring ethnicity as a literary category is also problematic for Suzette Mayr, as George Eliott Clarke excludes her novel *The Widows* from his analysis of her work because it does not figure a (sufficiently) black character (294). Vernon also mentions that Mayr's inclusion in the volume of criticism *Refractions of Germany* constructs Mayr as a German-Canadian writer (41). Critics then conveniently omit one half of her ethnic background whenever convenient. Yet, performing literary analyses without engaging with existing literary categories would erase the extent to

[48] Kit Dobson would disagree, as he argues that multiculturalism as national narrative ensures that all experiences become "Canadian," even if the writers and critics which live them disagree with the application of this term (73).

[49] Two stories in Robinson's *Traplines*, "Contact Sports" and "Dogs in Winter," are not about indigenous peoples, while the novel *Blood Sports* is a sequel to "Contact Sports."

which the texts I study are in dialogue with previous writers and critics. My dissertation then uses literary categories not merely to question and dismantle them, but also to foreground that they are, and have always been, provisional, incomplete, and in need of rearticulation.

3.1 Hybridity: From Race to Culture

Much like postcolonial theory, hybridity is a concept critics have debated and reconceptualised numerous times. While many consider it to be an over-theorized master discourse, I argue that its historical legacy, combined with its postcolonial reformulations, can be used productively to analyze the literary strategies multicultural and indigenous texts develop. Hybridity has a complex history, but is currently understood as a "common-sense term" (Brah and Coombes 1; Werbner 1) because many critics used it without clearly defining or situating it. For Peter Burke, hybridity and the terms which have come to replace it in postcolonial studies are "maddeningly elastic" (34),[50] a flexibility which appears to prevent it from becoming an effective literary strategy or tool of critical analysis. According to Wachinger, hybridity has become almost meaningless because of this theorization, and because the theory which aims to define it is characterized by vagueness (9). The concept of hybridity has also been criticized because it appears to be overly celebratory (Brah and Coombes 1; Dobson 93; Burke 7). It has become a commodity (Andrew Smith 253), one that can be deployed to increase the value of "postcolonial" literatures (Wachinger 5; Godard, "Notes" 127). These critiques might be far from exhaustive, but they do highlight that hybridity appears to have reached its critical and conceptual limitations because it has been

[50] These terms include "creolization," "translation," "syncretism," "transculturation," and the increasingly popular "negotiation" (Burke 66). For Burke, these different terms are useful because they can be used to analyze specific local situations (66). However, this usefulness does not entail that they can supplant hybridity. Parry even disagrees that these terms are connected to hybridity, as she mentions that Bhabha's hybridity only *looks* like it corresponds to the Caribbean concepts of métissage and creolization (63).

overused and misused. However, hybridity remains a useful term because of its history rooted in racial and colonial violence, its contribution to literary studies, and its relevance to cross-cultural encounters. The history of hybridity and its contemporary definitions allow me to deploy it in contexts that relate to colonialism, "mixed unions," culture, language, identity, and classification. It is true that hybridity is always at risk of being "hegemonically recuperated" (Smyth 43) because it emerged out of the "Victorian extreme right" (R. Young, *CD* 10). Yet, this ever-present threat of coercion is productive because it dictates a cautious application of hybridity and the terms, such as ambivalence, resistance, oscillation, and vacillation, on which it relies.

The historical definition and application of hybridity is indeed coercive, as it constructs race and culture as categories that can be polluted. Robert Young's *Colonial Desire* tracks the transformation of the concept of hybridity in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries from discussing racial "mixing" to a cultural phenomenon. In its nineteenth century denotations, hybridity describes the children of mixed unions (R. Young, *CD* 16), and the desire to categorize them as hybrid denotes an anxiety and obsession with sexuality (xii). As Ann Stoler states, the imperial project had the "management of sexuality" at its core ("Sexual" 45). While the sexual encounter with the colonized was marked by "attraction and repulsion" (R. Young, *CD* 108), the mixed children this union created were viewed as degenerate, yet physically beautiful (16). The children were also hated and feared (Gilroy 106), since they were understood as a presence that contaminated an assumed "purity," understood as the whiteness which they polluted (106; Brah and Coombes 1; Papastergiadis 257; R. Young, *CD* 177).[51] If

[51] Put differently, it is not the mixing per se that contaminates the offspring of "mixed" unions, but the presence of non-white heritage. In the nineteenth century, it is always blackness which contaminates "pure" white (Brah and Coombes 1), hence the one drop rule.

some critics argue that the "dark past of hybridity does not disturb its celebratory present" (Papastergiadis 258), Young specifies that culture was always racially constructed (*CD* 28; 54; 95; Brah and Coombes 4). This belief in purity and contamination led to a compulsive cataloguing and classifying of the gradations of mixing. For example, Young reproduces a Peruvian table listing the twenty-three potential crosses and their names (176), and mentions that in Spanish, there are 128 words "for different combinations of mixed races" (178). For Papastergiadis, this obsessive categorization demonstrates the profound distaste felt towards the racially mixed (260).

The historical context of hybridity is then steeped in colonial and racist overtones that cannot be easily dismissed. Yet, the very concepts deployed to describe this coercive historical past can be reconfigured as literary strategies that not only ensure that this history is always taken into account, but also actively challenge and recontextualize this violent history. For instance, hybridity denotes contamination of the (white) race and culture, and the sexual encounter which produces this hybridity is marked by repulsion and desire. These contradictory impulses relate to Kristeva's definition of the abject. For that reason, chapters three and four of my dissertation explore how contamination and abjection, as well as the forms of obsessive categorization which hybridity enables, can be reconfigured into literary strategies which destabilize the imperial past that allows these terms to operate coercively. Transforming these material forms of oppression into literary strategies might appear as though it reduces the material and the historical to matters of language and style, but contamination, abjection, and categorization are already in use as categories of literary and cultural analysis. What my dissertation adds to this already-existing criticism is a specific attention to the ongoing coercive legacy of these terms, which enables their critical, rather than

celebratory, application. In other words, these terms need to be constantly rearticulated to prevent them from corresponding to their hegemonic history.

Hybridity has also been used to describe certain forms of utterances or language usage. Robert Young mentions that Bakhtin's hybridization, defined as an utterance belonging to a single speaker but containing two languages (Bakhtin 359),[52] has influenced the poststructuralist theories of Derrida and De Man, who in turn influenced Bhabha (R. Young, *CD* 20). For instance, in "La mythologie blanche," Derrida asserts that the same metaphor "peut fonctionner différemment ici et là" (318). The idea that terms can be related analogically to each other ultimately implies that metaphor does not function as a sun, that is, as a master discourse that disseminates its "light," but as a star. In other words, metaphor functions as a "source ponctuelle de vérité ou de propriété restant invisible ou nocturne" (291). Derrida's metaphor (metaphor as sun or star) then implies that metaphors have multiple and elusive trajectories, and cannot be contained.[53] De Man furthers this investigation into metaphor. According to him, metaphors assume that the literal and figural forms of language can be distinguished and isolated "and, consequently, exchanged and substituted for each other" (152). Yet, he complicates his argument when he notes that language is already metaphorical (152), which grants metaphors further instability. While neither De Man nor Derrida uses the word "hybridity," Young notes that it is the impossibility to determine which meaning is the primary one within an utterance that connects Derrida and De Man with Bakhtin's notion of hybridity (*CD* 20; Wachinger 7).

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[52] Bakthin's double-voiced utterance is not bilingual, but contains two "socio-ideological" languages or consciousness that belong to the author and to the character represented (359). Contemporary theorists of hybridity have also used Bakhtin's work in order to identify what can constitute organic, that is, a non-disruptive form of hybridity, from intentional hybridity, the disruptive incarnation of the same term (Werbner 4)

[53] In *De la grammatologie*, Derrida makes the unruly nature of metaphor more explicit when he argues that a "langue juste" must be "non-métaphorique" (382).

Hybridity can also be conceptualized as language-based in much more concrete terms, since many critics use this concept to examine the different languages, or language variations, which operate within a single literary text. For instance, Ashcroft et al. assert that postcolonial literature can be monoglossic when there is a single language, diglossic in bilingual societies, and polyglossic when a variety of dialects and variations interact within a same literature (*EWB* 39).[54] Similarly, Dee Horne considers that accented English in indigenous texts is a hybrid linguistic variation (90). Language-based hybridity in my dissertation does not rely on its literal applications, such as code-switching or bilingualism, although forms of multilingualism occur in all four texts under discussion. Rather, I am interested in how literature and style can destabilize what appears to be the primary meaning of a literary text. More specifically, hybridity allows me to develop a method where the tensions a literary text creates through the structural positioning of fragments, repetitions, and metaphors can foreground how meaning shifts within a single text. This form of hybridity, which insists on the double-voiced nature of utterances, then prevents the solidification of meaning, as it is always contradicted by another moment in the text. It is in this way that hybridity comes to function as form of dissensus, since a metaphor which possesses contradictory referents effectively contains two worlds in one (Rancière, "Ten Theses" 37), and disrupts systems of interpretation (*SE* 55).

This understanding of hybridity relates to Bhabha's work, itself greatly influenced by deconstruction and poststructuralism. Indeed, the resistance his theory enables is articulated in

[54] See also *Weird English*, which documents various forms of linguistic variations. However, these categorizations of language and their relation to hybridity can easily become a simplistic method of analysis when the presence of a "foreign" language becomes synonymous with subversion. It can also fetishize difference when difference is thought to be encapsulated in the presence of these "foreign" words.

discourse rather than in acts of violence.[55] Instead of defining resistance through its material instances, Bhabha argues that it is “an effect of ambivalence produced within the rules of dominating discourses as they articulate the signs of cultural difference and reimplicate them within the deferential relations of colonial power” (158). This ambivalence occurs because colonial power must disavow “the chaos of its intervention” (158) in order to preserve its authority. Hybridity intervenes in this process because it enables the “strategic reversal” (159) of authority. Bhabha insists that hybridity is neither an inversion, nor a third term that seeks to resolve tensions (162), but a term whose ambivalence creates “a crisis for any concept of authority based on a system of recognition” (162). For Bhabha, the ambivalence of colonial discourse entails that critics should reconsider its effects in order to determine how resistance occurs (160). If one understands colonial power as producing “hybridization rather than the noisy command of colonialist authority or the silent repression of native traditions” (160), then this power can be understood as being always under question, always resisted. It is “recognized” but not proven because its utterances are contradictory. Subsequently, the “‘marks’ of authority” become “‘empty’ presences” (161).

The ambivalence within colonial discourse is then one which enables subversion (160), but it is one which does not require any particular agency on the part of the marginalized, or the colonized.[56] Indeed, hybridity “reverses the effects of the colonialist disavowal so that other ‘denied’ knowledges enter upon the dominant discourse and estrange the basis of its

[55] This form of discursive resistance is poststructuralist: Robert Young summarizes Derrida’s work as one which resists not only logocentrism, but logocentrism’s ethnocentrism (*WM* 18). In more general terms, he asserts that deconstruction is specifically a critique “of the grounds of Occidental knowledge” (17). In addition, Bhabha deploys Derrida’s notion of the supplement, and the former’s “DissemiNation” is a play on the latter’s *La dissémination*.

[56] R. young disagrees, as he finds that hybridity, unlike Bhabha’s mimicry, enables active resistance (*WM* 148).

authority" (162).[57] Hybridity then "reverses the formal process of disavowal so that the violent dislocation of the act of colonization becomes the conditionality of colonial discourse" (163). In this formulation, hybridity seems to be an inevitable consequence of colonialism, as the two cultures meet, the dominant attempts to impose itself, yet disavows this imposition. It is this contradiction which then leads "native" knowledge to seep through and destabilize the basis of colonial authority. In short, resistance does not occur through deliberate acts of sabotage or insubordination. It just happens.

Much like his definition of colonial mimicry, Bhabha elaborates hybridization as a product of colonialism, and not an act of resistance that requires the deliberate desire of the colonized to resist colonial authority. As Robert Young notes, mimicry is not overtly linked to the definition of hybridity in Bhabha's work (*WM* 148). However, the similarity between the two forms of ambivalence which he describes through these two terms suggests that his definition of mimicry can provide a more concrete example of how hybridity functions. Bhabha defines mimicry through Macaulay's "Minute on Education" where English rule in India would create "a class of interpreters between us and the millions whom we govern – a class of persons Indian in blood and colour, but English in tastes, in opinions, in morals and in intellect" (qtd in Bhabha 124-125). Within this single utterance, colonial rule becomes ambivalent because its goal, to anglicise the colonized, can never be achieved since they are to be denied Englishness in order to remain "Indian in blood and colour." Hence, Bhabha's "not

[57] The example Bhabha provides is that of recently converted Hindus making demands for an "indianized Gospel" (169) and presenting colonizers as barbaric because they eat meat (166). Their understanding of Christianity then resisted colonial authority because it demanded that Christianity be adapted to the Indian context, while also denying that Christianity was brought to India by the colonizers since they were considered barbaric. This form of resistance is not however active in my view, because it does not set out to be oppositional.

quite/not white" (131),[58] a phrase which encapsulates the "menace" mimicry creates when it disrupts colonial authority by exposing its contradictory utterance (126). Bhabha's hybridity, like the concept of mimicry he elaborates, is then one that is enacted through discourse rather than culture, which is however how most critics have applied the term.[59] It is true that cultures become affected because they are dependent on discourse and are modified by the interference of colonial authority, but in Bhabha's work, this cultural hybridization is an effect of colonialism rather than a conscious, active, and subversive decision to borrow from two or more heritages.

Bhabha's theorization of hybridity, mimicry, and ambivalence enabled many critics to read postcolonial literatures and examine the effects of colonialism, but it has also provoked numerous critiques because of its perceived idealism, abstraction, and discursive focus.[60] Bhabha's work enables a critical revision of colonialism as a project which, discursively, always required the violation of its own tenets. However, his failure to address hybridity's racial and imperial history prevents the violent and coercive aspects of colonialism to be unsettled through his reconfiguration of the concept. This problematic omission is most powerfully illustrated in an indigenous context, where any form of hybridization, whether

[58] Bhabha insists that mimicry as resemblance and menace requires racism, as his "almost the same but not quite" (123) becomes "almost the same but not white" (128).

[59] For instance, Dee Horne, Peter Burke, Tobias A. Wachinger, Smaro Kamboureli, the contributors to *Hybridity and Its Discontents*, as well as those to *Debating Cultural Hybridity*, among many others, use the term hybridity to discuss cross-cultural encounters. This application of the term is valid, but it can, when used to describe encounters other than colonial ones, disable the unequal relations of power which lie at the core of Bhabha's argument. Defining hybridity as cultural also reconfigures the term as relying on the agency of the hybrid, thereby disconnecting this definition of hybridity from Bhabha's.

[60] Some of these critiques also address Bhabha's vague writing style, such as Tobias A. Wachinger, Rey Chow, and Barbara Christian, but they are not immediately relevant to my critique. However, I do believe that much of the critiques of Bhabha's work could have been avoided had he been more specific. Yet, the flexibility of his terminology, and the opaqueness of his style have had a rather interesting influence on the development of postcolonial studies, since his terms can be instrumentalized to varied ends.

racial or cultural, is interpreted as a sign of assimilation and inauthenticity (L. Smith 74).[61] The omission of the indigenous context, particularly as it relates to discourses of authenticity, stems from the fact that Bhabha elaborates the concept of hybridity to account for his own complicity with the colonial discourses he deconstructs. In contrast, the charge of complicity in an indigenous context is used to defuse the negative effects of colonialism and dismiss indigenous land claims.

In addition, postcolonial critics interested in anti-colonial struggles find Bhabha's emphasis on discourse troubling because his theories dematerialize culture (Cheah 170)[62] and reduce every act of violence and act of resistance to a discursive effect (Cheah 163; Parry 26; 58).[63] For Cheah, this form of hybridity becomes a "closet idealism" (169) that deprives culture of its material history (170). According to him, hybridity constitutes a "theoretical antinationalism" meant to deny any credence to local/national culture, what Cheah calls "the given" (167).[64] This interpretation is based on Cheah's understanding of hybridity as enacted on culture, rather than as a product of colonial discourse and as a manifestation of the colonial encounter. Cheah illustrates Bhabha's tendency to reduce concrete acts of resistance to language metaphors in a quotation from the *Location of Culture* where "Algerian liberation fighters are agents of interpretation who 'destroy … the nationalist tradition' and are 'free to negotiate and translate their cultural identities in a discontinuous intertextual temporality of

[61] As Linda Tuhiwai Smith mentions, only Western subjects have the right to a changing and evolving culture, since such changes in an indigenous context threaten the rigid markers of native identities as legislated by the state.
[62] The materiality of culture, for Cheah, lies in its political, sociological, economic determinants (169).
[63] Parry's critique lies in her belief that Bhabha misreads Fanon because he drops the latter's "call for insurgency" (16-17) in favour of the psychoanalytical and discourse analysis his writings enable (16-17).
[64] In other words, Cheah argues that hybridity theory develops a new cosmopolitanism, one that undercuts the nation as defined by Benedict Anderson, and posits culture as having the potential to liberate humans from nature ("the given") (Cheah 168).

cultural difference'" (Cheah 169).[65] Such a statement effectively robs acts of violence of their materiality, as it turns a revolutionary into a "reader who … short circuits the enunciative present of modernity" (169). Because of this dematerializing impulse which ultimately dismisses the importance of the local and national, Cheah remains suspicious and critical of hybridity.

Other critics focus on the fact that Bhabha's notion of hybridity does not rely on the conscious resistance of the colonized, since this resistance is implicitly articulated in the ambivalent discourse of colonial power. For Rey Chow, Bhabha answers Spivak's question "can the subaltern speak" with the assertion that it is not necessary for subalterns to speak,[66] since they have already spoken, albeit ambivalently, in the utterance of the colonizer (*WD* 34-23). It is therefore unnecessary for critics and theorists to analyze subaltern discourse, because it is inherently part of the manner in which colonial discourse unfolds (35): "all we would need to do would be to continue to study – to deconstruct – the rich and ambivalent language of the imperialist" (35). Hybridity then constitutes a revival of "an old functionalist notion of what a dominant culture permits in the interest of maintaining its own equilibrium" (35), a critique which points to hybridity as a hegemonic category that maintains the status quo by dictating how opposition and subversion can unfold. Chow subsequently proposes, to contrast this dominant discourse, a more "radical alternative" (35), one which would recognize that the

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[65] In "DissemiNation," Bhabha also notes that the Harlem Renaissance is a discursive recreation of the guerrilla warfare of the maroons, and even states that a passage he quotes at length on these guerillas should be substituted by the following: "for 'warriors' read writers or even 'signs'" (207). For Robert Young, Bhabha's focus on these forms of resistance is problematic because "documentary evidence of resistance by colonized peoples is not at all hard to come by, and is only belittled by the implication that you have to read between the lines to find it" (*WM* 149).

[66] Bhabha does not, however, use the concept of the subaltern in the same way that Spivak and Chow do. For Spivak, the subaltern is not simply "the colonized," but "females of the urban sub-proletariat" (84). Bhabha's focus, at least in "Of Mimicry and Man," is on those who have been colonized but had received education or military training. In other words, they were not disenfranchised in the way that Spivak defines the subaltern.

subaltern's experiences cannot be translated into the imperial discourse (35). Cheah and Chow's critiques address an important limitation of Bhabha's hybridity, since the latter's interest in discourse prevents him from acknowledging that some acts of resistance are neither civil nor sly in their opposition to colonial authority, but violent. However, hybridity need not be synonymous with a lack of agency on the part of the colonized. For Bery and Murray, hybridity does not necessarily flow from the colonizer to the colonized (2), as it relies on the "selective agency" of the colonized to piece together and negotiate cross-cultural encounters (2). It is therefore important to note that while Bhabha does dominate discussions of hybridity, his terminology is sufficiently flexible to be reformulated to address situations other than those he considered.[67] These critiques therefore shed light on what the limitations of his concepts are, and signal how they can be supplemented to address these shortcomings.

In short, hybridity as a concept, and as a category of literary analysis, is fraught and contested because it can be used to theorize opposing situations. It can be used to describe "a history, a politics, and an aesthetics of decolonization" (Smyth 47), which entails that the meaning of this concept is both inextricable from colonial contexts and unfolds differently depending on the social or literary context in which it is applied. Hybridity has also been accused of being a binary structure, based on an "either/or" formulation rather than a "both/and" one (Phoenix and Owen 73). Yet, it has also been theorized as being "multiple" (Bery and Murray 2-3) and as operating as a process (Burke 46), two conceptualization of the term which undo binary thinking. As Brah and Coombes note, hybridity is inevitably complicated by hierarchies of power because it is constituted through them (2). This concept

[67] It should be noted though, that some critics defend hybridity as Bhabha defined it. Stuart Hall, for instance, derides Young's argument that the past of hybridity affects the manner in which the term can be employed and understood today (259). Bhabha's hybridity might be heavily contested, but that should not entail that the concept has been discredited.

must then be deployed cautiously, not only because of its coercive history, but also because it assumes and proposes different interpretations depending on how it is mobilized.

3.2 Contextualizing and Redefining Hybridity in CanLit

The contested and competing definitions of hybridity have affected the manner in which the concept has been used in Canadian literary studies. Mukherjee criticizes hybridity because postcolonial critics have instrumentalized this concept to "[compartmentalize] postcolonial writing" (*PML* xvi). This critique addresses the tendency to apply the term carelessly, as though its definition were fixed. Mukherjee's critique is then at odds with the common observation that hybridity theory is too "elastic" (Burke 34). Kamboureli also deploys the term, but she does so with an awareness of Cheah's charge of its "closet idealism." Far from providing a "ready-made framework" of analysis, hybridity must be used, in Kamboureli's formulation, "to question the metanarratives of development and progress that assent to hybridity" (*SB* 23).[68] Dee Horne also warns that hybridity can be coercive, as it can perpetuate policies of racism and assimilation, especially in an indigenous context. For that reason, Horne reshapes Bhabha's terminology. Hybridity becomes "creative hybridity," which characterizes a text that does not merely reflect an "existing reality" but reimagines it "by reformulating it within the text" (xix). Meanwhile, colonial mimicry becomes "subversive mimicry," where the mimic self-consciously references dominant modes, without however participating in them (12-13). These reformulations of Bhabha's theories have the potential to develop non-coercive forms of hybridity, especially since they are elaborated through the literary texts Horne examines, rather than conceptualized as a framework to which each text must correspond. However, Horne risks rehearsing the criticism of postcolonial theory which

[68] However, Kamboureli does not exactly specify what kind of hybridity she is discussing in *Scandalous Bodies*. Hybridity is simply assigned to the diasporic critic (21).

King anticipates in "Godzilla Versus the Postcolonial." Horne's critique is centred on the content of the literary texts, which means that her formulations depend on the text's oppositional relationship to dominant Canadians and colonialism, and requires that the text must aim to subvert these structures. [69] In contrast, texts that are not concerned with these topics cannot be incorporated in Horne's framework. For instance, Cree critic Neal McCleod deploys hybridization much like Bhabha does. He uses the concept to illustrate the struggle through which indigenous peoples can retain their tribal identities (25). Like Bhabha, he is interested in how colonial discourses can be subverted, but articulates this subversion in the "shifting of interpretative reality and space" that a return to Cree storytelling can provide.[70]

Fred Wah has also reformulated the concept of hybridity, as he finds it useful to describe the space of the hyphen which "binds and divides" (*FI* 72). Wah maintains hybridity's contested history, since he mentions that his interest in the term comes from his mixed heritage (74). Yet, unlike most critics who mobilize the term to describe the content of a literary text or their own process of cultural hybridization, Wah's "half-bred poetics" define literary strategies that put pressures on "the master narratives of duality, multiculturalism, and apartheid" (74). The "pressure" which these literary techniques exercise subsequently "creates a volatile space that is inhabited by a wide range of voices" (74). The strategies he proposes to effect this destabilization include code-switching and asking questions (89),[71] as they can

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[69] For King, texts such as Ruby Slipperjack's *Honour the Sun* and Basil Johnston's *Indian School Days* are in fact more engaging than those that expose colonialism because they are more concerned with the everyday than with demonizing dominant culture (Lutz 110).

[70] McCleod calls this process "coming home through stories," because it has the potential to "link two disparate narrative locations, and to find … a place of speaking and narrating, wherein the experiences of the present can be understood as a function of the past" (33).

[71] This reference to asking questions as a technique of subversion is also how Bhabha develops his concept of hybridity as "less than one but double" (166) in "Signs Taken for Wonders." For Bhabha, asking questions threatens the self-evident, true, and universal nature of Christian scriptures because it troubles its assumptions (167-170).

threaten, contaminate, and pollute dominant narratives (89). Wah's reconfiguration of hybridity as a literary strategy enables writers to write "through a complicated net of possibilities, the 'contact zone'" (94), which entails that Wah understands the space of the hyphen as a contested space marked by (colonial) unequal relations of power. In other words, even though his theorization of the hyphen describes literary techniques, it remains embedded within hybridity's history of race theory and colonialism.

Wah's definition of hybridity then differs from prior applications of the term because it addresses hybridity as characterizing various literary strategies that arise out of a violent history. In other words, he moves away from conceptualizing of hybridity as a category of discourse analysis or as a marker of assimilation and cultural identity. However, the techniques he associates with hybridity are tied to an oppositional stance towards the dominant, which limits the applications of these techniques to texts that wish to challenge and reconfigure discourses prevalent among their own marginalized community, or their own relation to other minoritized subject positions. When used as an oppositional strategy directed towards dominant narratives, hybridity risks reifying and homogenizing them.[72] For that reason, hybridity as I use it in this dissertation builds on Bhabha's theorization of hybridity in an attempt to develop non-hegemonic forms of hybridity that prevent master discourses from establishing themselves. For that reason, I supplement Bhabha's definition of hybridity to allow agency to figure in how this discourse unfolds, as well as in how narratives of nation,

[72] As many critics have pointed out, the problem with discussing majoritized discourses or whiteness in Canadian literature is that it homogenizes discrepancies that lie at the level of gender, ethnicity, and region. For that reason, some women took offence at being labelled "WASPs" during the "Telling It" conference (Maracle et al., 47), as that word describes ethnicity and religion in a way that did not represent most women present. Emma Larocque also notes that "white" can be homogenizing, but asserts that, in an indigenous context, "white" is employed "contrapuntally, sometimes ideologically, but not in a racist way" (9). The relevance of terms such as "dominant" or "white" rather lies in the position of privilege which it occupies in contradistinction to minoritized communities.

identity, culture, and race are questioned and destabilized. The fact that I read hybridity as a literary strategy rather than as a category of discourse analysis or as the consequence of displacement and assimilation (Lowe 138) does not entail that I am dematerializing colonialism, resistance, and violence by turning them into language metaphors. The material consequences of these events are ever present in the texts I discuss, as they impact and influence the content of the works. However, my dissertation asks what the form and genre of these texts accomplish through their hybrid literary strategies. In other words, I examine how experimental techniques that aim to destabilize and question narratives, whether dominant or marginalized, influence the manner in which the content of the texts unfolds. This focus on how the literary text operates allows me to identify contradictions and tensions between form and content, tensions which prevent the works from becoming one of the hegemonic narratives they trouble.

Since I do not deploy hybridity in and of itself as a category of literary analysis, it is the terms used to define hybridity, such as ambivalence, resistance, oscillation, and vacillation, which serve this function in my dissertation. My application of these terms is greatly influenced by Bhabha's definitions, but I do deploy them in contexts that differ from those intended in colonial discourse analysis. While Bhabha defines resistance as disrupting the authority of colonial discourse through the ambivalence of the colonial discourse in its attempt to disavow the violence of its intervention (157-158), resistance in my dissertation is one that requires agency on the part of those marginalized by dominant narratives. It is expressed through the text's oppositional content, but it is also performed stylistically as the texts engage with prior literary and critical material to question the formation of dominant narratives. It is a form of resistance that is attentive to the narratives which it creates even as it questions others,

and which therefore always seeks to destabilize the text's coercive potential. When used in this context, hybridity functions as dissensus because it demonstrates the absence of a "régime unique de présentation et interprétation du donné imposant à tous son évidence" (Rancière, *SE* 55). Meaning in the texts is never self-evident or fixed, as the metaphors the texts employ often encapsulate opposing referents that undo interpretations.

The ambivalence of these literary texts also contributes to this destabilization of meaning. Bhabha theorizes ambivalence as the contradictory, but disavowed, content of an utterance (157-158). It is central to the function of hybridity because it allows for subversion (160). While ambivalence characterizes colonial power in Bhabha's theory, I use it to describe strategies that actively work to destabilize and challenge themselves, and thus, to prevent the establishment of a master discourse. This ambivalence is encapsulated in the tensions that occur between the experimental form of a text and its seemingly linear and hegemonic content, as the form subsequently fractures the possibility to interpret the content in totalizing terms. It is also created through metaphor usage, in which a same metaphorical context is repeated throughout a text yet never bears the same meaning. I then use Bhabha's concepts of oscillation and vacillation to describe the movement between the referents of these unstable metaphors. These concepts occur in his theorization of the stereotype, where they characterize the "fixity" which the stereotype assumes. For Bhabha, the stereotype "is a form of knowledge and identification that vacillates between what is always 'in place,' already known, and something that must be anxiously repeated" (94-95). Vacillation then produces the ambivalence that characterizes the stereotype (95) and that allows hybridity to operate (159).[73]

[73] The stereotype and hybridity are in fact linked, as both concepts depend on the ability of colonial discourse to create "the colonized as a social reality which is at once an 'other' and yet entirely knowable and visible (101).

A focus on how meaning oscillates in the literary texts between different referents then allows the text to always question itself and thus, to prevent its own discourses, narratives, or perspectives from becoming hegemonic.

This destabilization of meaning which the texts present through their stylistic and formal strategies then shapes the manner in which I deploy theory and criticism as categories of analysis. Since hybridity has been characterized, historically, by a compulsive desire to categorize what fell outside of colonial categorizations, the juxtaposition of this historical context with contemporary theories of hybridity allows this concept to trouble the logic of categorization. The creation of literary categories and literary discourses through debate occupies a certain predominance in Canadian criticism,[74] and texts which trouble these categories because of the subject position from which they are written are then often classified as indigenous, multicultural, or minority literature instead of being examined as contributing directly to dominant discourses in Canadian criticism.

This anxiety over classification is particularly relevant to indigenous literatures, as writers and critics disagree on whether or not these literatures should be incorporated within the canon. According to Horne, dismissing the category of indigenous literature would prevent critics from analyzing a text's oppositional politics (xix). In contrast, Fagan is resistant towards the category of native literature, because it encourages critics to look for what

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This construction of the colonized coincides with Bhabha's definition of colonial discourse as "a splitting of hybridity that is less than one and double" (166).

[74] For Imre Szeman, it is literary criticism rather than the literature itself which has created the field of Canadian literary studies (17). The importance of these critical debates then cannot be overlooked when discussing the reception of literary texts, which may face marginalization or misreadings if they do not adhere to the rather rigid manner in which literary categories such as city writing, the long poem, prairie literature, and indigenous literatures have been historically defined. As Kristina Fagan notes in relation to native literature, indigenous texts are inevitably read for their resistance to colonialism because they must "fit into critical and theoretical thinking" ("What" 240).

constitutes the "nativeness" of the studied text ("What" 239).[75] Yet, she worries that dismissing it will prove dangerous and homogenizing for indigenous cultural production (243). For Anna Marie Sewell, the category of native literature is "based on bigotry" (20), one which risks herding the literature "into a reservation of ideas" (20).[76] Her critique highlights the dangers of categorization, which can act as a strategy of containment that prescribes the content of indigenous writing. Due to this tension between the use-value of categories and their potential risks, I maintain the categories of literary analysis relevant to the texts under discussion, but examine how the texts simultaneously resist and reformulate them. Instead of arguing for a coercive application of literary categorization, I contend that literary texts can displace and reconfigure the field of Canadian literature as it has been historically defined in order to account for discrepant perspectives. My dissertation then relies on a juxtaposition of competing definitions and applications of hybridity that derive from the term's historical, cultural, and discursive theorization. This articulation of hybridity allows me to develop non-hegemonic forms of postcolonial literary analysis within a Canadian context that emphasizes what literary strategies indigenous and multicultural texts share, yet deploy to varied effects.

In order to perform this form of analysis, my second chapter analyzes Armand Garnet Ruffo's *Grey Owl: The Mystery of Archie Belaney* as a text that revisits and indigenizes the genre of the Canadian long poem. While critics read this text as more factual than the long poems it resembles, I explore how Ruffo's use of a hybrid genre and form allows him to question the historical figure of Archie Belaney/Grey Owl and the narratives attributed to him.

[75] This indigenous content becomes inevitably tied to stereotypes that act as markers of authenticity, as critics search for instances of orality and storytelling, a circular structure, an environmental/ environmentalist bent, and a representation of the destructive impact of colonialism.

[76] As Helen Hoy mentions, categories such as "native literature" and "multicultural literature" risk "creating simple … binaries," "using race as explanatory" and "reducing these texts to cultural documentation" (20).

I am particularly interested in the manner in which the structural positioning of textual fragments within the text's generic interplay generates a contradictory subject and casts doubt on the historical material cited in the text. This destabilizing form allows me to examine how Belaney deploys mimicry to coercive ends, as he manipulates it with the purpose of supplanting indigenous peoples in their claims to indigeneity. My analysis then differs from that of prior critics since I argue that the text's content is disrupted and questioned by the form in which it is presented.

My third chapter reads Suzette Mayr's *Venous Hum* as a text that proposes a contamination of the dominant narratives of Canadian nationalism, multiculturalism, and the traditional family unit. Set in a Calgary/Edmonton suburban setting, Mayr's novel forces a reconsideration of the category of prairie literature as a homogenous zone of literary production, and contests the centrality of Toronto as the prime location for the production of African Canadian and queer writing. I analyze this novel as one which initially relies on a heavily conservative framework, but subsequently dismantles and contaminates it through experimental techniques such as magic realism, playful intertextuality, and ambivalent metaphors. I also use Mayr's novel to tease out the limitations of overfamiliarity with indigenous and other marginalized peoples, as Mayr's novel replicates but systematically troubles assumptions relating to race and sexuality. In short, I interpret *Venous Hum* as a text which creates the narratives it wishes to oppose in order to thoroughly destabilize them through stylistic experimentation.

Chapter four opens the second section of my dissertation, where I turn away from predominantly national (and nationalist) concerns in order to examine intersections between Canadian literature and the global. In this chapter, I analyze Rawi Hage's *Cockroach* through

Saskia Sassen's theorization of the scales of the global. While critics are prone to identify this novel either as a multicultural text on the one hand (national scale), or as a diasporic one on the other (global scale), I situate *Cockroach* within the emerging field of Canadian urban literature. By insisting on the relevance of Montreal as a category of analysis, I explore how Hage's novel can supplement Sassen's theorization of the interpenetrating spatial scales of the global through the addition of the temporal dimension of colonialism. Examining the local as simultaneously part of the global yet as complicit with colonialism allows me to argue that Hage's novel destabilizes the seeming coherence of its plot by implicating his narrator in the very critiques he constantly articulates. I therefore pay attention to the effect of Hage's ambivalent and abject metaphors, playful intertextuality, and apocalyptic writing style in order to examine how the novel troubles and criticizes the narrator's actions.

My final chapter examines the limitations of my own methodology as I provide a close-reading of Armstrong's *Whispering in Shadows*. Since hybridity as it has been defined is strongly resisted in Armstrong's body of work, I argue that it is possible to develop alternatives to hybridity by drawing on the indigenous concepts, such as that of En'owkin and the spider's web, which recur in Armstrong's critical essays. This chapter relies on Armstrong's *Slash* and its vast critical reception in order to provide non-hegemonic readings of the competing narratives *Whispering in Shadows* provides. By paying close attention to Armstrong's generic interplay and her use of fragmentation, intertextuality, and overlapping narratives, this chapter argues that it is the novel's refusal to reckon with its complicity that prevents it from occupying a hegemonic position. In that way, Armstrong's novel criticizes the categories and discourses which would defuse its radical critiques without however providing reductive or simplistic solutions to the violence and degradation it tracks.

My dissertation then addresses the relationship between multicultural and indigenous writing indirectly. The texts are not placed in direct comparisons in order to avoid conflations, but I do establish links between them and other works of Canadian literature via the footnotes. The numerous references I make to a wide variety of Canadian and international works of literature throughout the dissertation are meant to stress the contribution the works under discussion make to various debates. This focus on literary strategies and on Canadian literary categories then allows me to examine how similar techniques that aim to destabilize the dominant unfold differently depending on the context and the subject position from which they emerge. Because this dissertation emphasizes the differential relations between and across these subject positions while still insisting that their oppositional nature need not dismantle the field of Canadian literature, it enables the creation of a new framework through which the relationship between indigenous and multicultural writing can be examined without reifying difference or practicing overfamiliarity.

Chapter 2: The Hybridity of Form: (De)constructing the Subject in Ruffo's *Grey Owl*

Critics of Ruffo's *Grey Owl: The Mystery of Archie Belaney* are not particularly engaged in analyzing this work as poetry. Rather, it is the relationship between this long poem and other biographical works on Belaney which has been the main focus of the criticism (Dawson, "Never" 131; Braz, "White" 174; Hulan, "Hearing" 41-48). For most critics, the question the long poem initially posits concerns "the mystery" of Archie Belaney, to which the text proposes no definite answer. According to Carrie Dawson, the answer lies in the nature of imposture ("Never"120), and both she and Albert Braz attempt to identify whether or not it is possible to assign a fixed "identity" to Belaney/Grey Owl (130-131; Braz, "White" 183).[77] For Jonathan Dewar, it concerns that "unsolved question of connection" ("Fringes" 268) and why Belaney felt the need to adopt an indigenous persona (268). Renée Hulan believes the mystery is related to the manner in which Belaney should be imagined, "as a man to be judged by his actions or by his beliefs" ("Hearing" 55). In contrast, I would suggest that the text offers another answer to this mystery through the epigraph from Grey Owl's *The Men of the Last Frontier* which opens Ruffo's long poem. This epigraph mentions that "the trail, then, is not merely a connecting link between widely distinct points, it becomes an idea… a creed from which none may falter" (qtd in Ruffo *GO*). If Dewar reads this epigraph as reinforcing the idea of connection ("Copper" 73), the trail should also be read beyond its ability to connect two points, or in this case, two identities. As an "idea" or "creed" that cannot be abandoned, the trail also comes to represent the *journey* between these two identities,[78] where the "mystery"

[77] Dawson's conclusion is that Ruffo's text, through its representation of the "North," suggests the possibility of transformation ("Never" 130). Similarly, Braz argues that acculturation is possible in Ruffo's long poem ("White" 183). Both arguments entail that "Grey Owl" constitutes Belaney's true identity.
[78] The importance of "journey" is further emphasized in the organization of the long poem, as it is the title of the third section. Beyond its documentation of Belaney's travels, this section marks the solidification of his Grey

of Archie Belaney concerns *how* Belaney (de)constructed his identity/identities. Through its tensions, ironies, as well as its contradictory desires and perceptions, this long poem demonstrates the extent to which the text continuously unsettles the self it attempts to produce, which suggests that Grey Owl cannot be assigned a unified identity.

For these reasons, I read Ruffo's long poem as an indigenous response to Belaney/Grey Owl, one which destabilizes the nature of identity through an intervention[79] in the genre of the contemporary Canadian long poem. It is through generic interplay and the hybrid form of this genre that Ruffo unsettles his subject, as his text contains no explicit evaluative judgement on Belaney or his impersonation. In the first section of this chapter, I situate Ruffo's *Grey Owl* within the genre of the long poem, as a text which contributes, yet is oppositional to, the manner in which this genre has been historically defined. The second section examines the hybrid form of the text, and pays particular attention to Ruffo's structural decisions. By looking at Ruffo's interweaving of facts and fiction, I will point out that the text's formal organization generates a contradictory subject. The final section focuses on elements Ruffo chose to reinscribe within Grey Owl's story, notably the latter's relationships with the North, success, and his family. Put differently, I argue that the form of Ruffo's long poem affects the interpretation of the content,[80] and deconstructs Belaney's Grey Owl persona by reassessing his denials and influences as stemming from a form of mimicry that signals

Owl persona, and launches the subject into a position where retreat is impossible, as the last section, "No Retreat," suggests.

[79] I use the word "intervention" because Ruffo engages with the long poem in a way that questions and challenges the way in which it has been historically defined and analyzed. His long poem does not simply deploy the form, but rather shapes it to different ends in order to "indigenize" the genre. Ruffo's approach can then be distinguished from that of early writers of long poems such as Cary or Goldsmith, who deployed the long poetic form developed by Pope and Dr. Goldsmith without adapting it to a Canadian context. In contrast, Ruffo's text adapts, corrects, and modifies the form to fit its subject matter and Ruffo's own perspective.

[80] While Fredric Jameson stresses that the form a text adopts often betrays what the text wishes to repress, its "political unconscious" (*PU* 49), the form of Ruffo's long poem betrays the writer's subversive intent in what appears to be a linear and sympathetic narrative.

conquest rather than subversion. My study of this long poem demonstrates that Ruffo does not resolve the debate surrounding Grey Owl, but rather questions and challenges this figure from an indigenous perspective. Thus, if Hulan asks whether Belaney should be “judged by his actions or by his beliefs” (“Hearing” 55), the long poem suggests that these two sides cannot be separated. Belaney frequently ventriloquizes two distinct selves, but his tendency to “deny Archibald Belaney” (Ruffo, *GO* 14) effectively results in a doubling of the self, which points to the enduring quality and fluidity of competing and repressed identities.

1.1 Biography, Poetry, or Historiography: The Genre of *Grey Owl: The Mystery of Archie Belaney*

Identifying *Grey Owl: the Mystery of Archie Belaney* as a long poem is complicated because there is little consensus amidst the text’s critics on the generic nature of Ruffo’s text. For instance, both Carrie Dawson and Albert Braz initially identify *Grey Owl* as a long poem (Dawson, “Never” 129; Braz, “White” 172), but later move on to identify it as a biography. Indeed, Dawson begins by stressing the poetic nature of Ruffo’s work, as she argues that “poetry enables Ruffo ... to reinvent well-known biographical details about Grey Owl within a fugal interplay of voices” (“Never” 129). However, since her article examines Ruffo’s long poem in relation to several non-fictional biographies of Archie Belaney, her article tends to equate Ruffo’s text with such works and forecloses discussions of its poetic and fictional features. She also differentiates Ruffo’s work from that of other postmodernist writers, claiming that Ruffo’s *Grey Owl* is “less playful and more romantic than [Kroetsch’s work]” [81] (130) and that “there is nothing remotely ironic about this *biography*” (131 my emphasis).

[81] Dawson is here referring to Kroetsch’s fictional rendition of Grey Owl in his novel *Gone Indian*. However, this comparison is not necessarily appropriate, since Kroetsch’s novel is a fictional narrative which refers to Grey Owl because his protagonist strives to imitate this impostor. In contrast, Ruffo’s text is a recreation of Grey Owl’s life story and is consequently more linear.

Likewise, Braz perceives *Grey Owl* as being "written in the form of a biography— it includes newspaper clippings and journal entries, as well as archival photographs" ("White" 174). For Braz, then, the text's documentary form adds biographical force to the poem. In contrast, Jonathan R. Dewar argues that Ruffo's text constitutes a subversion of the "historically problematic genre" that is the Indian autobiography ("Copper" 70), since Ruffo employs Belaney's own writings throughout the text in a way that identifies both Ruffo and Belaney as "co-authors" of *Grey Owl: the Mystery of Archie Belaney* (70). Dewar sees this subversion in the fact that Ruffo is Native while Belaney is not, which contradicts the traditional relation of power between the Native as subject material, and the biographer as author (70-71).[82] For Renée Hulan, Ruffo's text is "an intervention in Canadian historiography" ("Hearing" 40), but like Dawson, she is concerned with situating Ruffo's *Grey Owl* within other biographical accounts. In short, when critics read *Grey Owl: The Mystery of Archie Belaney*, they tend to favour one specific genre over the multi-genre form of the long poem, one which inevitably privileges the factual over the fictional aspects of Ruffo's work.

While Dewar suggests that the Indian autobiography is the dominant genre of Ruffo's text, his interpretation is based on a comparative examination of *Grey Owl* with Atwood's *The Journals of Susanna Moodie* and Ondaatje's *The Collected Works of Billy the Kid* because Ruffo's form echoes that of these two long poems ("Fringes" 260). According to him, Ruffo's text differs from those of Atwood and Ondaatje because the latter "purport to be creations by

[82] Dewar makes his argument through Arnold Krupat's "The Indian Autobiography: Origins, Type, and Function." However, Dewar misreads Krupat's argument. Indeed, the latter *insists* that an Indian autobiography requires "contact" between the subject and the writer in order to be interpreted as such (263). Krupat also mentions that this genre, developed in the 19th Century, is *already* subversive because it presents a speaking Native voice rather than a vanished, memorialized one (263). A more adequate example of a contemporary Indian autobiography would be Yvonne Johnson and Rudy Wiebe's *Stolen Life*.

their 'authors'" (261), which entails that they are more fictionalized than *Grey Owl*.[83] Put differently, he argues that Ruffo's use of Belaney's writings transforms Ruffo's text into a "bi-cultural composite authorship" (262), where Ruffo and Belaney act as co-authors of the text. Dewar is also concerned with the unequal relations of power that mark First Nations' relationship with mainstream culture. According to him, Moodie and Billy are relatively privileged figures within history, because they were not subjected to the same forms of "re-versioning" to which indigenous peoples and stories were subjected (262). However, Dewar gives more authority to Ondaatje's long poem than other critics do, since Kamboureli argues that Ondaatje foregrounds himself as a reader of biographies and stories in *The Collected Works* (*EG* 186), much like Ruffo does in *Grey Owl*.[84] While I agree that Ruffo's text differs significantly from Atwood and Ondaatje's long poems, Ruffo's introductory poem suggests that he does not treat Belaney as a "subject" but as a *character*. In this poem, the pronoun "you" initially addresses a speaker/researcher attempting to represent Belaney, but shifts to a "you" that addresses Belaney himself:

> Your [the writer's] face transparent as a lens,
>
> and with the click of a pen
>
> you find yourself stepping from a train (n.p.).

The writer/researcher can here be seen as *becoming* Belaney "with the click of a pen," which suggests that the text is a fictional recreation of Belaney's life as he potentially experienced

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[83] Once again, Dewar deviates from Krupat's definition of the "Indian autobiography." It is true that this genre is characterized by an attempt, on the part of the writers, to disclaim their role by asserting that the story and opinions belong to their subjects (Krupat 271). However, no such disclaimer exists in Ruffo's text, who takes full responsibility in the acknowledgements for the fact that "this work… is a culmination of all that *I* have heard, read, and *imagined* about the man and his times" (Ruffo, *GO* 213 my emphasis). Ruffo's statement points to the role of fiction in the text as well as to his own role in putting the text together.

[84] In addition, Kamboureli criticizes previous critics of Ondaatje's work because they search for "authenticity" when reading literary works dealing with historical figures. Similarly, critics of Ruffo's *Grey Owl* focus on this long poem's factual elements.

it.[85] For Dewar, Ruffo's opening poem marks a departure from the tradition of Indian autobiography ("Copper" 74), but he argues that Ruffo is "otherwise absent" (74) from the rest of the text.[86] In contrast, Hulan establishes this opening poem as marking the text's passage into fictionality, where "the poet ... re-appropriates the Native voice and culture appropriated by Belaney" ("Hearing" 49). Because *Grey Owl* mixes fact and fiction, it can be interpreted as an indigenous response to a controversial historical figure. Its fictional rendition of the historical material also legitimates an analysis of the text as a long poem.

Defining *Grey Owl: The Mystery of Archie Belaney* as a long poem is however problematic because the genre of the Canadian long poem has long been the subject of some debate.[87] It is also complicated by the critical history which accompanies discussions of the long poem. For example, both Barbara Godard and Eli Mandel comment on the fact that the "Long-Liners Conference" (Toronto, 1984) did not ask its contributors to examine women poets and their engagement with the form (Godard, "Epi(pro)logue" 324; Mandel 22). In other words, the criticism on the long poem appears to be marked by the erasure of historically ignored voices. Mandel also evokes the long poem's fraught critical history by pointing out the tension between those who identify it as a postmodern form, and those who ground it in modernism (17). Additionally, the debate raises questions regarding the relation between the contemporary long poem and the early Canadian long poems of the late eighteenth and

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[85] This drive towards representing Belaney's experiences "authentically" could explain why Dawson views the text as "less playful and more romantic" than Kroetsch's *Gone Indian* ("Never" 130), since Ruffo's goal could be to tell the story, as much as possible, from Belaney's perspective and that of those around him.

[86] The way in which Dewar happens to be wrong regarding the absence of this speaker anywhere else in the text will be examined later.

[87] While part of this debate is concerned with the effects of the length of the long poem, as well as how long a long poem must be, such discussions will not be the subject of this analysis, since this chapter addresses the long poem as a genre rather than as a set of aesthetic criteria. Kroetsch's notions of delay and failure in "For Play and Entrance," Davey's focus on anticipation in "Recontextualization in the Long Poem," or Kamboureli's argument on duration in *On the Edge of Genre* are thus not the focus of this generic study.

nineteenth centuries. Since those early long poems were concerned with nation-building, settlement, and migration (Munton 94), they borrowed heavily from the epic mode (Saul 261), a configuration which glamorizes progress and the pioneering spirit.[88] Similarly, Dorothy Livesay perceives a continuity between an early long poem such as Crawford's *Malcom's Katie* and her own work because of the long poem's documentary nature (269; 271). For Livesay, the documentary long poem is "a frame on which to hang a theme" (269), since she reads it as reflecting "the social structure of the country" while being held together by "descriptive, lyrical, and didactic elements" (269). Through her reading of Crawford's portrayal of nature as "Native Indian" (271), Livesay defines this genre as uniquely Canadian. For her, this imagery demonstrates that the characters of her long poem are in harmony with their environment (274). However, when Max, who is cutting trees to establish his settlement declares that "Mine axe and I– we do immortal tasks/ We build nations" (Crawford 5 ll.55-56), Crawford evokes, perhaps unintentionally, the material reality of early settlement; that is, the physical displacement of indigenous peoples. Like the epic mode, the documentary genre is then unsettling in an indigenous context. The historical connection between early and contemporary long poems challenge Ruffo's engagement with a similar form, since its early manifestations wish to displace First Nations and are also replete with negative stereotypical representations of indigenous peoples.[89]

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[88] See for instance Pratt's *Towards the Last Spike*, where progress and movement are treated through the epic mode in order to identify the construction of the Canadian-Pacific railway as a significant moment of nation-building. Pratt's poem also demonstrates that certain dissenting voices, such as Riel's and the indentured workers', must be dismissed or erased in order to create "the united spirit of a culture" (Saul 262) that the epic requires.

[89] See for example Thomas Cary's *Abrams Plains* where Inuits are described as "dwarfish Esquimaux, with small pig's eyes" (l.164). Similarly, Oliver Goldsmith's *The Rising Village* portrays First Nations as "wandering savages" who display, "by turns, the fury of their sway" (ll.45-46). Joseph Howe's *Acadia* represents the time before the arrival of settlers as "gloomy scenes of *darker days*,/ the bloody strife, the discord and the fear" (ll.620-621 my emphasis).

These historical connections have however been challenged and questioned. In a response to Livesay's essay, Frank Davey suggests that women should always be suspicious of the documentary form, since it is rooted in a "presumptively authoritative and patriarchal tradition" ("Recontextualization" 136). He subsequently mentions that writers of the long poem share this suspicion. The sense of distrust Davey recommends resonates in a First Nations context, where indigenous voices have been, and continue to be, marginalized by dominant discourses of history and literary criticism. Indeed, Livesay had not anticipated the problematic feature the documentary genre would generate; that is, that its imperial biases could taint its "factual" basis. Her belief that D.C. Scott's work in the department of Indian Affairs gave him "factual" knowledge of indigenous cultures (Livesay 277) is questionable at best. Considering that Ruffo responded to Scott's poetry[90] in a way that highlighted the former's misguided and racist attitudes, his *Grey Owl* can be interpreted as having a conflicted relationship with the genre of the long poem.

In the face of these contested definitions of the same genre, and of its historically problematic context, one might wonder how the long poem can function as a literary category. During the Long-Liners Conference, Mandel declared that the long poem could not exist as a form, as the attempts to define it occurred within a time period, postmodernity, which resists definition (19-21). While Kamboureli agrees that the contemporary long poem resists definition, she points to this genre's "contradictory impulses" (*EG* 4) as what constitutes its generic specificity. She subsequently argues that the multiple genres from which it is composed, such as the epic, the lyric, and the documentary (xiii), constitute the long poem's

[90] Ruffo addresses a poem to D.C. Scott ("Poem for D.C. Scott") in *Opening in the Sky*. Similarly, Louise (Sky Dancer) Halfe addresses D.C. Scott's legacy in her long poem *Blue Marrow* to demonstrate the negative impact Scott has had on indigenous peoples.

determining characteristic. For Kamboureli, the contemporary long poem does not privilege one genre over another, but rather "accommodates and appropriates" (50) different genres, the interplay between them generating its "distinct poetic form" (45). It is then the long poem's complex generic relations which allow for multiple encodings and decodings (77).

While Kamboureli's definition of the long poem is at times problematic,[91] her definition of this form as inherently hybrid applies well to *Grey Owl: The Mystery of Archie Belaney*. Indigenous writers are not considered in Kamboureli's study, perhaps due to the lack of texts lending themselves to her analysis at the time she was writing, but her interpretation of the long poem as a hybrid form allows writers who engage with cultural (and racial) hybridity to adapt this form to their own ends. Since historical definitions of this genre are at times hostile to indigenous ways of knowing, an analysis of Ruffo's work as a long poem entails paying attention to the strategies through which the text defuses historically coercive forms and corrects erasures through its generic interplay. Ruffo's long poem can then be seen as appropriating the form of the Canadian long poem in order to indigenize it, inasmuch as it challenges and subverts the effects different genres normally seek to create. The generic interplay this text develops can subsequently be viewed as revisiting and defusing First Nations' unequal relations of power with history and genre.

1.2 "Indigenizing" the Long Poem: Generic Interplay in *Grey Owl: The Mystery of Archie Belaney*

[91] For example, Kamboureli's definition denies that one genre within a long poem's generic interplay dominates the others. In contrast, Eli Mandel argues that multiple genres always interact within a set hierarchy (12). For Kamboureli, this unequal valuation between genres is "dissolved and reconstituted with a difference" (*EG* 90) in a long poem, an argument which dismisses the possibility for one genre to exercise hegemony over the others. However, since generic interplay "reconstitutes" this hierarchy, her argument raises questions concerning the coercive potential of certain genres.

To begin, *Grey Owl* invokes the epic mode only to subvert it. Ruffo's text can be interpreted as a long poem through the traces of its generic interplay, and the manner in which genres are complicated through an indigenous perspective. While Joanne Saul argues that the epic allows for the construction of the "united spirit of a culture" (262), Kamboureli examines the epic as dealing with the need for and the creation of an established history (*EG* 23). According to her, there is a marked desire within Canadian criticism to affiliate the epic with migration and settlement (23), as well as with the fact that both Canada and the long poem are epic in size (23). The epic drive is usually affiliated with early long poems, where the need for national unity leads the poet to homogenize the heterogeneity of the Canadian landscape and its contested history. This emphasis on nation-building as a marker of the epic is present in Ruffo's long poem, since it is concerned, to a certain degree, with the fur trade, one of Canada's foundational ventures.[92] The epic is invoked through Ruffo's "romantic" approach to Belaney (Dawson, "Never" 130), where North America is mythologized through an association with dreams (Ruffo, *GO* 2; 4), the imagination (6; 12), and freedom (4; 15). However, it is Belaney's character, rather than Ruffo's text itself, which seeks to be aligned with the epic mode. To that end, Belaney draws a contrast between England and Canada. He constructs the former as the realm of "stuffiness" (10) and "proper" behaviour (8), while one has to be "tough" to "handle the action" (21) in Canada. The text only begins to resist the epic impulse once unsustainable trapping devastates the landscape, which leads Ruffo to represent the dark side of progress and settlement: "the war in Europe was over. The war here had just begun" (32).

[92] Harold A. Innis argues that Canada's foundation is related to the trade routes the fur trade required (qtd in Emberley, *CPF* 3). Julia Emberley adds to Innis's argument in *The Cultural Politics of Fur* through an analysis of the Hudson's Bay Company's 325th anniversary leaflet, which created a direct link between the fur trade, nationhood, and "the signing of the Canadian charter in Ottawa, 1970" (70).

While Belaney's transformation betrays epic impulses, Kamboureli warns that the quests portrayed in long poems should not be conflated with epic quests (*EG* 57). Belaney's metamorphosis into Grey Owl is marked by several moments which serve to defuse epic glorification. For instance, after meeting Belaney, Mackenzie King asserts that:

> The very idea of the Brits fawning over him like awed children is most interesting, if not amusing, especially when I detect a certain naivety in him I can but describe as child-like. The way he tries to sell his film project, speaking with such fervour of his people's traditions, as though there is really a place for them in modern Canada. (Ruffo, *GO* 134)

Such a passage demonstrates not only that Belaney's transformation is not sufficiently convincing from a Canadian point of view, but also that Belaney does not have the political power he believes he can muster. Simultaneously, Mackenzie King is speaking from an "epic" position, one through which "modern Canada" must be created through the displacement of First Nations. By presenting Mackenzie King's voice in such an honest manner, Ruffo exposes what lies behind myths of nation-formation, especially since King would "give [his] approbation" were it "politically astute" (134) to do so. As Manina Jones argues, repetition or re-citation serves the purpose of reassessment (*That* 15). This passage should then prompt readers to question Mackenzie King and the epic narrative of progress and modernization he espouses. The epic mythologizing of Grey Owl as the reformed trapper turned conservationist is also defused once Annie Espaniel mentions that she once found "blasting caps underneath Archie's bed ... Imagine, Grey Owl blowing up beaver houses" (Ruffo, *GO* 163). Annie's intervention is crucial, since it hints that Ruffo's text contains instances of unreliable narration where certain details have been omitted. In Ruffo's long poem, indigenous voices often

challenge and expose the erasures created by epic impulses,[93] demonstrating the ways in which First Nations writers can appropriate this hegemonic genre in order to subvert it.

Ruffo also incorporates archival research in his long poem, which prompts a comparison with the documentary genre. However, while Livesay argues that the documentary mode is dedicated to notions of factual truth (281), Davey proposes that this "objectivity" masks a certain point of view ("Countertextuality" 36). For instance, Ruffo's text employs the documentary mode in a postmodern way, aligning his text with those of Atwood's *The Journals of Susanna Moodie* and Ondaatje's *The Collected Works of Billy the Kid*. His text comprises Belaney's writing along with eyewitness accounts, newspaper clippings, and archival photographs in order to present multiple and alternative points of view on his central figure.[94] Unlike Atwood and Ondaatje, Ruffo integrates these documents with little to no variation within the long poem.

However, if Ruffo's *Grey Owl* appears to be more factual than the other long poems it resembles, Ruffo's use of the documentary mode questions desires to cast his text as a biography. Indeed, Godard argues that the documentary long poem "moves to drown out the singular represented subject in a chorus of voices" ("Epi(pro)logue" 315). In this context, Ruffo's inclusion of multiple voices cannot create the unified subject a biography requires, particularly as those voices contradict each other. For instance, one voice argues that Belaney is "content" (Ruffo, *GO* 81), but Ruffo often presents Belaney as tormented (68-69). Indigenous voices also view him as "part of the family" (36) and as a "brother" (128), while

[93] Their presence is in fact subversive from an epic perspective, since such poems often rely on the annihilation, displacement, and disavowal of First Nations in order to legitimize the formation of Canada.
[94] Since the documents are "self-consciously [transcribed] ... into the literary text" (Jones, *That* 13) through the indication of the date and source, Ruffo's long poem also functions within the tradition of Manina Jones' "documentary-collage," a form which "draws from the visual arts the sense of fragmentation and radical recontextualization" (14). Ruffo's use of documents is then one which has a subversive relationship to the notion of "factual" history.

non-Native voices seek to prove that he is a fraud (83; 84; 157-58). In this case, the multiple voices do more than simply present contradictory points of view on Grey Owl. They also present competing definitions of what constitutes an “authentic” subject, since Belaney’s identity is judged according to separate sets of standards depending on whether the speaker is of European or First Nations background. The inclusion of First Nations voices simultaneously complicates this long poem’s affiliation with the documentary, since they are seldom included in biographical or archival texts dealing with Belaney (Braz, “White” 179; Hulan, “Hearing” 42; Dewar, “Fringes” 258). Their presence in Ruffo’s text prompts Braz to assert that Ruffo has a self-interested agenda in *Grey Owl*, since he gives indigenous voices “a centrality they do not have elsewhere” (179). In contrast, I argue that Ruffo’s re-insertion of indigenous voices underscores their exclusion from previous documentary ventures. Previous biographies of Grey Owl are not as factual as Braz believes, since they have always been created with a specific narrative in mind (Hulan, “Hearing” 42; 46-47). Hulan refers to three writers whose works betray a certain agenda in their approach to Belaney’s life: Atwood’s “The Grey Owl Syndrome,” Gertrude Bernard’s *Devil in Deerskin* and Lovat Dickson’s two book-length investigations into Belaney’s past. All want to defend his message yet emphasize the shock of his deception. In the end, the three authors manage to excuse Belaney’s transgression, which indicates that non-fiction is inevitably biased. Hulan even suggests that the absence of indigenous voices from most accounts constitutes an ideological erasure which legitimates attempts at indigenization (42-43). Ruffo’s inclusion of indigenous voices then subverts the documentary inasmuch as it demonstrates the extent to which this form should not be trusted as an unbiased means of representation.

Grey Owl: The Mystery of Archie Belaney also contains several metafictional markers which signal the constructed nature of this apparently linear narrative.[95] This metafictional component is linked to the documentary long poem, since both genres employ and stress the importance of documents in the formation of the narrative. However, the former differs in that it stresses that the researcher is a "clearly defined and situated narrating voice" (Hutcheon, *CP* 64-65), which entails that this genre treats facts as fiction. Ruffo opens *Grey Owl: The Mystery of Archie Belaney* with a metafictional reference to a writer/researcher who has "unearthed" (n.p.) archival material on Belaney. While Dewar argues that this researcher does not resurface past those two unnumbered pages ("Copper" 74), Hulan perceives metafictional intent when the speaker urges the readers to "See this portrait of Archibald Stanfeld Belaney" (Ruffo, *GO* 6) a few pages later (Hulan, "Hearing" 49).[96] What neither Hulan nor Dewar mention is that the speaking voice intrudes in many other instances throughout the long poem. In the scene Hulan mentions, the readers are not only urged to look at the picture, but are also told that Belaney would

> (Never... suspect
>
> that one day
>
> you [the writer/researcher and the readers] will catch him
>
> like this.) (Ruffo, *GO* 6)

Likewise, the speaker interrupts the otherwise chronological long poem by referencing the future, where Archie will have "four or five wives" (7), and where Gertie will be the only one

[95] Hutcheon defines metafiction as "fiction about fiction (*CP* 2), while historiographic metafictions are texts which highlight that they are dealing with a history which is itself constituted through texts (*CP* 66-67).
[96] Additionally, this urging to "look at this portrait" points out the material nature of Ruffo's long poem, since readers have to flip back a few pages in order to look into "the boy's eyes" (Ruffo, *GO* 6). It is then not only the metafictional nature of the text which is stressed here, but also the book as object which the readers are holding.

of them to leave him (48-49). These examples signal that Belaney's story is narrated by someone who already knows all the details. The speaker also points out what *cannot* be learned from archival resources, since he speculates on how Archie met Angele (his first wife), only to conclude this section by mentioning "what we do know" (20) about their encounter. This passage highlights not only the speaker's knowledge of Belaney's life, but also that this knowledge was gathered collectively. The mention of what "we do know" (20) points to the role played by other researchers in the creation of this "collective" knowledge about Belaney. The writer/researcher is also clearly situated as a contemporary voice in the section entitled "The Thing About Photographs:"

> Hard to believe these photographs
>
> Actually drew breath
>
> Blew smoke rings
>
> Or kisses (153),

a feeling which the researcher subsequently projects onto Belaney who also "cannot believe it" (153). The metafictional components in *Grey Owl* then serve to separate this long poem from the biographical elements it contains, even as those biographical moments are stressed. This metafictional voice aligns this long poem with a postmodern tradition, one which, as Mandel notes, "resists definitions" (19). In other words, the presence of the speaker/researcher entails that the text cannot be simply defined as a biography, since it betrays that the archival documents have been *reworked* through an outsider perspective.

The pictures in Ruffo's text also contribute to the generic interplay of the long poem; they constitute an alternative text that requires to be read as a literary form. Linda Hutcheon argues that photography is often employed in Canadian fiction as a "metaphor for creation"

(*CP* 46), one she finds unsettling because it suggests that writing is "an act of petrifying into stasis the dynamics of experience" (46). In Ruffo's text, the pictures do act as a metaphor for creation, since they document Belaney's creation of his Grey Owl persona. The first picture shows Archie as a model of the early twentieth century British middle-class, while the subsequent photographs demonstrate the extent to which he comes to inscribe his idea of indigeneity upon his body once he modifies his hair, facial expressions, dress, and posture.[97] Hutcheon also argues that photographs suggest distance and death (*CP* 46), a position which is shared by the writer/researcher who needs to consult documentation on Grey Owl in the opening pages in order to figure out how to represent him. Both Belaney and the writer/researcher know that the moment a photograph claims to capture cannot be encapsulated in a static image:

> everybody looks
> the moment
> as if that's all there is
> or was
> but there's more. (Ruffo, *GO* 153)

If Hutcheon argues that, when confronted with the stasis and "death" that photographs represent, reading can act as a form of "resurrection" (*CP* 46), Ruffo's speaker has difficulty believing that pictures once "drew breath" (Ruffo, *GO* 153). In other words, the central issue with Ruffo's text is not to recreate the sense of outrage once Belaney's imposture is discovered (Hulan, "Hearing" 41); rather, the pictures dispersed throughout the long poem

[97] The cover photograph, however, serves to demonstrate the successful inscription of such markers, since it "appears remarkably "Indian"" (Dewar, "Fringes" 267).

seek to determine *how* this transformation was achieved,[98] and *how* it can be represented in a literary form.

Indeed, when read from a documentary perspective, the photographs act as historical evidence which add biographical force to the narrative. However, photographs are not an objective mode of representation since they imply an already mediated perception (Jones, *That* 73). In that way, the photographs in Ruffo's text demonstrate the "truth" about Grey Owl from his own point of view, since those pictures always betray the manner in which his vision functions. For instance, the photographs chosen to represent Britain reinforce Belaney's idea that Britain is marked by "stuffiness" (Ruffo, *GO* 10) and "unrelenting discipline" (8). Once his transformation is underway, the photographs point to a contrast between what Belaney is arguing for, the protection of the "Indian/ way of life" (71), and the manner in which he actually lives. The photographs of First Nations in Ruffo's text shows them within their community or their family (18; 33), while Belaney is mainly photographed alone. His solitude emphasizes the way in which he constructed himself as the only authority on conservation and indigenous issues. The contrast between the two sets of pictures also points out that Belaney enacted his own version of indigeneity.[99] The presence of photographs thus adds to the generic interplay of the long poem, since they act as a literary strategy through which Belaney and the "mystery" of how he created himself can be questioned.

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[98] The pictures can also be affiliated with Benjamin's comments on early photography as constituting "the last time the aura emanates … in the fleeting expression of a human face" (226). What Benjamin identifies as "the cult of remembrance of loved ones, absent or dead" (226) which early photographs enable applies to these pictures of Grey Owl, whose transformation and display of indigeneity can be studied and admired despite his death. The photographs also adequately document that he sought to replicate the "aura" of indigeneity, an action which, in Benjamin's theorization of the aura, detaches the subject from the "domain of tradition" (221). Since readers know that Belaney is an Englishman, the photographs challenge them to reconsider their understanding of indigeneity as an "aura" that can be manifested on the body.

[99] As David Chapin mentions, Belaney knew members of First Nations communities, but recreated indigeneity according to "stereotypes he had learned as a boy" (95).

Grey Owl also invokes the lyric mode to personalize the historical materials on which it draws. While Livesay argues that the lyric helps hold the documentary form together (269), Godard suggests that the documentary "turns its back on lyric discourse" because it relies on multiple voices ("Epi(pro)logue" 315). In Ruffo's long poem, the lyric defuses the historical drive of the epic, documentary, and metafictional modes it also contains. It is true that the "I" employed in Ruffo's text is not always a lyric "I," since the multiple testimonies the long poem collects do not necessarily entail that someone's interiority will be revealed. Rather, Ruffo's text invokes the lyric to express Belaney's doubts and anxieties, which contradicts claims that his text is solely biographical. For instance, one section explores the relation between Belaney's two faces, where "one face is truthful" while "the other lies" (Ruffo, *GO* 90). Another section focuses on Belaney's doubts as he begins to assume an indigenous voice: "who are you speaking as? Who are you/ speaking for?" (69). Likewise, *Grey Owl* explores Belaney's mixed feelings towards his parents, specifically his resentment towards his mother (182), and his longing for his father:

> Yes I'm in America
>
> Just like you
>
> Looking for the one face
>
> I needed but never knew. (11)

Such passages not only employ the lyric "I" as a stand in for Belaney, but also act as markers that this long poem is a work of fiction. Belaney is humanized in those instances, made to express "compassion and pain" towards the "children [he] never see[s]" (199) in a way that resists both the epic quest and the documentary's factual basis. The lyric also fractures the possibility for the documentary form to act as a "frame on which to hang a theme" (Livesay

269), since the lyric here prevents the development of a unifying theme. In other words, Ruffo's long poem neither presents a condemnation of Belaney's actions, nor does it celebrate him.[100] Ruffo's deployment of the lyric mode rather allows him to represent what cannot be historicized or documented, such as Belaney's inner turmoil and his personal relationships.

2.1 Creating a Contradictory Subject: The Hybrid Form of Ruffo's *Grey Owl*

The form which *Grey Owl: The Mystery of Archie Belaney* adopts also contradicts assertions that Ruffo's text constitutes a factual and sympathetic biography. Critics, with the exception of Hulan, excuse Belaney's transgression, because Ruffo's text lacks "rancour" (Braz, "White" 177) and legitimizes Belaney's connection with First Nations (Braz, "White" 174; Dewar, "Copper" 69; "Fringes" 271; Dawson, "Never" 131). However, Ruffo's lack of explicit moral judgement towards Grey Owl does not entail that his long poem embraces the latter's actions, nor does his use of documentary sources automatically cast his text as an objective biography. As Kamboureli argues in relation to Ondaatje' *The Collected Works of Billy the Kid*, critics tend to search for "truth" and authenticity when reading a documentary long poem. Before engaging with the text itself, Kamboureli discusses the manner in which critics of Ondaatje's text are constantly searching for "authenticity" in a way that betrays their "desire to measure the extent to which Ondaatje departs from, or distorts, his sources" (*EG* 186). Furthermore, she argues that critics are looking for "narrative" in Ondaatje's long poem despite the fact that the latter's "ludic use of documents" (187) makes his poem "not history but the making of literature out of history" (187). Likewise, critics of Ruffo always foreground the manner in which he deviates from his sources, without examining how many poetic

[100] There is some debate regarding whether or not Ruffo wrote this poem with a specific agenda in mind. Albert Braz argues that Ruffo does take position, that he "praises [Grey Owl] for championing Aboriginal causes" ("White" 172), while Renée Hulan suggests that Ruffo is sympathetic to Belaney but "never apologetic" ("Hearing" 52).

passages, such as those detailing Belaney's inner turmoil or describing the landscape, are fictional. Arguments which stress the biographical nature of this long poem therefore tend to omit certain elements of Ruffo's text.

In contrast, I contend that the presence of documentary evidence, even when the poet has incorporated it unchanged, questions the historical data because it is decontextualized. Put differently, Belaney constitutes what Stephen Scobie calls a "forged signature" (120) in Ruffo's text, as the poet appropriates his life, writings, and identity. The question is not about when and where Ruffo deviates from his sources, but rather concerns the kind of subject the text produces. Since the "facts" deployed by the documentary genre are never as objective as they appear (Davey, "Countertextuality" 36),[101] particular attention must be paid to the poet's structural decisions. As Manina Jones argues, documents are "positioned subjects whose particular positioning needs to be taken into … account" (8). It is thus not only the documents and external sources that must be challenged, but also the poet's use of the documentary form to create a certain narrative.[102] In order to avoid creating a hegemonic text, Ruffo's long poem develops a form in which hybridity becomes a literary strategy of ambivalence. This notion of hybridity differs from that defined by Bhabha[103] because it manifests itself through form. In this long poem, the coexistence of multiple, and even contradictory, perspectives generates an

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[101] Davey pushes his criticism of Livesay's arguments for "truth" and "objectivity" further by arguing that the very notion of truth is contingent and variable ("Countertextuality" 33-34).

[102] The importance of this "positioning" of the text and its documents in relation to the subject which is produced can be seen in Roy Miki's reading of Livesay's "Call My People Home." While she claims that her text is an "authentic" portrayal of the experiences of Japanese-Canadians (Livesay, *Call* n.p.), Miki suggests that her long poem actually argues for the "normalizing power of English-Canadian nationalism" (*BE* 102).

[103] For Bhabha, hybridity constitutes a reversal of "the effects of the colonialist disavowal" (162) through which the repressed knowledge of the colonized enters the dominant discourse and subverts its authority (162). Both Bhabha's notion of hybridity and ambivalence are embedded within discourse. However, while I here use the same terms, I deploy them in a different manner: hybridity and ambivalence in the context of this long poem do not unsettle colonial power. Rather, they destabilize the subject the narrative attempts to produce. My use of hybridity also differs from Eva Gruber's, who argues that hybridity in Native texts "tends to emphasize interconnection rather than rigid dichotomies" (31) between First Nations and Euro-Americans, since I deploy it as a *literary* strategy.

ambivalent subject, where the distinction between Belaney's "performing self" and "self-performed" (Gallop 11) continuously blurs and defuses itself. The relationship between different sections and the hybrid forms they employ then create tensions as the readers' understanding of Grey Owl is continuously challenged, questioned, and displaced. In this section, I demonstrate that Ruffo's text refuses to close the debate on Grey Owl, and contributes to the mystery of Archie Belaney because it is not as factual as it initially appears.

Ruffo's selection of documents and textual evidence, and their strategic positioning within the long poem, allow each segment to be read in various and contradictory ways. More specifically, the extracts from Belaney's notebooks provide commentary on the nature of identity and the manner in which it is perceived. According to Jones, documentary sources serve to destabilize established historical positions through their recontextualization in a fictional work (*That* 18), something which is enacted in Ruffo's text as the tensions within the different sections provide clues as well as ambiguities relating to the mystery of Archie Belaney. For instance, different voices are often strategically juxtaposed within a single page, and their interactions raise questions regarding which voice can or should be trusted. While Ruffo mentions that archival material was employed "almost verbatim, notably the excerpts from the notebooks" (*GO* 213), the reliability of Belaney's material is challenged once Ruffo begins to echo his own choice of form in a fictional manner. Passages from the notebooks usually appear at the bottom of a page, following an account by a different voice on Belaney's actions and appearance. These interventions are titled "Archie Belaney, Notebook" followed by the date when it is known. Later in the long poem, Ruffo begins to provide *fictional* commentaries through the same form, which are simply titled "Archie Belaney" followed by the date (65; 114). By echoing the form he normally reserves for the notebooks, Ruffo casts

doubts on the reliability of the documentary form he employs, since Belaney's fictional interventions create a different Grey Owl from the one whose notebooks are cited. Following a description of Belaney's first talk at a hotel, Ruffo interrupts the apparent success of Belaney's first lecture with a description of his emotions during the talk:

> I felt I'd swallowed an icicle
>
> (which is putting it delicately,
>
> if not mildly,
>
> because suddenly I felt I'd sat on one). (63)[104]

This Belaney differs from the one whose notebooks are quoted because of his humour, this tone being absent from the passages extracted from the notebooks. Belaney is not otherwise portrayed as having a sense of humour about himself, an impression which the photographs reinforce since they rarely show Belaney smile. In other words, while Ruffo's use of documentary evidence seems to reinforce the factual nature of his text, the presence of fictional elements questions the reliability of those facts.

Belaney's notebooks first interrupt the narrative to contrast the manner in which his aunt Ada raised him. Her goal is to ensure that Archie becomes "a gentleman, even if it kills him" (Ruffo, *GO* 8), since he "has the Belaney looks" (8) of his "despicable father" (8). The passage from Belaney's notebooks acts as a reaction against that upbringing, since he mentions that it is only "after many years/ of speaking little but Indian" (8) that he managed to build on his childhood education. Through this reference to his upbringing, Belaney explains

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[104] This passage is not only humorous, but also filled with sexual innuendos that hint towards Belaney's alleged "gender issues" (Chapin 91). As Chapin documents, Belaney was afraid his upbringing at the hand of his two aunts would "sissify" him (93), and his performance of indigeneity was laced with anxieties regarding sexual and gender expression (91). The contrast Ruffo draws between Britain as "stuffy" and North America as "freedom" was, for Belaney, also a contrast between Britain as "feminine" and North America as "manly" (93). The repressed sexuality embodied in the icicle in the passage above betrays Grey Owl's sexual anxieties, that his performance of indigeneity might "sissify" him (91).

why he chose to become someone else.[105] When placed in relation to the passage spoken from Ada's perspective, his need to escape is related to her attempts to repress his "Belaney" side, the parentage which Belaney associates with his father, America, and becoming "an Apache" (2). This passage generates a tension which haunts the text on other occasions. It presents Belaney as resentful towards his aunt, a feeling which is contradicted when, later in the long poem, he asserts that "he never denies his aunt Ada" (14) and dedicates his first book to her (84). This passage can thus be interpreted as providing a seminal context for Belaney's conflicted sense of identity. While his desire to escape is introduced through his mention that he was "grounded/ by an ever-blessed aunt" (8) who "believes in the old adage: Spare the rod, Spoil the child" (8), he remains indebted to her for the skills he developed during his childhood. Passages from the notebooks, in conjunction with imagined and reconstructed poems on Belaney's childhood, offer insight into Belaney's conflicted sense of identity, which is, in Ruffo's text, always caught between a contradictory desire to "deny Archibald Belaney" (14),[106] while remaining loyal to Aunt Ada.

Ruffo also employs Belaney's notebooks to comment on Belaney's transformation, as eyewitnesses question its legitimacy before it is even completed. While some critics tend to perceive this transformation as genuine (Braz, "White" 183; Hulan, "Hearing" 44), Dawson argues that Ruffo's long poem ensures that readers are always aware of Belaney's true identity, since Ruffo often employs "Archie" rather than Grey Owl ("Never" 131). This strategy is similar to that of beginning with Belaney's childhood (Braz, "White" 174), in that it emphasizes his English background (Dawson, "Never" 131). Ruffo takes this awareness

[105] In contrast, Dewar argues that no such reason is available to readers of the long poem, the question of why he became Grey Owl constituting the "mystery" to which the title alludes ("Fringes" 268).
[106] This desire to deny his identity is interesting when examined in conjunction with his aunt Ada who, like him, wants to repress his Belaney side (Ruffo, *GO* 8).

further when he includes the testimonies of three friends who comment on Belaney's transformation following his first brief stay in Canada. They mention that he is "more Indian than ever" (Ruffo, *GO* 17), and that he has become an "odd" and "mysterious chap" (17). In contrast, the passage from Belaney's notebook which follows these three testimonies describes Belaney's frustration towards England:

> The sidewalks hurt my feet. My mother has remarried and
> is busy with her new baby. My aunts are the same chatterboxes
> as ever. The town and everybody in it is the same as ever.
> I feel shackled by so many old emotions.
> I swear
> I will never return. (17)

This passage, when contrasted to the three eyewitness accounts, foregrounds the nature of Belaney's metamorphosis. Belaney is convinced that everyone and everything is "the same as ever," which implies that he is the only one who has changed, although his mother's situation is clearly different. The notion of Canada as escape is also reasserted because he feels "shackled by so many old emotions," a line which turns his "I will never return" into a desire to escape from, but also deny, those old emotions. In other words, the extract from Belaney's notebooks supplements the physical transformation which Belaney's friends document, and reconfigures his departure from England and subsequent transformation as a desire for freedom. By placing these four passages on the same page, Ruffo draws attention to Belaney's self-construction. It is not simply "a surrender to ... self-promotion," as argued by Hulan and Braz (Hulan, "Hearing" 53; Braz, "White" 177), since the idea of escape recurs throughout the text (Ruffo, *GO* 2; 4; 6; 17; 20; 98). Rather, the text provides grounds for questioning

Belaney's motivations even before his transformation is complete, since he already feels the need to lie about his occupation (17). Once Belaney becomes Grey Owl, Ruffo ensures that readers keep in mind that his impersonation was always problematic. When Ruffo has Grey Owl speak in his own voice, the sections are entitled, for instance "Grey Owl, 1936" (121). However, when Ruffo returns to Belaney's notebooks as a point of contrast, the sections are marked: "Archie Belaney, Notebook, 1936" (122), which shows that, for Ruffo, Archie continues to exist even once he has become Grey Owl. Ruffo's text, without having to present an explicit commentary, challenges Belaney's "genuine transformation" (Braz, "White" 183), as "Grey Owl," his "self performed," creates tensions with "Archie," his "performing self" (Gallop 11).

2.2 Undermining the Subject: The Structural Positioning of Fragments

The form also produces tensions because it highlights Grey Owl's lack of awareness of the sort of image he is constructing. While the text itself does not judge Belaney's impersonation negatively, the form displaces and dismisses attempts to interpret Grey Owl's transformation, as well as his connection to First Nations cultures, as "genuine" (Hulan, "Hearing" 44; Braz, "Modern" 64; "White" 183). Discussing linguistic variance in postcolonial novels, John Clement Ball argues that "if a variant can be viewed on the text's own terms as authentic and normal, it is unlikely to be satiric. If it is a measure of inauthenticity it is more likely to indicate satiric evaluation" (25). Thus, the manner in which Ruffo presents Belaney's metamorphosis into Grey Owl through his duplication of Western stereotypes on indigenous peoples cannot be viewed as "authentic" when examined on the

text's own terms.[107] Ruffo indeed inserts a poem about Belaney's conception of indigeneity (Ruffo, *GO* 76):

To Be A Red Indian

Red skin. Black hair. Piercing eyes

Feathers. Beads. Mocassins. Braids.

Always slouch. Never smile.

Say How-Kola.

This poem stands alone, on the middle of a blank page. It is also a concrete poem: as a self-enclosed circle, it points to the circular logic that characterizes Belaney's reliance on stereotypes: Belaney deems stereotypes necessary to convey his message, but his message of conservation stems from his desire for indigenization.[108] The way in which the poem occupies the surface of the page reminds its readers not only that the stereotypes listed constitute a "surface discourse" (L. Owens *MM* 12), but also that, according to this poem, indigeneity has no interiority. The poem stands as a stoic face on the page, on which stereotypes can be inscribed to ensure that it will be "recognized" as "Indian." For Belaney, indigeneity only needs to be inscribed on the body by conforming to conventions of dress, since details concerning beliefs, cultural experiences, or lifestyle are absent from this poem.[109] Dewar's assertion that the text demonstrates the kinship between "Belaney's perception of the Indian

[107] In his critical work, Ruffo asserts that stereotypical representations are always deployed "for the purpose of subjugation, whether it is physical, psychological, or spiritual" ("Why" 112), which implies a critique of people like Grey Owl. In his long poem, Ruffo even recreates Belaney's racist assumptions, where the latter dismisses "those civilized halfbreeds and Indians/ who have gone white" (122). Such a statement demonstrates Belaney's desire to control which forms of identity expression are acceptable. In other words, while his adoption of an indigenous identity is acceptable, he views First Nations who choose to assimilate with suspicion. Considering Ruffo's critical work, it is doubtful that he endorses Belaney's behaviour as depicted in the poem.

[108] Indigenization, coined by Terry Goldie, describes invader-settlers' need to become indigenous in order to forget that First Nations have a stronger claim to the land than they do (*FT* 13-14).

[109] Belaney's transformation into Grey Owl can then be interpreted as an act of "passing" for Native since, as Wayde Compton argues, passing entails a deliberate attempt to deceive (23).

and Ruffo's own" ("Copper" 73) seems difficult to defend, since Belaney's perception reduces First Nations to an easily duplicatable set of signifiers. The first tension created by "To Be A Red Indian" then lies in the fact that it has been written by a First Nations writer engaged in reinserting indigenous voices into Grey Owl's story. In other words, Belaney's interpretation of indigeneity cannot be viewed as "authentic,"[110] as endorsed by the author. Despite Grey Owl's insistence that this appearance is necessary to propagate his message, the text identifies Belaney's metamorphosis as a performative act.

"To Be A Red Indian" is followed by a photograph of Belaney on the opposing page (Ruffo *GO* 77), which shows that he has come to embody all the stereotypes listed in the previous poem. The photograph reinforces the impression that Belaney strives to inscribe what constitutes indigeneity in imperial eyes. While he is not saying "How-Kola," he is standing in the forest and holding a beaver, which associate him with the natural world.[111] The form the text adopts here destabilizes the legitimacy of Belaney's impersonation since it questions his understanding of indigenous peoples. For instance, critics of Grey Owl tend to assert that his appropriation of an indigenous identity is acceptable because of his important message, and because it is based on a sincere admiration for First Nations (Atwood, *ST* 37; 60; Dewar, "Fringes" 265; Braz, "White" 172; Hulan, "Hearing" 54; Chapin 105). However, the message is absent here. Instead of serving to support his call for conservation, the poem and the picture demonstrate that Belaney's appearance is dedicated to convey a sense of authenticity to his

[110] The notion of authenticity is problematic in an indigenous context, since it mostly acts as a criterion by which states attempt to control who can or cannot claim First Nation heritage (L. Smith 22), as though indigeneity could be evaluated by an outside expert (72). Belaney's duplication of Western stereotypes then constitutes his own attempt at conveying authenticity to his audience, but this form of identity formation cannot be interpreted as authentic from an indigenous perspective. Put differently, Belaney conveys "authenticity" in a fashion that is recognizable for Western, but not indigenous, audiences. This contrast between Western and indigenous conceptions of authenticity is carefully tracked in Neil Diamond's *Reel Injun*.

[111] Equating First Nations to nature is a common stereotype, criticized in Douglas J. Buege's "The Environmentally Noble Savage Revisited" and Terry Goldie's *Fear and Temptation*.

audiences, who are later confirmed to "come to see the cigarstore Indian, the spectacle, not to hear my message" (Ruffo, *GO* 191).

The tension between this poem and photograph not only foregrounds the idea of spectacle, but also that of control. By recreating these stereotypes with the goal of getting "Canadians to listen" (72), Ruffo sets up Belaney as determining what indigeneity should be, especially once he becomes the voice of First Nations in the political sphere (Dewar, "Fringes" 263). Dewar hints towards this problematic consequence of Grey Owl's impersonation when he mentions that "to many young people of Native heritage, Grey Owl was more successful as an authentic Indian than they could ever imagine themselves to be" ("Copper" 75).[112] Belaney's chosen appearance is then part of a vicious circle, as that evoked by the poem "To Be A Red Indian" (Ruffo, *GO* 76), since Ruffo demonstrates that Belaney contributes to the *reinforcement* of Native stereotypes. While this realization comes late in the long poem (127; 171), Ruffo sets up this contradiction early on through his strategic positioning of documents and fictional material.

The poem which follows the photograph continues to destabilize Belaney's assumed identity. Spoken by James Harkin, a Commissioner for National Parks, this section presents several challenges to the construction of Belaney as performing "important work" (Atwood, *ST* 50) for conservation. Indeed, the vocabulary deployed in this section stresses that his message, to which "the audience cannot help but clap enthusiastically" (Ruffo, *GO* 77), is not the reason for his success. Rather, Harkin explains his reasons for employing Grey Owl as

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[112] Dewar does not identify this feeling as being caused by Belaney, since his argument is that imposture is a common feeling among indigenous and Métis peoples. However, Dewar seems to conflate the two forms of imposture. The feelings of imposture indigenous youths experience stem from the expectations the dominant society imposes upon them from the outside, and one which is prevalent because of the manner in which First Nations status is regulated according to certain standards (L. Smith 22). In contrast, Belaney *invented* his genealogy: he is interpreted as an impostor because he constructed his own sense of identity and sought to conceal his European past.

financially motivated: "My plan is to station him in a park, provide/ for his beaver colony and use him and them for *publicity*" (77 my emphasis). Throughout this section, Harkin is looking for "good word[s]" (77) to describe Belaney, beginning with "potential," to move on to "Naturalist," until he finally calls him an "Asset" (77), the last word being "an even better word" (77) than the previous ones. Because it is situated in such close proximity to the poem "To Be A Red Indian" and the photograph of Grey Owl, this poem suggests once more that Grey Owl's message is secondary to the fact that his showmanship is marketable. In other words, the form is not as sympathetic to Belaney as some critics interpret it to be. Rather, Grey Owl's success is overshadowed by the notion that he is being exploited, and that he is not as efficient in the propagation of his message as his financial success makes him appear to be. However, if Harkin might tempt readers to interpret Belaney as a victim, the fact that said "publicity" benefits Grey Owl financially undermines this notion.

2.3 Conflicting Positions and Contradictory Perspectives

Different textual passages also challenge the possibility of representing Grey Owl as a unified subject, since the hybridity of the form presents contradictory and potentially unreliable perspectives on a single event. For instance, the poems which concern Archie's War Dance take varied forms: the section begins with an eyewitness account narrated by Annie Espaniel (Ruffo, *GO* 37), followed by a commentary which criticizes Belaney's poor dancing abilities. The description of the dance itself is taken out of the *Sudbury Star* (38), while the journalist Jack Leve concludes the section by praising Belaney's skill as a speaker (39). This passage is also supported by a photograph which appears to be of the War Dance, but might not be since it is dated "circa 1920" (215), while the dance took place in 1923. The photograph thus casts doubt on the way in which the event is staged in the long poem, since its standing as

"proof" turns out to be deceitful. Ruffo's decision to open the section with First Nations voices also causes some critics to question the reliability of the long poem. More specifically, while some critics consider Ruffo's reinsertion of indigenous voices as part of his poetic license, Albert Braz reads this decision as an attempt to "celebrate his own family" ("White 172) and incorporate Grey Owl "into the Aboriginal world" ("Modern" 64-65). However, Braz's statements forget that indigenous peoples and their reactions to Grey Owl are usually absent from accounts of Grey Owl's life (Hulan, "Hearing" 42; Dewar, "Fringes" 258), an erasure which points to the continued marginalization of First Nations. Ruffo's reinsertion of First Nations voices should not be read in relation to a specific agenda, as though Ruffo were trying to exonerate Belaney by showing that the latter had "first-hand knowledge of First Nations and their cultures" (Braz, "White" 179). Rather, the presence of indigenous voices along with official records and other eyewitness accounts serves to destabilize official positions on Grey Owl, as the multiple voices which relate the War Dance present the varied implications that arise from Belaney's actions without occluding one perspective in favour of another.

By beginning the War Dance section with an intervention by Annie Espaniel, Ruffo ensures that it is First Nations voices which will initially shape the readers' interpretation of the events. Annie's poem introduces how the dance was conceived:

> He comes in all serious,
> sits down at the table beside me and
> says he's organizing an Indian War Dance
> for Queen Victoria Day.
> Me, I smile to myself when he tells me this
> and look at the long face he makes.

> So I say Archie, What's an Indian War Dance? None
> of us Indian people have had one of those recently.
> For Archie that's OK.
> He's going to take care of everything.
> He'll show everybody
> what they're supposed to do.
>
> Of course he needs my help to make a special suit.
> You can't have an Indian War Dance without a costume.
> I agree, and he brings home some brown material
> and red ribbons from the lumber company store
> He draws me a pattern and I make it up for him.
> When I'm finished he paints on little arrows,
> adds animal teeth and bones.
> He does a good job.
> It's when he makes a drum out of a cheese box
> that I have to shake my head (Ruffo, *GO* 37).

Annie's input on Belaney's War Dance details the problems Belaney's appropriation generates, yet also points to the ways in which First Nations cultures are "dynamic, not static" (Kymlicka 104). Even though Belaney's Indian War Dance has little to do with the manner in which the Espaniels currently experience their culture, they are still willing to participate in the event, as the photograph suggests. After all, Annie feels compelled to shake her head only once Archie "makes a drum out of a cheese box" (Ruffo, *GO* 37), which demonstrates that she

still has some power over the manner in which her culture is expressed. As the narrator of this scene, Annie remains the only one able to pass judgement, her conclusion being that Archie "does a good job" (37). While Archie's dance conforms to stereotypes, Ruffo points to the necessity of indigenous participation through Annie's assertion that "*of course* he needs my help" (37, my emphasis). Annie's agreement that Archie needs a costume (37) hints that the dance would not have taken place without this agreement between them, since "you can't have an Indian War Dance without a costume" (37).

Annie's perspective is also ironic, inasmuch as her smile is contrasted to Archie's "long face" and the way in which "he comes in all serious" (37). For Archie, this dance is not merely a stereotypical representation of what he thinks indigenous cultures should be, since he wants to use this opportunity to expose "the wrongs that the whiteman had done to the Indian" (38). In contrast, Annie distances him from her community; Archie is not included in her understanding of "us Indians" (37). She calls his outfit a "costume," a term which severs the Dance from any ceremonial function since it merely constitutes another instance of Archie "playing Indian" (104). While she does participate in the preparation for the dance, Annie does not take Archie seriously. Rather, she indulges him, and insists that his views of First Nations cultures are outdated, since War Dances have not been performed "recently" (37). Annie's intervention then defies the impact Belaney's stereotypical representations usually generate, since she does not allow him to petrify her culture (Gruber 156). Belaney's seriousness is also contrasted to the ironic tone adopted by the indigenous voices which follow Annie's poem. They question Archie's belief that having "a few drinks/ under his belt" can make him a better dancer (37), thereby reinforcing the idea that Belaney's poor dancing and singing act as

markers of his Englishness.[113] Their ironic tone forces readers to confront the fact that Belaney's performance is erroneous and unconvincing. It simultaneously signals that only non-Natives can view it as "genuine." Their interventions also stress their right to self-determination,[114] through which they determine membership to their communities as well as the manner in which their cultures can be experienced.[115] Indeed, the two interventions on this page call attention to the fact that Belaney is not indigenous, but that Belaney's attempts at indigenization are accepted, if somewhat mocked.

However, Annie's intervention also points to issues of unequal relations of power, as readers witness the ease with which Archie can take over:

> He's going to take care of everything.
>
> He'll show everybody
>
> what they're supposed to do (37).

The language Annie employs to describe Archie's reaction after she challenges the relevance of his Indian War Dance denotes Belaney's condescension towards her input. In this passage, Ruffo stresses Belaney's role in determining how the dance is to be performed, since it is Archie who designs and decorates the costume Annie makes. While Belaney's actions stem from good intentions, his decision to represent indigenous peoples as "cigarstore wooden Indians" (Ruffo, *GO* 111; 191) prevents indigenous peoples from finding forms of cultural

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[113] This assertion, that First Nations are always aware of Belaney's European origin because of his poor singing, dancing, and drumming skills recurs several times during the text (Ruffo, *GO* 37; 41; 128; 145-146).

[114] While self-determination is considered to be "an inappropriate concept" (Alfred 89) by some indigenous critics, it can be useful in discussions relating to indigenous and human rights (L. Smith 74). The concept is here deployed in relation to needs for decolonization, and not in the Western sense where it would entail secession from the state (as is mistakenly argued in Hendrix 127).

[115] "Teasing" in First Nations literatures is often employed for purposes of community building (Fagan, "Teasing" 25). The fact that Annie and the others tease Belaney can serve an inclusive purpose.

expression that do not conform so closely to Western stereotypes.[116] Belaney also proves to be disrespectful towards First Nations cultures when he "makes a drum out of a cheese box" (37), an action which demonstrates that Belaney understands the drum in terms of function: it is something he needs for the War Dance, and what matters to him is whether or not it can make the sound he requires. For him, the drum is what Louis Owens calls a "surface discourse" (*MM* 12), since Archie does not see that it might "still play [a vital role] in the cultural continuity of Native communities" (13). It is this drum that compels Annie to intervene: "*I have to* shake my head" (Ruffo, *GO* 37 my emphasis).

The link between this War Dance and Western conceptions of indigenous peoples is stressed further as a journalist reports the War Dance for the *Sudbury Star*. The language of this newspaper clipping stresses the brutality of the dance. The participants beat "their spears, knives and tomahawks by the flame" in preparation for the "torture dance" in which the prisoner is stabbed "with their weapons" while the participants "[let] out wild yells" (38). This dance might have a different significance for the indigenous peoples present,[117] especially since Archie uses it as a platform to argue for First Nations rights. However, to a Western audience, such a performance fits easily into a colonial discourse which classifies indigenous peoples through the stereotypes of the noble savage and that of the blood-thirsty warrior. As Louis Owens argues, this discourse has replaced the identities of real First Nations in order to become the new standards of authenticity (*MM* 12-13). The dance represents both sides of the stereotype, since the prisoner's life is threatened, but the Chief, Archie Belaney, ultimately

[116] As Vizenor argues, stereotypes constitute an act of "surveillance and domination" (4). Belaney's decision to represent the War Dance through a Western perspective allows him to exercise control over First Nations.
[117] The long poem does not present a reason why the Espaniels participated: while the dance might have an empowering purpose, their participation nonetheless raises questions regarding their (potential) internalization of Western stereotypes.

decides to “let [the prisoner] go free” (Ruffo, *GO* 38). When contrasted to each other, the poems on the War Dance generate an ambivalent effect. The dance cannot be interpreted solely as showing the “accepting nature of Native culture” (Dewar, “Fringes” 271), since the language employed is evocative of forms of colonialism that seek to control indigenous identities. However, the Espaniels’ participation, and their inclusion of Belaney within their family circles contradicts the impression that Belaney is perpetrating an act of power on their culture. Ruffo’s use of a hybrid form then ensures that the narrative does not resolve the mystery of Archie Belaney. His text rather contributes to the debate though its juxtaposition of multiple perspectives that prevent readers from hastily reaching a conclusion.

2.4 Formal Ironies: Evaluating the Subject

The structural positioning of Ruffo’s poetic fragments also generates irony in a way that undermines Grey Owl as a unified subject. Whether or not Ruffo is deploying irony in *Grey Owl: The Mystery of Archie Belaney* is a contested issue. Dawson mentions that one is tempted to look for irony in the text because “Ruffo is an Ojibwa and is the associate director of the Centre for Aboriginal Education Research and Culture at Carleton University” (“Never” 131). However, she concludes that the text is not ironic because Ruffo treats his subject with “sympathy and respect” (131), instead of being “evasive, dismissive, acerbic, or excessively distanced” in the way previous critics and commentators have been. Braz even argues that irony and sarcasm in Ruffo’s text would be “counterproductive” (“White” 183), since he teases out similarities between Belaney’s indigenization and that of one of Ruffo’s ancestors (183). Through this biographical parallel, Braz argues that Grey Owl’s situation is too close to

Ruffo's for the latter to be critical in his long poem (183).[118] It is true that Ruffo treats Belaney with respect. However, his sympathetic approach does not preclude ironic intent. As a mode, irony does not necessarily entail being sarcastic and judgemental, since the "transmission of information and evaluative attitude" which irony facilitates does not need to be "explicitly presented' (Hutcheon, *IE* 11). As Hutcheon argues, irony only functions if it is interpreted as such (6): it needs to be identified and recognized in order to exist. Interpreters can detect irony where none was intended (12), just as they can defuse its power by failing to recognize it.[119] Further, as a literary text, *Grey Owl: The Mystery of Archie Belaney* does not need to be explicit in tone in order to create ironic effects. Rather, the form and chronological organization of the text allow readers to develop their own opinion on Grey Owl, without requiring the poet to assert his position. In an indigenous context, irony also deconstructs and subverts stereotypes, as such representations are undercut in the writer's implied assessment (Gruber 56). By keeping in mind that irony can function through form as well as through language, ironic effects and tensions can be teased out of Ruffo's text.

In Ruffo's long poem, irony often engages in a conflicted relationship with humour, being at times dismissive of Grey Owl, and at times oriented towards community-building. While humour is usually understood as a tone, the poetic structure of Ruffo's text allows it to function through form, as it is the recurrence of certain comments and the chronological

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[118] Hulan also mentions this biographical note in her analysis of Ruffo's poem ("Hearing" 47), a strategy which is, I think, deeply unsettling. It firstly points to the manner in which indigenous peoples must always prove that they are "sufficiently" indigenous, as though prying into their genealogy could provide insight into their identity. Secondly, whether factual or not, and whether this indigenized European ancestor indeed provides a reason why the Espaniels accepted Belaney in their family, it remains irrelevant to the text at hand, and does not constitute a valid tool of literary analysis. Irony is indeed produced either through language or through form (Hutcheon, *IE* 10), and does not even require authorial intention in order to function (12). This biographical reference in both Braz and Hulan's articles is then more distracting than insightful.

[119] Irony's dependence on an interpreter also questions my position as a critic: perhaps Dawson and Braz are right that there is no irony in this text, and that I have detected ironies merely because I have been looking for them.

unfolding of events which turn certain passages into ironic and humorous interventions. However, much like irony, humour is not a stable category,[120] since it relies heavily on the readers' ability, or willingness, to detect it. When apprehended cross-culturally, humour is also subject to misinterpretations: "What white people do when they encounter Aboriginal humour. They take it the wrong way. That is, they take it way too serious" (Ferguson 131). Critics who do not see irony or humour in Ruffo's text can be viewed as confirming Ferguson's argument, as they gloss over all the passages from Ruffo's text which are humorous or critical of Belaney's actions. For instance, the passage in which Belaney equates public speaking with sitting on an icicle (Ruffo *GO* 65), coupled with those that comment dismissively on Belaney's War Dance (37) and writings (156), and the one in which his son calls him "Archie Baloney" (82), undermine arguments that Belaney is a romantic subject. The stoic figure the photographs and the passages from Belaney's notebook generate is structurally unsettled by these humorous interventions. For they interrupt the chronological progression of the narrative and question whether the character the text produces is as unified as some critics would argue.

Similarly, First Nations voices mention three times that Belaney cannot dance (37; 128; 145), comments which evoke teasing as an important tool of social management in some First Nations texts (Fagan, "Teasing" 25; Taylor, "Whacking" 75; King, "Performing" 170; 180). Teasing is also a weapon to enforce social conformity (Fagan, "Teasing" 36) and create certain exclusions (Taylor 70), which is seen in Ruffo's text when dancing indirectly becomes a marker of indigeneity through the repetition that Belaney's inability to dance betrays his

[120] Unlike Eva Gruber, who offers a definition of "native humour" (40), I do not believe that humour is different *in kind* when deployed by First Nations writers. Rather, humour in an indigenous context differs *in intent and function*, since unequal relations of power often force Native peoples to employ it indirectly. I would thus tend to agree with Thomas King's assertion that defining "Native humour" would be too reductive ("Performing" 170-171) in that it would deny Native status to all humorous interventions which do not correspond to it.

Englishness. This marker of authenticity is simultaneously questioned, since it is doubtful that Ruffo sets up this criterion as a marker of indigeneity. Rather, when placed in relation to the other "recognizable" markers of authenticity discussed and foregrounded throughout the text, the references to dance constitute another play on stereotypes, only this time, it is one which First Nations have about their own communities. Comments on Belaney's dancing abilities also constitute an act of community-building, as John Tootoosis urges Grey Owl to "dance with us, as you can" (Ruffo, *GO* 146). His statement only makes sense in reference to the previous acts of teasing, as Tootoosis points to "the accepting nature of First Nation cultures" (Dewar, "Fringes" 271) while underlining Belaney's lack of talent. The picture Tootoosis creates through his comment is one of a clumsy dancer and "nervous" (145) speaker, an image much at odds with that which several other (non-Native) voices present. Humour then functions through the form of Ruffo's long poem, as the text's structure allows for humorous repetitions and contrasts in tone that unsettle the unified subject created by the chronological narrative.

Critics who reject the possibility of ironic intent or effect in Ruffo's text are also glossing over instances of "dramatic irony" (Hulan, "Hearing" 52), which stem from the contradictory perspectives the long poem foregrounds. Hulan cites the example of Lloyd Roberts who, upon meeting Grey Owl, asserts that the latter seems to be "someone … who has found peace/ and tranquility within himself" (Ruffo, *GO* 81). The form creates irony since "the reader knows Archie to be violent, rarely at peace, torn by his own decisions and actions" (Hulan, "Hearing" 52). In this long poem, eyewitness accounts, however factual, lack insight and accuracy (52). Structurally, what adds to this effect is Ruffo's decision to begin his long poem with Belaney's childhood, a strategy which defuses the possibility of "outrage" at his

deception. Because Ruffo's long poem is concerned with the nature and effects of Belaney's transformation rather than on recreating the manner in which Grey Owl was perceived, eyewitness accounts which are, when isolated, historically accurate, become ironic in relation to what the readers already know. For instance, Geoffrey Turner intervenes during Belaney's speaking tour, since "as a student of the North American Indian and Associate of the Department of Ethnology and Prehistory, University of Oxford, [he has] … a professional interest in this Grey Owl" (Ruffo, *GO* 111). Turner details his shifting perception of Grey Owl as he listens to the latter speak. He initially views Grey Owl as "all style and no substance" (111), to then affirm that he is "the real stuff. Certainly no cigarstore wooden Indian here" (111). This passage becomes ironic because the readers know that Turner's initial perception of Grey Owl, as "all style and no substance," was closer to the truth than his later assertion.[121] Further, the fact that the speaker of this passage is an "expert" associated with a prestigious university deepens the irony of the passage because readers witness the ease with which Belaney can deceive his audience. Since readers already know that Belaney is an impostor, Ruffo's text sets up a narrative in which readers *anticipate* discovery, a strategy which makes every testimony confirming Belaney's "authenticity" ironic, as readers question how Belaney's deception functions[122] rather than why he chose to perform it.

3.1 Denial and Competing Identities: Examining the Content of Ruffo's Grey Owl

[121] "Truth" is however tenuous, since the image of the "Indian" which relies on the duplication of stereotypes has supplanted any other expression of indigeneity. As Baudrillard notes, because simulation substitutes "the signs of the real for the real" (2), "simulation threatens the difference between the 'true' and the 'false'" (3). In other words, Turner cannot identify what is "true" because the "false" is just as real. For Chow, using the "Natives" to represent authenticity inevitably involves a form of "myth-making" which removes said "Natives" from their "impure" political reality (*WD* 44). The fact that Grey Owl adheres to the type of apolitical yet nature-centric discourse that Turner deems authentically indigenous is enough to confirm Belaney's "authenticity."

[122] Belaney himself wonders, in the poem, how he can get away with his deception, and insists that this question is more important than "who" he is: "it's not a question of Who,/ that's not the issue, but rather How./ How do I get away with it?" (84).

Ruffo's *Grey Owl: The Mystery of Archie Belaney* also explores the struggle between Archie Belaney as "performing self" and Grey Owl as "self performed" (Gallop 11), which points to the tensions and denials which arise from this simultaneous doubling and splitting of the self. Indeed, Belaney possesses a doubled identity, since its two sides are interdependent. However, his Grey Owl persona seeks to deny connections to Archie Belaney, which marks a split between the two selves. For some critics, Ruffo presents a solid argument regarding the nature of identity, as Braz claims that Grey Owl "may not be guilty" of appropriation ("White" 172) since Ruffo suggests he underwent a genuine "ethnonational transformation" ("Modern" 64; Hulan, "Hearing" 44). Similarly, Dewar reads the poem as offering the possibility of connection to a culture that is not one's own ("Copper" 69), because Ruffo's text shows how First Nations members accept Grey Owl ("Fringes" 271). These arguments, which include the notions of "guilt," "genuineness," "connection," and "transformation," hint towards the complex nature of identity in Ruffo's text, and the difficulty of revisiting Grey Owl's story without paying attention to the issue of imposture.[123] As Braz mentions, audiences continue to be uncomfortable with the idea of a Euro-Canadian claiming a Native identity, even though identity is no longer understood as a stable category ("Modern" 53). According to him, this discomfort explains the feelings of outrage that followed the discovery of Belaney's deception (53; "White" 172-173). For Renée Hulan, that reaction betrayed "the racism underlying the public credulity" ("Hearing" 43), which not only proceeded to doubt the veracity of Grey

[123] For David Crane, an impostor "relies on acting and seeming genuine" (x), which makes deception inherent to imposture (ergo the tensions between the notions of "guilt" and "genuineness" articulated in the critical work). As a label, it only applies after the discovery that the "self performed" (Gallop 11) was not genuine (Crane x). For Jane Gallop, imposture constitutes a splitting of the self (11), but an impostor could also be interpreted as *doubling* the self, as the two identities become layered, or interdependent.

Owl's message, but also contributed to reinforcing assumptions that indigenous peoples would be incapable of creating such compelling material on conservation (44).

This outrage towards Grey Owl's impersonation is problematic, since other Canadian impostors are not met with such vitriol. For example, F.P. Grove, whom Robert Kroetsch dubbed "the trickster of our prose tradition" ("Unhiding" 62), became a more interesting figure once it was discovered that he had invented his past to the same degree that Belaney had. The continued interest in Belaney and with what Atwood calls "The Grey Owl Syndrome" also stems from the discovery that he invented his genealogy in order to propagate his message. However, unlike the critical work on Grove, contemporary discussions about Belaney's identity have eclipsed those about his work and writings (Braz, "Modern" 55; Atwood, *ST* 50-51). The discomfort with Belaney's impersonation, but which does not accompany discussions of F.P. Grove, is then mainly political: it evokes issues of voice appropriation, deception, and making financial profit out of a stereotypical representation.[124] In the face of the complex nature of Belaney's dual identities, Ruffo's long poem offers insights into the precarious nature of impersonation through the expression of contradictory desires which either reinforce or undermine his claim to indigenization. In this section, I argue that Belaney's self is split within the text, yet doubled since Ruffo continuously emphasizes the enduring quality of what Grey Owl attempts to deny. Belaney's constructed identity does

[124] Other complications concern the fact that just as Grey Owl was traveling through Europe and North America and propagating his message of conservation, First Nations could not legally work for land rights, dance, or exit their reservations without a permit (Root 105). Native children were also forcibly placed in residential schools, and policies bent on the suppression of First Nations languages and cultures were in place (Milloy xv). Amidst this tense situation, "Belaney told non-Natives what they wanted to hear, which was that Native people did not … concern themselves with politics and were quite content with the status quo" (Root 105). This view is not entirely supported by Ruffo's long poem, but the absence of this repressive political background from his long poem might serve to paint Belaney in a more positive light.

not merely entail an invented genealogy, but also a rewriting of the "North" and its peoples, as well as a denial of where the sources of his performed identity lie.

In other words, it is not only the genre and the form of Ruffo's text which challenge the notion of identity, but also the contrast which Ruffo draws between the image Belaney projects, that of Grey Owl, and the identity he wishes to suppress, his past as Archie Belaney. Ruffo's text questions the self Belaney constructed by deviating from the perception of nature and its relationship to humans which Belaney represented in his books. In his writings, Grey Owl elaborated a certain image of the trapper as being of a distinct type: his ideal "frontiersman" relishes solitude, is self-reliant (Grey Owl 8), has no interest in current events, and dislikes conversation (21). Such ideas are evoked in Ruffo's text once Belaney is established at Beaver Lodge, where his constant need for silence marks the beginning of marital tensions with Gertie (Ruffo, *GO* 74). However, this image is at odds with Ruffo's long poem, which is engaged in reinscribing the human presence in the wilderness Grey Owl was set to defend.

This human presence is asserted in that Ruffo's long poem is composed of voices. For instance, his incorporation of indigenous perspectives reinscribes the often ignored indigenous context behind Grey Owl's story (Dewar, "Fringes" 258; Hulan, "Hearing" 47). Ruffo even has Belaney devalue his conservation work through a passage from his notebook where he gives "the Indian 90% of the credit" (Ruffo, *GO* 87). If Braz views this reinsertion of voices as granting more authenticity to Belaney's claim to indigenization ("White" 179), the presence of indigenous voices could also be read as undermining Belaney's vision of "the vanishing

frontier" (Grey Owl 45).[125] Indeed, Belaney's references to "the Indian" in the singular[126] (Ruffo, *GO* 87; 121; 122) and "the old Indian faith" (121) imply that there are few people left in the North. Similarly, Grey Owl connects the vanishing nature with the disappearance of First Nations: "where are the buffalo? Gone the way of the Indian" (194).[127] Ruffo's text does not support this assertion, since Ruffo documents the beginning of a Native resistance movement through the presence of John Tootoosis (126-127). The long poem then foregrounds certain ideas and experiences which Belaney's "self performed" attempted to repress, demonstrating the limitations of his assumed identity, and his inability to recognize the material conditions of First Nations that do not correspond to his agenda.

Similarly, the Native and non-Native voices which intervene throughout the narrative question Belaney's identities, since those who knew Grey Owl as Archie propose different methods to explore the tension between his two selves. For instance, Gertie slips when addressing her former husband: "and Archie, I mean Grey Owl" (Ruffo, *GO* 75), while an old acquaintance asks Grey Owl "remember back when you were just Archie" (193). These interventions suggest alternative ways to apprehend Belaney's metamorphosis. Gertie seems to believe that "Grey Owl" has replaced "Archie," leaving only the trace of this identity behind as one which must be immediately dismissed. In contrast, the second speaker views "Grey Owl" as an added identity to that of Archie, since being "just Archie" in the past means

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[125] Grey Owl had originally titled his first book, *The Men of the Last Frontier*, *The Vanishing Frontier*, but the title was changed by his publishers without his prior knowledge (Ruffo, *GO* 85). The original title was meant to emphasize "the vanishing nature" (85) caused by "man's insensitivity and self-centredness" (85), as Belaney purported to be much more concerned with the natural world than with the people who inhabited it (85).

[126] His use of this expression also showcases his lack of understanding of First Nations peoples as diverse and heterogeneous, something which Ruffo challenges by having numerous voices from different nations intervene in his long poem. In his critical work, Ruffo indeed argues that "the term Indian" is "an imperial construct [which] serves to wipe out any trace of a unique culture and history among individual First Nations" ("Why" 113).

[127] As Braz mentions, Grey Owl worked on behalf of First Nations, yet was convinced, like D.C. Scott, that their disappearance was "imminent" ("Modern" 64). Belaney's deployment of the vanished and memorialized Indian also marks him as "collaborating with those bent on [the] physical extermination" of indigenous peoples (Vizenor 8).

that he is now both Archie and Grey Owl. Ruffo's exploration of this problem goes further, through an experimental poem which functions like an algebraic equation:

> A is for Archibald
>
> A is for Anishnabeg
>
> A+A = Archibald Anishnabeg … (46).

If this poem, which continues to explore what B equals and the possibilities the equation A+B then generates, suggests that identities can be put on, added, supplanted, replaced, and re-imagined in a methodical fashion, it never adds up to a total or stable identity. In fact, stability is grossly at odds with Belaney's constant inner turmoil. This poem rather stresses that Belaney/Grey Owl is a continuously fractured identity which must be constantly re-formulated, but cannot be stabilized because it is always split between "A" and "B." As Hulan mentions, those who met Belaney once he became Grey Owl, "see their own ideas reflected in him" ("Hearing" 52), as Grey Owl succeeds in projecting a certain image to the public. He is thus interpreted as "a man natural and unsullied as the great northern lakes, out of place in a modern world where progress means dams and automobiles and smokestacks" (Ruffo, *GO* 177). Belaney himself asserts that he feels

> as an Indian, think[s]
>
> as an Indian, all my ways
>
> are Indian, my heart is Indian (83),

a statement which seeks to solidify his assumed identity as Grey Owl.[128] In contrast, Ruffo continuously presents Belaney's fear of discovery (83; 98-99; 104; 120), as well as his

[128] However, this poem does not provide much insight into how Belaney views himself, since it merely reveals the stoic nature of his stereotypes about indigeneity. It is unclear what thinking "as an Indian" means, as Belaney's comment does not provide any interiority.

ambivalence towards his impersonation. Belaney indeed questions "Who's speaking," the "Whiteman" or the "Redman" in him (68), and such self-interrogations lead him to "rush/ to the mirror and make [his] Indian face" (68). Because Belaney constantly asserts that his "past is dead. Bury it" (97), Ruffo's text foregrounds, rather than denies, the fact that Belaney always remains Belaney. Ruffo did not choose to portray his title character as a man untroubled by the past once he has assumed his new identity. Instead, he mentions repeatedly that Belaney not only has ambivalent feelings about his "performed self," but also that he cannot leave his abandoned identity behind. In fact, his fear of exposure betrays that he does not fully believe, as he asserts, that Grey Owl is "a name I've earned/ which no one can take away" (97-98), since exposure would mean being stripped of that identity. Braz's argument that Ruffo's portrayal of Grey Owl "clearly testifies to the possibility of acculturation" ("White" 183) is not very apparent in the long poem, because Ruffo presents "Grey Owl" as an identity that can never be fully believed, or fully realized.

The relationship between Belaney's financial success and his message also unsettles the identity Belaney is trying to create. While excerpts from his notebooks show him downplaying his success as unimportant because "what's life without nature?/ Wildlife? Solitude?" (Ruffo, *GO* 108), Ruffo continuously foregrounds the amount of money Grey Owl makes. Belaney asserts that he does not value "security" (78), but this statement is contradicted by Ruffo's structural decision to place this fragment within the same few pages as extracts which focus on his work for the Canadian Forestry Commission (77) and his book deal with Country Life (77-78). Belaney's decision to become a nature writer was also financially motivated (60-61), and money is mentioned frequently (60-61; 65; 66; 107; 108; 116; 196). These references to the marketability of Grey Owl's message are not discussed in

the critical work. However, when tracked carefully, their recurrence challenges claims that Ruffo has adopted a sympathetic approach to Belaney's appropriation (Dawson, "Never" 131; Braz, "White" 178; Hulan, "Hearing" 52). Most indigenous critics indeed posit financial success as the main ethical problem impersonation and appropriation generate. For Vizenor, it constitutes the proof that "the Indian was an occidental invention that became a *bankable* simulation" (11, my emphasis),[129] an argument which is echoed in the work of Louis Owens (*MM* 18), Marie Garroutte (227), and Rayna Green (48). A similar contrast occurs in regards to fame. If Belaney asserts that it is his message that matters and that he will do anything to "get Canadians to listen" (72), Gertie mentions that he is "basking in all the attention they're lavishing on him" (74), and that "the accolades come pouring in, and Archie … drinks them up feverishly" (75). Despite viewing his speaking tour as a "trap" because he is "bound to [his] purpose" (98), Belaney nonetheless desires to find his aunts Ada and Carrie and "tell them that a week ago their Archie/ gave a command performance at Buckingham Palace" (180). This last passage, spoken by Grey Owl, re-emphasizes the problem of identity: if Ruffo has his Grey Owl assert that people would "call me other than I am" (198) if they knew of his origins, his "being" Grey Owl remains tied to being, first and foremost, Archie.[130] As much as Grey Owl wishes to "deny Archibald Belaney" (14), he appears incapable of letting go of his past. Moreover, this passage emphasizes that despite his dismissal of security and financial success as unnecessary, Grey Owl's "British side" desires recognition and admiration from his

[129] See also Thomas King's *Green Grass, Running Water*. In this novel, King exposes and subverts the marketability of these completely inaccurate markers of indigenous authenticity during the scenes set at the Dead Dog Café, where Grey Owl himself is a pleased customer.
[130] Ruffo's representation of Grey Owl then differs from that which Atwood developed, since she believes that "he did not want to have two identities, only one: the Indian one" (*ST* 48). In contrast, Ruffo's Grey Owl cannot be viewed as claiming this sole identity specifically because he desires admiration from his family.

family. His dual identity can thus be interpreted as generating contradictory and unstable desires.

The tension between Grey Owl's attempts to repress certain aspects of his previous identity, yet his incapacity to do so, later affects the manner in which he is perceived. The nature of identity does not translate into a fixed argument, one through which Ruffo would argue that Belaney managed to establish a connection with First Nations to the point of assimilation (Dewar, "Fringes" 271; Braz, "White" 183). Such arguments cannot hold because the narrative defuses itself through the split it creates between Belaney and Grey Owl, which doubles the self instead of suppressing the undesired self. Belaney and Grey Owl cannot be separated, as the last page of Ruffo's poem suggests. Through its insistence that while he was born Archibald Stanfeld Belaney, he died "Wa-sha-quon-asin" (Ruffo, *GO* 209), this last page constitutes an attempt to unify the two selves. It may appear sympathetic to Grey Owl in its recognition that his chosen identity is the "final" one, but it also refuses to legitimize the genealogy he invented. Similarly, Gertie, the last speaker of the poem, points to the tenuous nature of Grey Owl's identity by calling Belaney a "ghost" (205). Her statement indicates the difficulty of stabilizing Belaney's identity, since she not only expresses the shock she felt when she discovered his deception, but also reminds readers that Grey Owl had once referred to "the other side of [himself]" (84) as being his "ghost writer" (84). The allusion to the ghostliness of his first identity re-emphasizes the interdependence between Belaney and Grey Owl: while Grey Owl wishes to split himself into two in order to deny Archibald Belaney, it is the ghostly presence of Belaney that allows him to accomplish his work as Grey Owl. The title of the long poem, *Grey Owl: The Mystery of Archie Belaney* (my emphasis), then suggests that the two identities cannot be separated, as the one can only exist in relation to the other.

3.2 Repetition and Identity: Re-Assessing Belaney's Influences

Ruffo also develops conceptual links between Belaney's relationship with his parents and his behaviour later in life, which complicates the nature of identity further as it is their role, as well as that of the "ideal Indian," which he appropriates and recreates. Ruffo presents Belaney as longing for his father, whom he never knew (Ruffo, *GO* 11), and for his mother, who had to leave him behind after she remarried (182). His desire to be in America comes from his belief that he will find his father there, and betrays his desire to be "just like you [his father]" (11). Similarly, Ruffo connects Belaney's need for escape with the mother's departure, where a young Archie says "I too would leave,/ leave and never return" (182), like she does. Belaney's need to repeat his parents' departure echoes Freud's discussion of repetition, in which he argues, in reference to a child's game of "fort-da," that repetition allows the child to master and play an active role in the unpleasant event (15). For Freud, the idea of agency is powerfully represented when the child recreates the unpleasant event on a playmate, where it takes the form of revenge. Lacan differs from Freud, as he identifies "fort-da" as a small part of the subject leaping over "the frontier of his domain" (62). While such psychoanalytical interpretations have their limitations, Belaney's tendency not only to echo, but also to exceed his parents in their abandonment points to his need to control the manner in which familial relationships unfold. Belaney exceeds his father inasmuch as he abandons more women, while he supplants his mother because while she returned to visit him (Ruffo, *GO* 182), he never appears to visit his children. He also exceeds his mother in his ability to appropriate the nurturing role she neglected. Yet, this role remains restricted to his beaver colony, where he acts as a parent to his adopted pets. While several pictures show Belaney mothering beavers (43; 62; 77), none shows him with his children. What these references to

Belaney's family background demonstrate is his need to construct his identity in a manner that supplants others. It is reflected further in his attempts to exceed indigenous peoples as an ideal model of indigeneity. Just as he criticizes his mother for abandoning him, he criticizes his wife Gertie for not taking sufficient care of their daughter (36), and for not being sufficiently indigenous, since she goes prospecting (66).[131] These connections between Belaney's family background and his actions further complicate Grey Owl's "genuine" (Braz, "White" 178; Hulan, "Hearing" 44) metamorphosis. For not only are Belaney's influences more European than indigenous,[132] but his assumed identity is also based on his failure to repress his English past and his unconscious recreation of it.

References to Belaney's family also complicate the issue of identity because his repetition of his father's actions is based on what he imagines about him rather than on facts. Ruffo mentions that Belaney

> dreams of America, of a long-lost father
>
> *who in Archie's mind* is living somewhere out there
>
> among the Red Indians. (Ruffo *GO* 2, my emphasis)

Thus, he wants to "become an Apache" (2) in order to recreate his father's alleged actions. In other words, Ruffo sets up a young Belaney as having already adopted the invented genealogy he will later claim. Arguments that Belaney is not guilty of impersonation in Ruffo's text

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[131] In contrast, "Archie stays behind to take care of the animals" (66), a line which portrays him as being a nurturing and "authentic" Native who cares about the land, while "real" First Nations have lost their way since they "go searching for gold,/ ready to tear up Mother Earth" (66).

[132] Braz argues that Ruffo's poem stresses that Belaney's sources are more indigenous than is generally believed ("White" 179). However, Belaney's interactions with First Nations are not his only sources, since the latter is shown reading European literature on the subject because he yearns for his father (Belaney *GO* 2). In *The Men of the Last Frontier*, Grey Owl even praises Longefellow's *Hiawatha* (204), despite the problematic connotations this poem has for indigenous peoples (Green 36). In other words, Ruffo represents Grey Owl's sense of indigeneity as based on first-hand knowledge he learned because he yearned for a connection with First Nations, *and* on stereotypes he learned because he longed for a connection with his father.

because it is society that compels him to it (Braz, "Modern" 178; Hulan, "Hearing" 53) are contradicted by this poem, which presents Archie as having always desired indigenization. However, because this desire stems from an imagined figure rather than from reality, Ruffo's Grey Owl engages in an unusual form of mimicry. In psychoanalytical terms, Lacan identifies mimicry as a camouflage, as becoming mottled when placed against a mottled background (99). Interpreting Lacan from a postcolonial perspective, Bhabha argues that mimicry, where a colonized subject mimics the colonizer's culture, returns and unsettles the colonizer's gaze by exposing the contradiction at the heart of the colonial venture (127).[133] In the context of Ruffo's long poem, Grey Owl does not return the gaze, but rather *reflects* it.[134] By deceiving European audiences into believing he is "the real stuff" (Ruffo, *GO* 111), Belaney exposes, albeit inadvertently, the ignorance of colonizing cultures. Indeed, he re-presents the European idea of indigeneity to his audience, and points out through his deception that such an image is "born out of themselves/ in their own image" (84).[135]

This form of mimicry is however complicated by the fact that Belaney is not subversively unsettling Western stereotypes. Rather, he believes that his "heart is Indian" (83), only to then ask "what more/ is there?" (83). Grey Owl does not constitute "at once resemblance and menace" (Bhabha 123); he merely resembles what his audience expects him to be. He thereby enacts Bhabha's fetish, where the stereotype must be constantly repeated in

[133] That contradiction lies in the impossibility of claiming European superiority if the colonized can be assimilated (126). The colonial project must then always violate its own tenets in order to keep the colonized in a subordinate position (124). Bhabha also roots mimicry in repetition rather than in re-presentation (125), which relates his theory to Grey Owl's sense of identity.
[134] Renée Hulan argues that it is eyewitnesses who see their own ideas reflected in Grey Owl ("Hearing" 52). My argument here is rather that Grey Owl reflects what he believes indigeneity should be, and that he does so from the colonizers' perspective.
[135] While I use this quotation positively in this instance, this assertion also has problematic connotations because Belaney uses it to deny his responsibility in his act of appropriation.

order to convey indigeneity as a "fixed" identity which can be easily encapsulated (107). Belaney appropriates the stereotypes, and through the repetition that he feels

> as an Indian, think[s]
>
> as an Indian, all my ways
>
> are Indian, my heart is Indian (83),

he uses the "Indian" as a fetish to reaffirm and fix the nature of his adopted identity. What his impersonation does is demonstrate the extent to which mimicry can become a tool of conquest,[136] where "difference," in its "fixed" form, becomes the only mode through which otherness can be made intelligible. Ruffo then creates a Grey Owl who asserts that this side of his identity is the valid one. However, as a form of mimicry which fails to return the gaze, the text points to his surface identity's lack of substance. By demonstrating how Belaney constructs his identity from factual, literary, and imagined sources, Ruffo's long poem further destabilizes the nature of his assumed identity.

Conclusion: Reappropriating Grey Owl, Reconfiguring Appropriation

In this chapter, I examined *Grey Owl: The Mystery of Archie Belaney* as a text which deconstructs Grey Owl just as it shows how the latter constructs himself. Through its hybrid form and generic interplay, Ruffo's text constitutes an intervention in a specific Canadian genre, the long poem, though its composition revisits, challenges, and unsettles the manner in which it has been historically defined. When placed within this historical discourse, the subject which the form generates can only be an unstable one, marked by contradictory

[136] Mimicry as conquest is best encapsulated in the practice of blackface. While some attempt to define it as a form of flattery which subverts social norms (Chapin 104-105), it remains a tool of domination through which identities are regulated and coerced. What Rey Chow has identified as "coercive mimeticism" constitutes a contemporary manifestation of this phenomenon, where those in a dominant position expect people deemed "other" to act in a way which confirms their ethnic status through the repetition of stereotypes (*PE* 107).

desires, tensions, and ironies which challenge the possibility of identifying Ruffo's text as a biography. Through its reinscription of the repressed material which marks Belaney's relationships with the "North," indigenous peoples, and his family, Ruffo unsettles his subject further because he questions the accuracy of Belaney's vision and the nature of his sources, particularly since the latter are grounded in repetition and mimicry. Instead of presenting a fixed perspective on Grey Owl, Ruffo contributes to the debate as he offers further insights into the nature of identity and impersonation. His text constitutes an indigenous response to Grey Owl, and while the form and its content create an evaluative judgement on Belaney due to Ruffo's structural decisions, it remains, as Hulan argues, sympathetic but "never apologetic" ("Hearing" 52). In other words, because Ruffo's text explores the mystery of how Belaney (de)constructs himself, it does not seek to recreate the sense of outrage his deception generated. Rather, through its focus on identity construction, Ruffo questions the nature of identity as Grey Owl's self is split, yet doubled.

If critics wish to identify what Ruffo's own position on Grey Owl and his impersonation might be, it is another act of repetition that needs to be examined: that of the narrative itself, since Ruffo is repeating Grey Owl's story. For Freud, a traumatized person repeats "the repressed material as a contemporary experience instead of … remembering it as something belonging to the past" (19). Since the long poem has been defined as a "genre in the present tense" which makes its topic "synchronous with the present time" (Kamboureli, *EG* 55), the repetition of Grey Owl's story as a long poem allows Ruffo to explore it as a contemporary event. Ruffo's text was published in 1996, at a time when Canadian writers and

critics were engaged in the appropriation debate.[137] If Atwood was reluctant "to drop the unfortunate Grey Owl" into this debate (*ST* 37), Ruffo appears to be incorporating him into it by association. While he does not resolve or recreate this debate in his long poem, Ruffo might be retelling Grey Owl's story in order to stress his own views on the issue. In "Why Native Literature?," Ruffo argues that in the face of stereotypical representations, "the only alternative… is for Native people to claim their own voice and thereby give insight into their own values, tradition, concerns, and needs" (109-110). If Braz reads *Grey Owl: The Mystery of Archie Belaney* as being at odds with Ruffo's critical work ("White" 180), I contend that Ruffo's long poem contributes to the arguments he developed in "Why Native Literature?". His text is relatively sympathetic to Belaney, since its goal is not to recreate the outrage generated by the discovery of his deception. Instead, Ruffo remains focused on how Belaney constructed Grey Owl in order to expose the assumptions of Western audiences. More importantly, this focus on identity construction allows Ruffo to foreground indigenous participation in Belaney's metamorphosis (Ruffo, *GO* 18-19; 34-36). This strategy subsequently enables him to comment on Belaney's actions, which ensures that future discussions of Grey Owl will include indigenous perspectives on and their reactions to the act

[137] The appropriation debate can be said to begin in the 1980s, when Lee Maracle asked Anne Cameron to "move over" for Native writers to tell their stories (Maracle, "Moving" 10). The issues this debate developed and the arguments deployed by both sides can also be tracked in Maria Campbell and Linda Griffith's *The Book of Jessica* (1989). The debate was met with bitter criticism by many non-Native writers. See for example "Whose Voice is It, Anyway?," to see which arguments Euro-Canadian writers advanced in favour or in opposition to those arguments. The debate emphasized the power of literary representation to oppress certain peoples (Ruffo, "Why" 112). It also demonstrated the failure of Euro-Canadian writers to recognize that First Nations do not have the power to censor literary works as their often paranoid responses suggest. While the issue is till tenuous, consensus now appears to be that writers in a position of power who write about those without power should do it well, and write only about what they know, or else be ready to face criticism (Maracle, "Post-Colonial" 208). Helen Hoy argues that the debate, though it initially concerned writers, also applies to critics and readers who might be tempted to presume "too-easy identification" or apply Eurocentric literary standards to the text (9). These challenges require that readers stress their privileged location in relation to the text (18), and avoid "normative readings" (11).

of impersonation. This text should thus be read as an indigenous response to Belaney, yet, as one which wishes to supplement, rather than resolve, the debate through added perspectives.

Chapter Three: Monstrous Hybridity: Destabilization, Cannibalism, and Contamination in Suzette Mayr's *Venous Hum*

In a review of Suzette Mayr's *Venous Hum*, Suzanne Andrew calls the text a "Frankenstein's monster of a novel" ("Demons" ¶13), a statement which adequately identifies not only Mayr's deployment of monsters throughout the text, but also the novel's composition out of seemingly disjointed elements. *Venous Hum* indeed engages with several discourses at the heart of Canadian literature and criticism: the category of prairie writing, official multiculturalism, sexual, national, and ethnic identity formation, as well as postmodern and postcolonial literary strategies of resistance. It is also in dialogue with Mayr's previous works, her chapbook *Zebra Talk*, and her novels *Moon Honey* and *The Widows*, since Mayr is searching "for the perfect metaphor" to represent those who cannot be categorized ("Exploring" 444). She argues that the metaphor banks to describe those who are between categories are "limiting and clichéd" (449; "Vampires" 333), which explains why her previous works have been read as defying categories (333; "CL" 58; "Exploring" 445; Dudek 167; Petersen ¶1), undermining stereotypes (Dudek 167; Andrew, "Demons" ¶13; Sturgess 224), and writing against racism, homophobia, and sexism (Dudek 171; Bezce 212). Mayr's disdain for rigid categorization will then guide my reading of *Venous Hum*, in which I will examine the novel as a text which writes *against* the discourses it evokes and constructs in order to avoid categorization.

While the novel has yet to generate any published criticism, Andrea Beverley's dissertation on transnational feminism examines *Venous Hum* in relation to previous feminist and prairie texts. However, because Beverley's thesis is "interested in connections and genealogies rather than disruptions" (Beverley 227), her interpretation of the novel does not

examine how Mayr destabilizes hegemonic discourses, reinscribes the absences they generated, and rethinks their flawed or essentialist creations. *Venous Hum* engages with coercive understandings of nation, region, and identity, and it is this conservative context which frames the novel's plot and guides its deployment of monsters as necessary metaphors of resistance and subversion. For this reason, this chapter examines how Mayr's novel engages with the hegemonic constructions of the Prairies, Canadian multiculturalism, racism, and homosexuality in order to challenge and provide alternatives to these constant attempts at categorizing peoples and texts through rigid narratives. I argue that *Venous Hum* allows for this destabilization through the monstrous figures which function metaphorically and structurally as literary strategies of contamination. This form of literary contamination draws on the coercive (racial) connotations of hybridity to undermine the rigid categorizations enacted through the text's conservative framework. Ultimately, *Venous Hum*'s desire to undermine rigid discourses entails that the novel must ironize other literary texts and itself in order to prevent its own solidification as a master discourse. My interpretation does not wish to suggest that there are no continuities between previous prairie and feminist texts and *Venous Hum*; rather, it seeks to emphasize that while Mayr draws on previous works, her own novel is engaged in a process of subversion which prevents her novel from being bound by the generic, regional, and national categories her predecessors elaborated.

To that effect, my chapter begins with an exploration of prairie writing as it has been historically defined. Despite the fact that it has been routinely challenged since the 1990s by critics such Frank Davey, Jon Paul Fiorentino, and Karina Vernon,[138] I argue that the category

[138] These critics revisit prairie literature for different, though interconnected, reasons. Davey questions the privileging of regionalism at the expense of other subject positions such as gender, ethnicity, or age ("Towards" 2; 5). Fiorentino expands the category to account for the radical changes the Prairies and prairie writing have

of prairie writing is too limiting in the context of *Venous Hum*, whose often positive engagement with the nation complicates its regional affiliations. Instead, I propose a reading of the novel through its conservative framework, which I define as a process of normalization that is manifested in the characters' need to construct and adhere to a single, all-encompassing discourse, whether it be Trudeau's Canada, or a prior imagining of Canada as homogenous. The desire for normalcy this framework generates is subsequently challenged through *Venous Hum*'s plot and literary style. As monsters emerge and contaminate the text, the novel itself becomes a cannibal, drawing subversively on other texts in order to satirize canonical works and figures, as well as the act of writing itself. Lastly, this chapter focuses on the reunion which frames the narrative, in order to demonstrate how *Venous Hum* satirizes itself to ensure that it does not become a rigid narrative.

1.1 Regionalism: On the Relevance of the "Prairie"

Suzette Mayr's *Venous Hum*, despite its ambiguous setting, is clearly situated within the Canadian Prairies in general and Alberta in particular. The novel refers to Alberta's Chinook winds (31; 40), its ten-month long winter (40), oil economy (104; 197), and conservative politics (39; 195). Due to its precise location, *Venous Hum* raises questions concerning its place within the corpus of prairie literature, a field which has been rather rigidly defined.[139] This regional category and the aesthetics affiliated with it continue to be the primary focus of the critical work on prairie texts. However, as Beverley argues, *Venous Hum* "does not have the profile of a typical prairie novel" (230). Her dissertation nonetheless

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experienced (9). Vernon's archival research and diasporic approach questions and rectifies the myth of the homogeneous Prairies (2).

[139] Alison Calder notes that prairie literature, because it has been interpreted as "regional," must be "realistic and referential" (52), and that it must "mirror a specific environment to show what real life is like" in the Prairies (52). As a result, the prairie realist texts of F.P. Grove, Martha Ostenso, Sinclair Ross, Margaret Laurence, and W.O. Mitchell are privileged over more experimental writing.

situates Mayr's work within the context of prairie writing, where this regional background allows Mayr to articulate her critique of Canadian state-sponsored bilingualism and multiculturalism (236). While I agree that *Venous Hum* "participates in the opening up and pluralizing of prairie writing as a category" (236), the novel cannot be comfortably placed within this regional framework. Mayr certainly accords value to regions and regionalisms, as she mentions that she grew up believing she could not be an African Canadian writer because she is not from Toronto (*Why* 174). Similarly, most queer literature and criticism produced in Canada tends to be Toronto-centric (Goldie, "QN" 13), a tendency Goldie explains as being the result of "gays and lesbians … [gravitating] around the metropolis partly to escape pressures of conservative homes and partly to seek others like themselves" (13). Mayr's text is then "region-conscious" because it attempts to reinscribe the presence of multicultural and queer people in Western Canada, but *Venous Hum* also exceeds and undermines regional categorization. Both the historical definition of prairie writing and regionalism, as well as the manner in which these categories have been challenged and reformulated, pose problems when examined in relation to Mayr's text. The critiques advanced by Jon Paul Fiorentino and Karina Vernon are helpful to examine *Venous Hum*'s uncomfortable relationship to strategies of regional categorization, but the novel requires a different approach in order to analyze its ability to be contained by, yet exceed, regionalism.

Historically, prairie fiction has been associated with realism and the rural, and was assumed to reflect the harsh reality of life in this environment (Calder 52). The criticism originally approached the literature as though the landscape inevitably generated a certain cultural response (Calder and Wardaugh 8). For Calder, this critical reception entails that prairie works are "by their nature, doomed" (54), since they are expected to present a

nostalgic, backward, and unchanging picture of life in this region (54). Such expectations require that the changing living conditions of the Prairies be systematically ignored (Calder and Wardhaugh 6). Put differently, the categorization of texts as prairie literature entails that what does not correspond to the (historically) rigid definition of "prairie literature" gets dismissed as "inauthentic" (Beverley 232). There is therefore a need, as Beverley mentions, to contest the notion that prairie texts must be "aesthetically conservative" (233), since there is more than a single tradition of prairie writing. The problem is that prairie literature has been defined aesthetically and thematically. Frank Davey appears to stand alone in his belief that prairie writing should simply define the literature produced by the people who inhabit the Prairies (Cooley 44).[140] The "traditional" understanding and reception of prairie literature is then being challenged because it fails to incorporate the changing nature of the Prairies and the variety of experiences within this region.

It is the label "regional literature" rather than the specific one of "prairie literature" that has led to a re-evaluation of how the category can be expanded or challenged. For Jon Paul Fiorentino, the problem with the label "regional" lies in the fact that it relies on a monolithic understanding of literature (11). For him, the persistence of the myth that prairie literature is somehow still concerned with "the rural, the wheat field and the grain elevator" (9) betrays the market value of such representations as much as it depends on the historical development of the region (9). For Frank Davey, regionalism needs to be questioned as a category because it assumes that a common geography overrides other strategies of identity formation, such as gender, ethnicity, race, or age, in defining communal social interests ("Towards" 2; 5).

[140] Cooley's article, "The Critical Reception of Prairie Literature, from Grove to Keahey," traces the different methodologies deployed to examine this literature, an approach which allows him to pinpoint that, with the exception of Davey, most critics approach these texts with the tacit assumptions that regional interests have a deterministic impact on the literature.

Regions are often understood as oppositional to, or as alternatives to, the nation-state, as though the communal ties it generates are more “organic” than the state’s “arbitrary borders” (Riegel et al., x). Davey criticizes this approach because regions only *appear* to have more “natural boundaries” (“Towards” 4) than the nation, while their attempts to resist the power of the nation-state actually create this “seat of power” (4). Furthermore, defining a literature as “regional” carries with it a host of negative connotations, which categorize prairie literature as “safe rather than dangerous or potentially ‘monstrous’” (Mayr, “Vampires” 331). What problematizes the notion of regional literature is then its tendency to homogenize the varied literary production which emerges within its seemingly “organic” borders. Categorizing prairie literature as regional not only reduces it to an inferior status, but also erases the fact that the region’s borders are as arbitrary as those of the nation-state. In other words, literary production is not bound by its territory, and while the space in which a text is produced and situated might impact its framework and aesthetics, those components do not constitute the sole route into the text.

In light of the limiting and homogenizing power of the category of prairie writing, critics have attempted to expand and supplement the field. One such effort is the anthology *Post-Prairie: An Anthology of New Poetry*, co-edited by Jon Paul Fiorentino and Robert Kroetsch. This anthology attempts to reformulate the category of prairie literature by taking into account that the Prairies are now “less unified,[141] more urban” than before (9). However, the introductory conversation which opens this anthology replicates the homogenizing and reductive drive of previous criticisms. That is, Kroetsch and Fiorentino attempt to establish the

[141] Karina Vernon would contest this assertion, since it implies that the population has *recently* become more diverse (2). In contrast, her work is concerned with ascertaining the long-standing presence of diversity in the region.

set of aesthetics which now defines the post-prairie, and argue that writers no longer respond to the landscape but rather seek to "unwrite" it (9). Fiorentino calls it a "descriptive poetic grammar" as opposed to a prescriptive one (9), where the text replaces the real for the fictive in its search for truth (10). He also asserts that there is an "anxiety of geography at work in the post-prairie poem" (11), as the poem longs for, yet unsettles, the notion of home (11). While the anthology does foreground that contemporary prairie literature challenges earlier articulations of the Prairies, it nonetheless creates a rather rigid definition of what can constitute the "post-prairie." Jenny Kerber has challenged the label because the "post" suggests a rupture with former aesthetics, as though the rural no longer had resonance within a prairie context (Kerber 88).[142] Indeed, Fiorentino asserts that the "prairie proper is now the periphery, and the centre is plural" (11), a statement which questions the continued relevance of the rural in the Prairies and within its literary production.[143] The "post-prairie" then raises several questions because of its rigid definition. It replicates the homogenizing tendencies of earlier articulations of prairie literature, as Fiorentino restricts his aesthetics to a single genre, poetry, despite the fact that many prairie texts operate across genres. For instance, the postmodern aesthetics that seem befitting to Fiorentino's project have generated works, such as those of Mayr, Goto, and Fiorentino's own *Stripmalling*, that continuously blur generic boundaries. A definition of the post-prairie as limited to a deconstructive poetic project then

[142] Kerber's critique echoes that made by critics of postcolonialism, who argue that the "post" suggests that colonialism is over, and points to a rupture with the past (McClintock 292; Parry 3; L. Smith 24; King, "Godzilla" 185; Maracle, "Post-Colonial" 205).

[143] For instance, Alberta writer Hiromi Goto has written two novels which focus on rural life: *Chorus of Mushrooms* and *The Kappa Child*. Both novels would however not correspond to a definition of prairie literature as "aesthetically conservative" (Beverley 233), since Goto not only focuses on two unusual crops, mushrooms and Japanese rice, but also unsettles the hegemony of the "white cowboy" prairie myth through references to Japanese stories and myths. Would her novels then be considered "post-prairie," because they unwrite the myth generated by *The Little House on the Prairie* (Sturgess 226), or would their rural setting prevent their association with this particular set of aesthetics?

replicates the homogenizing form of criticism that established realism as the quintessential prairie genre.

While some critics argue that regions are socially constructed spaces (Davey, "Towards" 3; Calder 54; Calder and Wardhaugh 4), it is the work of Karina Vernon which emphasizes this constructed nature most powerfully. Her dissertation, which aims to retrieve the archive of the repressed black presence in the Prairies, simultaneously underscores the degree to which the image of the Prairie as "a white cowboy country, homogenous and unraced" (Vernon 11) is historically inaccurate. According to her, the repression of the black presence, as well as the failure of recent anthologies to include literary texts produced by early African Canadian writers, betrays the "power of regions and nations to aggressively exclude and erase entire peoples from memory and consciousness" (7).[144] Her argument resonates because it recalls Davey's own accusation that regions construct themselves as oppressed by an outside power ("Towards" 11), while omitting to mention that regions also serve the nation's interests. The Prairies thereby undermine their self-definition as an entity defined from the outside because they have mobilized the nation-state's own tendency to disavow and repress "otherness" in order to define themselves as homogenous. Methodologically, Vernon's work uses the regional category in order to highlight the hypocrisy of the region, and the forgotten archive of black writing she recovers is subsequently examined through a diasporic approach (31). *Venous Hum* cannot be analyzed through the same framework, as Louve and Fritz-Peter deny any diasporic connections (Beverley 242). However, Vernon's move from the

[144] Vernon also mentions that anthologies of contemporary prairie writing seldom mention African Canadian writers, with the exception of more well-known writers such as Claire Harris, Suzette Mayr, and Cheryl Foggo (6). Significantly, even critical works produced within the context of Black Canadian Studies omit the prairies in their discussions of blackness in Canada (8). Other communities, such as Chinese Canadians, face similar exclusions, but Vernon notes that their presence is acknowledged to a greater extent as that of African Canadians (5).

regional to the diasporic can be adapted to Mayr's text if one analyzes the tensions the text generates between the regional and the *national* rather than with the diasporic.

1.2 Unwriting, Rewriting, and Rethinking: *Venous Hum* and Prairie Literature

While Mayr is in dialogue with other prairie writers, classifying her novel as prairie writing proves complicated because *Venous Hum* contests this category as much as it contributes to it. For instance, Mayr affiliates her work with that of Hiromi Goto and Aritha van Herk in her article "Vampires in the Oilfields," as she mentions that the article could have easily been titled "'Kappas in the Wheatfields' or 'Zombies in the Palliser Hotel'" (331), potential titles which respectively refer to Goto's *The Kappa Child* and van Herk's *Restlessness*. Mayr's work is however different from theirs in that Goto and van Herk's works reinscribe the feminine[145] and, in the case of Goto, the Japanese presence within a more traditional prairie framework.[146] *Venous Hum* is also a work that reinscribes neglected or repressed identities, but the novel's hybrid setting (Andrew, "Fang" 37) prevents the solidification of a more conservative aesthetic of place.[147] These connections between Mayr, van Herk, and Goto then challenge Fiorentino's conception of the post-prairie, since his affirmation that post-prairie texts "unwrite the prairie" points to a *deconstructive* project. In contrast, Mayr, van Herk, and Goto are engaged in a project of *reinscription* that seeks to rewrite and expand it in order to correct and challenge its erasures.

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[145] Keahey has argued that early prairie writing, along with early criticism, contains a marked "gender bias" that validates the male experience at the expense of the female (8). There is therefore a need to reinscribe the feminine within the Prairies, an argument also made by van Herk ("Women" 139).
[146] See also the arguments advanced in Charlotte Sturgess's "Bridging the Gap: Transcultural Figurations in Novels by Lai, Goto, and Mayr."
[147] Put differently, Mayr is not responding to a particular setting, such as a rural scene or a specific city, two elements which come with a specific tradition to which van Herk and Goto write against and contribute to redefining. Mayr frames her narrative within a recognizable non-place.

Venous Hum also echoes earlier prairie writers generically, structurally, and stylistically. The novel deploys the same techniques of magic realism developed in texts such as Robert Kroetsch's *What the Crow Said* and Sheila Watson's *The Double Hook*. *Venous Hum* is similar to Margaret Laurence's *The Diviners*, as the identity formation of the protagonist structurally relies on her relationship to an indigenous classmate. [148] Stylistically, Mayr recalls the work of Kroetsch through the frankness and orality of her text. Kroetsch claims that orality and the tall tale are markers of prairie writing ("Moment" 6-7), and he can be credited for his open and detailed depictions of sexuality, notably in works such as *The Studhorse Man* and *What the Crow Said*. Mayr is also explicit in her descriptions of sexuality, and does not shy away from bodily details that include lavatorial humour (Mayr, *VH* 13) and the shame that characterizes Lai Fun's affair with Thor:

> She pulls on her cotton underwear, pulls up her stockings, pulls at her skirt, pulls down her guilt, tucks up her bra, tucks in her shirt, tucks in her shame, walks out the door … and she will have to wash the smell of that wasted time off her … that and the smell of his sweat rushing off him and onto her in waterfall sheets, his saliva, the burn of his stubble" (29).

The open yet playful tone in this passage aligns Mayr's text with Kroetsch's work, since he too lightly mocks his characters through an omniscient perspective. Similarly, *Venous Hum* follows some other prairie texts that mix high and low narrative styles, as dialogues are laced with profanity and natural speech rhythms. Kroestch used this technique in *The Studhorse*

[148] Davey has read *The Diviners* as a text which ultimately naturalizes the exclusion of the Métis because Morag's life worked out despite the presence of racialized and gendered injustices (*PNA* 40). Jules, the Métis character, is indeed useful inasmuch as he facilitates Morag's rebellion from her husband (32). In *Venous Hum*, Lai Fun's belief that Lloyd Weaselhead is her "twin" (131) enables her to admit her homosexuality (122), which recalls Laurence's technique.

Man, when Hazard says "it's a deal … if you ram them up your ass without any help from me" (12) in what is otherwise a lofty, sophisticated style. Mayr pushes this technique further by having Lai Fun "tell Jennifer that she is a shitty, neglectful spouse" (39) or declare something to be "fucking unbelievable" (115). Such stylistic choices demonstrate the extent to which Mayr has been influenced by previous prairie writers, and is also engaged in continuing their tradition.

However, the centrality Mayr accords to the work of Margaret Atwood in *Venous Hum* contradicts this specifically regional framework, and prevents Mayr's work from being bound by its regional context.[149] Mayr mentions in an interview that she finds the Albertan literary scene "horribly traditional" ("Exploring" 448), and her distaste for the tendency to equate Alberta writing with conservative aesthetics (qtd in Dudek 167) might explain why *Venous Hum* does not easily adhere to the category of prairie writing.[150] For the same reason, *Venous Hum* does not use the regional as a tool to resist the national (Riegel et al., x; Davey, "Towards" 4), but rather has the characters frequently stress their national identity over their regional one (Mayr, *VH* 93; 176; 186). This seeming rejection of the regional does not hold for the entire narrative, as Louve and Fritz-Peter, Lai Fun's parents, realize that their move to Western Canada has changed them. Fritz-Peter, who used to mock cowboy boots, now finds them "sexy" (44), while Louve fears that their move westward has led Lai Fun to become "*one*

[149] The function of intertextuality in *Venous Hum* is an important stylistic issue, but it is also relevant to the regional context of this novel because it proves that Mayr is not working within a single prairie tradition. Rather, Mayr contextualizes her writing within a larger Canadian framework, as well as within a magic realist tradition that includes Gabriel García Márquez, Franz Kafka, Salman Rushdie (*Why* 168-169), and with Gloria Anzaldua's generically hybrid *Borderlands/ La Frontera* ("Vampires" 337).

[150] As van Herk points out, the Prairie literary scene "has to be earthquaked a little" ("Women" 149), since the art of the region has defined the Prairies as masculine (139). Yet, despite her desire to modify this male literary scene, van Herk still interprets prairie writing as predetermined by the landscape (139). Van Herk seeks to expand the category, but Mayr's urban fiction fits uncomfortably within this landscape-based interpretation, even once it has been opened up to other (sexual, gendered) experiences.

of them" (130), an expression which stands for the "status quo" (89). In other words, Mayr's novel does not subsume the regional to the national, nor does she present regionalism as an antidote to the national. If Davey argues that regionalism constructs the seat of power as being elsewhere and as being unable to change this unequal relation ("Towards" 11), *Venous Hum* underlines, through the transformations the characters experience, that the regional can be just as homogenizing as the national, as these two categories function dialogically as well as dialectically.

Stylistically, *Venous Hum*'s drive towards the national is illustrated through Mayr's use of French, as some paragraphs operate through the official policy of bilingualism. As Lai Fun reminisces about her high school days, the language Mayr deploys becomes more bilingual, but its linguistic prowess remains limited. For instance, Lai Fun describes Stefanja's sudden drop in popularity in high school by saying that "tout de suite sans warning Stefanja was banished to the realm of the Shit People where Lai Fun and Kim resided" (79). Similarly, Lai Fun's car is bilingually graffitied by the dead who scribble "WASH ME S'IL VOUS PLAIT," and "J'AI BESOIN D'UNE DOUCHE" in the dirt that coats it. When Lai Fun dismisses these graffitis, it is because "she has no time for merde right now" (192). This interweaving of English and French denotes the distinctly "Canadian" education she and her classmates have received. Lai Fun's "bilingualism" is very limited, which demonstrates that Trudeau's seemingly "disheveling" policies have had little impact on the Canadian education system. French is not being "shoved down honest, Canadian throats" (95) as Mrs. Blake fears, but merely "spices" the Anglophone text with a little diversity. Mayr also defies conventions through her use of French since texts that draw on different languages tend to italicize the words in the language deemed "foreign." No such exoticizing move is performed in *Venous*

Hum, which lets the French blend in with the English as though the French words belonged within the text's English syntax.[151] The bilingual style she employs throughout *Venous Hum* then opens up her novel beyond regionalism, in order to encompass *traces* of official bilingualism.

Mayr's novel should then be read as a text which complicates the relationship between the national and the regional, where the category of "prairie literature" no longer strictly applies. *Venous Hum* is located within a regional context, but is not contained by it, as the relationship between the centre and the periphery shifts within the narrative. Since the "far-right politics" the novel criticizes are "taking over the country" (39), *Venous Hum* displaces the notion of the centre by demonstrating that the regional now constitutes the centre rather than the margin.[152] This is not to say that the categories of regional literature or prairie writing need to be dismissed, but rather that Mayr's novel encourages readings that take into account the slipperiness of such categories and their shifting relation with the centre. Mayr's novel is in dialogue with and in opposition to regional and national categories, in a way that ultimately destabilizes both.

2.1 Heterogeneity as Homogeneity:[153] *Venous Hum*'s Conservative Framework

If the category of prairie writing proves to be too restrictive in the context of Mayr's text, *Venous Hum*'s conservative framework[154] can provide a way into the text. Conservative politics and attitudes are stereotypically assigned to Alberta, but they do transcend this specific

[151] While the lack of italics can be read positively, as I have done, it can also be interpreted as a homogenizing move, which subsumes French vocabulary to the English language. Stylistically, the use of French in *Venous Hum* does enact Trudeau's bilingual Canada, where national unity is created through the reduction of French to an "ethnic" phenomenon.

[152] Indeed, the rise of the Alberta-centric Reform, Alliance, and Conservative parties demonstrates the extent to which conservative politics have become central to the country as a whole.

[153] This subheading aims to echo Kroetsch's "Disunity as Unity."

[154] Deborah Keahey argues against locating regional coherence through "political and cultural affiliation" (8), but she articulated this argument before the right came to exercise a certain unifying hegemony over the Prairies.

regional context in a way that allows *Venous Hum* to criticize the regional and the national, explore resistance within and beyond these two spheres, as well as the manner in which they perceive and collide with each other. *Venous Hum* opens with references to two of Trudeau's landmark policies: the 1967 bill and amendments to the Criminal Code which lifted restrictions on abortion and homosexuality, and the 1971 Policy of Multiculturalism. Beverley reads these references as ironic statements, where Mayr emphasizes that "these governmental changes could never instigate the adjustments in attitude that they proposed, nor live up to the expectations they elicited" (239). But Mayr's phrasing also suggests an alternative reading, since it is not only disappointment in the face of an unrealizable promise that generates the ironic tone, but also the *fear* that those policies will irremediably modify the fabric of the country. Trudeau's assertion that "the state has no business in the bedrooms of the nation" (Mayr, *VH* 11) is followed by "and the beds of many nations promptly spun out of control" (11), a statement which articulates the policy's destabilizing consequences. Similarly, Mayr states that "Canada's hair has been dishevelled ever since" (11) Trudeau instigated his Policy of Multiculturalism, which signals that the changes Trudeau instigated are not unanimously celebrated. The sense of threat is as present in *Venous Hum*'s opening as the sense of upcoming disappointment.

In other words, fear and disappointment operate simultaneously in the novel, as a seemingly homogenous society is shaken by the possibility of change. Trudeau's policies are threatening because they attempt to redefine what is considered "normal." The decriminalization of homosexuality indeed required more than the withdrawal of the state from the nation's bedrooms, but also the redefinition of a behaviour once deemed "perverse." At the same time, Trudeau's policy did not go far enough: it was neither meant as an anti-

discrimination bill, nor as an argument for equal rights (Goldie, "QN" 19). Similarly, official multiculturalism[155] elicits the same polarization of viewpoints. On the one hand, Bissoondath's controversial *Selling Illusions* argues for assimilation over diasporic allegiances. His main concern is that multiculturalism has eroded any sense of "centre" to the Canadian identity (71), which indicates the primary fear which Trudeau's policy generates; that is, that Canada, once a "homogeneous" country, is now fragmented and segregated (25).[156] On the other hand, most critics agree that the Multiculturalism Act is insufficient to effect radical change. For M. NourbeSe Philip, it prevents the development of anti-racist strategies (181-85).[157] Kamboureli's well-known critique denounces multiculturalism's "sedative politics" (*SB* 82), as the policy accepts difference only to manage it (82). The Multiculturalism Act has also been accused of being a diversion tactic, one which defuses Québécois and First Nations' demands for sovereignty by reducing their claims to "ethnic phenomena" (Bissoondath 40; Bannerji, *Dark* 49; Beverley 251; Kernerman 59; Miki, "Global" 148). It simultaneously erases Canada's history, as it constructs ethnic diversity as recent (Kamboureli, *SB* 100). These contradictory reactions are vital in the context of Mayr's *Venous Hum*, a novel which not only foregrounds the hopes and disappointments Trudeau's policies generated, but also the fears they inspired.

[155] My analysis is concerned with Canada's official Multiculturalism Act, but it should be noted that multiculturalism has generated meaningful and relevant critiques from Britain, the U.S., and Australia. For example, Paul Gilroy and David Theo Goldberg mention that multiculturalism has become a corporate strategy to normalize, market, and manage difference (Gilroy 21; Goldberg, *Multiculturalism* 29), an argument which echoes those made by Kamboureli (*SB* 82) and Bannerji (*Dark* 6; 43) in a Canadian context.

[156] Bissoondath's critique is fundamentally flawed on two counts. Firstly, he uses himself and his immigration to Canada as a test case for all immigrations and relocations, a gesture which erases the sometimes painful and violent causes behind some migrations. Secondly, Bissoondath assumes that the Canada which committed "nasty things" (166) no longer exists (166; 132). Such a statement not only erases the instances of systematic racism in Canada, but also the continued colonial relations between Canada and indigenous peoples.

[157] Bannerji points to this failure when she notes that multiculturalism condemns people of colour to the permanent status of immigrant, regardless of citizenship status ("Geography" 290).

However, the policies instigated by Trudeau are more conservative than they appear. Official multiculturalism did not erode the core of Canadian society, but reinforced dominant interests by controlling and managing populations deemed "ethnic." It encourages diversity, but through the construction of an essentialized ethnic other whose identity is rooted in "folklore" (Kamboureli, *SB* 106).[158] Difference is hence managed because it is rendered static, an approach which "spices up " the dominant Canadian society without challenging its structure. Similarly, while same-sex couples in general, and same-sex marriage in particular, are sometimes perceived as threats to "the traditional family" (M. K. Owen 87), some critics have argued that same-sex marriage legislation actually normalizes homosexuality (87; Eng 24).[159] For Owen, lesbian women constitute, by their very existence, a "structural threat to patriarchy" (92), but the family unit reinscribes heteronormativity because it does not challenge the traditional family (93). Eng even argues that same-sex marriage legalization[160] corresponds to conservative politics, and fails to represent the interests of the entire gay community. What he finds specifically conservative with this movement is that it has become the "privileged way of legitimating sexuality" (31) and has prevented the development of alternative unions. Owen is less critical than Eng about same-sex unions: she agrees that the focus on the family unit prevents the development of alternative lifestyles, yet believes that same-sex couples should have access to the same rights as other couples. Same-sex unions

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[158] Slavoj Žižek pushes this argument further by arguing that "liberal tolerance" only "tolerates" so long as identity expression is reduced to "folklore *without substance*" (37 my emphasis). Roy Miki disagrees that this insistence on folklore and stereotype is still relevant. In "Global Drift," he argues that the emphasis on folklore marked the early years of official multiculturalism, as in, the 1970s, while the 1980s were characterized by the rise of "contested discourses" such as the Japanese Canadian Redress movement (150).

[159] While Trudeau's 1967 bill did not legalize same-sex marriage, the legalization of same-sex unions can be interpreted as a direct result of his decriminalization of consensual sexual behaviours.

[160] Eng is writing in the context of current discussions to legalize same-sex marriage in the United States, and published his book shortly before the repeal of "don't ask, don't tell." His focus is thus on activism in the U.S., but his arguments regarding the consequences of same-sex unions remain relevant to a Canadian context where same-sex marriage has been legalized.

then do not necessarily pose the challenge to traditional society its critics fear, just like multiculturalism does not automatically entail a disintegration of the dominant society.

Trudeau's policies are also more conservative than they appear because they project difference into the private sphere. While the Multiculturalism Act affords some funding for programs which foster the well-being and development of diversity, the responsibility of educating children is thrust upon individual families. It is they who must choose whether they will pass on their cultural heritage to their children, as well as how much of it and how (Gunew, "Serial" 9; Mackey 101). Ultimately, this strategy leads to the (partial) assimilation of the second generation, who is often perceived by the first generation as misinformed "about their heritage, be it language or cultural specifics" (Parameswaran 96).[161] Similarly, Goldie interprets "the state has no business in the bedrooms of the nation" as guaranteeing Canadians the same freedom that Americans already enjoyed; that is, "the freedom of any Canadian to live as he or she wishes in the *privacy of the home*" ("QN" 19 my emphasis).[162] For Eng, reducing homosexuality to private behaviour is a neoconservative strategy, which defuses debates on identity politics "by displacing them into the intimate public sphere of privatived citizenship, normative family, and heterosexist morality" (6). As both Goldie and Eng argue, the public realm often relies on a certain conformity within the private one in order to consolidate the interests of the dominant class (8; Goldie, "QN" 18). While Goldie argues that Trudeau's bill meant that "sexual morality was no longer to be a microcosm of governmentality" (18), Eng suggests that reducing matters of sexual behaviour to a private

[161] Parameswaran argues quite firmly that "second-generation immigrants are not well informed about their heritage" (96), but her assertion should be qualified inasmuch as it is based on her perception rather than on an empirical study.
[162] Goldie is actually wrong about his assumption that Americans were free to live as they wished, since anti-sodomy laws were in place in some American states until 2003. See *Lawrence versus Texas* (Eng 43).

"choice" solidifies governing interests because it deceptively constructs the private sphere as a realm which is *outside* public relations of exploitation (8; 10). Homosexuality has thus been reduced to an "aestheticized lifestyle" (29), while the same-sex marriage lobby has replaced its radical politics of resistance (30).[163] There is therefore a significant discrepancy between the manner in which conservative commentators have identified homosexuality and multiculturalism as threatening to what they perceive to be traditional society, and the result that these "liberating" policies have had on multicultural populations and same-sex relationships.

2.2 "The Terrible Need to Belong:" Containing Differences, Reproducing Status Quos

The conservative context behind the two seemingly liberalizing policies that open *Venous Hum* has a specific relevance to the novel. In *Venous Hum*, official multiculturalism acts on different levels to simultaneously legitimate Louve and Fritz-Peter's vision of Canada, and solidify the dominant interests attributed to Mrs. Blake. While some critics of multiculturalism argue that the policy has led to an erosion of a sense of Canadian identity (Bissoondath 71), Louve and Fritz-Peter interpret the Policy of Multiculturalism as authorizing their entry into Canadianness.[164] As Beverley mentions, Lai Fun's parents do not fall under the category of diasporic subjects (242): their origin is assumed to be elsewhere, but its precise location is never detailed. They identify solely as Canadians, as being from here, or from Ottawa (Mayr, *VH* 89), an assertion which defuses claims that their roots lie outside the nation. The repeated assertion that they are, first and foremost, Canadians (89; 93; 106; 107;

[163] However, Eng's argument needs to be qualified, in that he equates "queerness" with a political movement of resistance (30). This statement is problematic because sexual orientation does not necessarily entail an adherence to movements of political resistance.
[164] The same argument is advanced in M.G. Vassanji's *The Gunny Sack*. In *Postcolonialism, My Living*, Mukherjee asserts that for many people with immigrant background, Trudeau remains a positive figure because of the Policy of Multiculturalism (68-69).

176) points to their idealist interpretation of multiculturalism, yet simultaneously undermines their potential to challenge the hegemony of the nation-state. It could be interpreted as challenging those who refuse to view immigrants as "Canadian," but Louve and Fritz-Peter operate within the logic of English-Canadian identity formation. They do send Lai Fun to French immersion school because "they do not want Lai Fun to become one of *them*, the status quo" (89), but their idealized dream for a "special and bilingual" (89) child "of all Canada" (93) merely corresponds to the new, state-sponsored status quo. Similarly, their contestation of racism and intolerance lies in their ability "to just walk away" (106) from such situations, since Trudeau's invitation has validated their identity. Even their move to Alberta and their decision to become vegetarians are linked to this desire for Canadianness, to "put down roots deep into the earth and live normal, boring suburban lives forever" (179). Since Lai Fun's parents have wilfully assimilated (Beverley 280), *Venous Hum* does not present multiculturalism as having altered and radicalized the fabric of the country. Louve and Fritz-Peter prefer to embrace the dominant instead of destabilizing it.

Even when the dominant society interprets it as threatening, multiculturalism continues to serve its interests. In *Venous Hum*, Mrs. Blake, Lai Fun's racist, classist, and homophobic[165] elementary and high-school teacher, enacts the Multiculturalism Act in her classroom despite herself in her relationships with her "ethnic" students. As some critics have argued, the Multiculturalism Act manages and controls populations (Kamboureli, *SB* 82; Bannerji, *Dark* 6). Mrs. Blake's attitude towards some of her students is then not at odds with this policy. Her

[165] Mrs. Blake's homophobia might be less apparent than her other acts of discrimination against her impoverished or ethnic students, but her discomfort towards the principal and Fritz-Peter's "non-traditional" masculinity points to her discomfort towards those who stray from gender expectations (Mayr, *VH* 94; 96). Further, it is after she sees Lai Fun and Daisy kiss that she decides to separate the two girls (126-127), a decision which barely cloaks her homophobia.

insistence that Lai Fun draw herself with a black crayon (Mayr, *VH* 99), and her request that Lloyd, a Native student, demonstrate to his classmates how feathers should be worn (98), seem like parodies of racist ignorance (Beverley 247). However, she is actually enacting the multicultural desire for an "authentic" Other deprived of substance (Kamboureli, *SB* 106; Žižek 37). Forcing Lai Fun to draw herself with a black crayon illustrates that Mrs. Blake perceives Lai Fun as "black," despite the fact that Lai Fun's own sense of identity is more fluid since her father's "skin is pink and white" (101). Mrs. Blake thereby manages Lai Fun's identity in a way that conforms to stereotypes[166] and does not challenge the perceptions of the dominant society. Similarly, despite her fears of the "French menace. The French peril" (95), Mrs. Blake's own linguistic status is not challenged by the presence of French. Before the beginning of their twenty-year high-school reunion, Lai Fun "wonders if any of them speak French anymore. If twelve years of French have completely worn off" (191), the implicit answer being that most of her classmates no longer speak French. If Lai Fun "functions as a test case … for the (bilingual, multicultural) national identity proposed by the Canadian nation-state" (Beverley 238), then her inability to retain the French language points to the failure of Trudeau's policies. In other words, *Venous Hum* points out the degree to which the policies Mrs. Blake finds threatening to "honest Canadians" (Mayr, *VH* 95) did not have the devastating effects she anticipated. In the context of *Venous Hum*, Trudeau's multiculturalism normalizes Louve and Fritz-Peter's identity and presence within the country, without challenging the dominant position Mrs. Blake represents.

But *Venous Hum* goes even further in its representation of multiculturalism's hegemonic power. Lai Fun is caught between two coercive interpretations of Canada, her

[166] In this case, her categorizing of Lai Fun as black falls under the category of the "one drop rule," where those with a single black ancestor remain black regardless of their skin tone or identity affiliation.

parents' and Mrs. Blake's. Louve and Fritz-Peter's enthusiastic response to Trudeau's Canada is empowering for them inasmuch as they choose to embrace it. However, their vision becomes coercive once they impose it on Lai Fun, "because the Canada they want, the daughter they want, is special and bilingual" (Mayr, *VH* 89). This sentence constructs an equation between Lai Fun and Canada, where Lai Fun, their "glorious Canadian Proclamation" (93), embodies Trudeau's Canada. Louve and Fritz-Peter constantly affiliate Lai Fun with the national rather than the regional, since they state that "even though Lai Fun was born in Western Canada, she will be a child of all Canada, of leaf-bright autumns and spring coastal rains and Great Lake boating and Newfoundland ice storms" (93). Lai Fun then represents the national unity Trudeau's policies were meant to construct, where regional differences and dissent are to be subsumed under the sign "Canada." However, as the conservative framework of the novel underscores, this vision of Canada did not establish itself seamlessly, just as Lai Fun ultimately resists her parents' attempt to make her embody their version of Canada. Indeed, six-year old Lai Fun is sent to French school to prevent her from becoming "one of *them*, the status quo" (89). Yet, Louve is forced to recognize that Lai Fun, as a teenager, has become "*one of them*" (130).

Meanwhile, Mrs. Blake's desire for a homogeneous Canada can be associated with institutional racism, as some textual markers indicate that Mrs. Blake is more than the parody of a racist. Mrs. Blake is not solely concerned with fostering her students' learning skills, since

> she is the kind of teacher who notices the cut and the cost of her students' clothes. Who is a judge's kid, who has a single mother who works at a discount clothing store. Which kid has salon-cut hair, which is ruined by a hare-lip, bulgy eyes. What colour

the kid's skin is. What the kid's name is: Hadleys fare better than Lai Funs, and Johns excel over Ozzies. (Mayr, *VH* 104)

What Mayr details here is the form of systemic discriminatory practices under which Mrs. Blake operates, where she categorizes her students through visual markers that prescribe how she will treat them. Not only is she racist, but she also discriminates against everyone who differs from the norm: single parent families, children with disabilities, and the impoverished. Further, Mrs. Blake claims that she has "been teaching at this school since before the school board opened it" (100), which is another way of saying that she has always been there.[167] She is also unavoidable and omnipresent, as she moves from being Lai Fun's elementary school teacher to being her high school teacher, and controls most extracurricular activities (110). Mrs. Blake is "everywhere" (110), "always watching them" (105), and even returns from the dead. Indeed, Louve buries Mrs. Blake in her garden, and plants hybrid tea roses on top of her grave. Louve mentions that such roses are "difficult to grow in this climate" (158). Yet, these hybrid plants flourish over the grave of Mrs. Blake, an image which points to the empowering potential of anti-racist strategies. But Louve's success is short-lived, since Mrs. Blake's return uproots her plants, which demonstrates the fragility of hybrid belonging and the power of institutional forms of discrimination that, though buried, can resurface at any time. As a ghost/zombie, Mrs. Blake asserts that the children against which she discriminated "did just fine" (221), since she prepared them "for the real world" (104). While this line can be read in various ways, it speaks of the insidious consequences of institutional racism. Lai Fun's success in the "real world" is certainly dependent on the desire for conformity which Mrs. Blake's consistent acts of discrimination generated.

[167] When Louve asserts that she will get Mrs. Blake fired, the latter answers that "I've been teaching here forever. I'm going to keep on teaching forever" (211), which emphasizes Mrs. Blake's permanent status.

Lai Fun's education then comprises, and combines, both Louve and Fritz-Peter's assertive Canadianness and Mrs. Blake's hegemonic practice of multiculturalism. Instead of fostering the development of an empowered bilingual/multicultural identity, this combination results in a desire for sameness, which Lai Fun expresses in her longing "to be like other people" (Mayr, *VH* 128). Lai Fun's need to subsume what makes her different is most explicitly enacted on her name. While Lai Fun attends elementary school, Mrs. Blake attempts to normalize "Lai Fun" by transforming it into "Lou Anne" (93), because she believes that this "black girl with a Chinese name" (94) should have a "Canadian name" (93).[168] As a teenager, Lai Fun wants to change her name: "I'm going to change my name! … A name people think is normal. Like Faith or Patience. Everyone thinks I'm some sort of fucked up Chinese woman!" (129), and readers learn that Lai Fun once asked her friend Daisy to call her "Jane" (149-150). While Lai Fun is now embarrassed to have made such a request, the fact remains that her upbringing led her to wish for "normalcy." When her difference cannot be erased, such as in the school production of *The Mikado*, Lai Fun withdraws from the choir "because it would be fucking unbelievable for a brown girl to dress up like she's Japanese" (115). In *Venous Hum*, the production of *The Mikado* emphasizes the importance of skin colour (Beverley 254), not only through Lai Fun's reaction, but also because "no one has the guts to tell Lloyd that it's a little bit weird that a Native kid is pretending to be Japanese" (Mayr, *VH* 119). Lai Fun's decision to withdraw from the play is not, however, based on an opposition to the play's racist overtones. In fact, Lai Fun does not apply the reasoning that she and Lloyd would look ridiculous as Japanese people to her white classmates. Similarly, despite being a lesbian, she

[168] Beverley reads "Lou-Anne" as an act of interpellation (246). Additionally, Mrs. Blake here indicates that "Canadian" must be white, that it cannot be black, and cannot have a "Chinese" name. "Lou-Anne" is simultaneously exclusive and inclusive, since it is supposed to make Lai Fun more acceptable, yet implies that "Lai Fun" cannot be Canadian.

gets “swept up in the other girls’ hysteria” (49), and desires “Boys. Boys.” (49). If Mrs. Blake interprets Trudeau’s policies on homosexuality and multiculturalism as threatening what she deems “Canadian,” Lai Fun’s sustained desire to subsume her difference demonstrates the extent to which dominant interests are not so easily destabilized.

Lai Fun’s desire to be “like other people” also has an influence on her relationship with her wife Jennifer. While Michelle K. Owen argues that “lesbian women cannot take for granted what a mother is and what a mother does” (92), Lai Fun and Jennifer’s relationship actually falls into a heteronormative, patriarchal pattern that does not challenge the traditional family.[169] Jennifer is a workaholic, absent figure in the novel, who laughs at the “shotgun” nature of her marriage to Lai Fun (Mayr, *VH* 17). Meanwhile, Lai Fun fulfils the traditional “mother role,” inasmuch as she is the one who gets pregnant and works part-time so she can spend more time at home. Lai Fun is the one who wishes to be “official and recognized” (37), who believes that their marriage will “stop their child from being born a bastard” (18), which betrays her need to have her union sanctioned as normal.[170] The way in which they relate to each other is also inscribed within a heteronormative framework, since Jennifer says that Lai Fun is “going to be a daddy” (18), while Lai Fun refers to herself as Jennifer’s “husband” during the wedding (24). These statements might appear subversive in their gender-bending, especially since Lai Fun is the one who is pregnant and yet assigned the role of “daddy.” Yet, the fact that Jennifer once suggested that she would “trade Lai Fun for a newer model if Lai Fun didn’t have a baby soon” (18) points to the traces of misogyny that mark their marriage.

[169] According to M.K. Owen, lesbian couples are more likely to be interpreted as simultaneously “mundane and menacing” (91) because the union between two women entails an effective attempt at escaping the patriarchy (92). However, since the patriarchy is a system and not simply defined through the presence of a man, a lesbian relationship should not be equated with an automatic challenge of, or escape from, patriarchal power.
[170] Lai Fun’s desire for official status echoes her parents’ response to Trudeau’s Policy of Multiculturalism. Their enthusiasm indeed stems from the same need to be officially recognized.

Despite the fact that their relationship would be interpreted as threatening to "traditional values," Lai Fun and Jennifer are just as dedicated to projecting the idealized concept of the "perfect" family (38). [171] In *Venous Hum*, the decriminalization of homosexuality, as well as the legalization of same-sex marriage, does not lead "the beds of several nations [to spin] out of control" (11). Rather, these policies have normalized behaviours once deemed threatening, and maintained the family unit as the prime structure through which unions are legitimated. In that way, the government has not exactly withdrawn from the nation's bedrooms; rather, same-sex unions enable further conformity in those bedrooms because they are no longer considered threatening.

2.3 "Secret Best Friends": The failure of Intersectionality

Mayr's coupling of Trudeau's two policies also evokes intersectionality, or rather, the limits of this particular theoretical framework within *Venous Hum*'s conservative context. Beverley draws attention to the importance of intersectional approaches and its pitfalls in *Venous Hum*.[172] However, the novel also illustrates the difficulty of adopting an intersectional approach when queer interests need to be examined in relation to race and racism. For instance, Eng's critique of same-sex marriage activists lies in the false analogies the movement has drawn between their legal battles and those of the American civil rights movements. In their pursuit for equality, these activists consign racism to the past, and tend to define queerness through whiteness (x). This failure to acknowledge the continuing power of

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[171] This illusion of perfection is the image the couple wishes to project, but the novel undermines it by presenting their marriage as profoundly dysfunctional. Lai Fun is unfaithful, Jennifer is constantly absent, and neither of them spend much time with their son now that Angélique works as their nanny. Lai Fun also wants to tell Jennifer that she is a "shitty, neglectful spouse" (*VH* 39), but cannot because the two never see each other.

[172] For example, Beverley reads Lai Fun's confrontation with Lloyd as betraying the manner in which intersectionality risks subsuming intragroup differences (266). Simultaneously, the bullying to which Lai Fun is subjected, notably the nicknames "LEZ FUN" and "PAKI FOON" demonstrates the extent to which racism and homophobia are intertwined (266-267).

racism – along with classism and sexism – characterizes what Eng dubs "the colorblind age" (2), where differences no longer matter. For Eng, this conservative attitude has resulted in an erosion of the public language in which race and racism can be discussed, and has separated queer politics from critical race politics (3-4). Eng thus advocates a return to intersectional approaches, but Goldie notes that intersectionality was always difficult to apply ("QN" 20).[173] The limits of intersectionality indeed lie in the difficulty of making different interests coincide, since a common experience of oppression does not preclude insensitivity towards a different group.

The difficulty of intersecting race and racism with queer politics haunts Mayr's novel. In an article about *Venous Hum*, she mentions that "up until recently I have always been extremely hesitant to include main characters who are of colour and homosexual or bisexual because of the fear that my work might be read as too full of 'issues,' as too didactic" ("Vampires" 337). Similarly, she argues that "the problem is, when you write about race … at some point you must write about racism … [but] writing about race only in terms of racism is going to restrict you" ("Exploring" 442). The hesitations Mayr expresses are mirrored in much of the theoretical/critical work concerned with race, racism, and anti-racism. For example, Gilroy notes that "the body circulates uneasily through contemporary discussions of how one knows the group to which one belongs and of what it takes to be recognized as belonging to such a collectivity" (24). Intra-group differences such as age, gender, sexual orientation, and class fracture the assumed "unanimity of racialized collectivities" (24), but despite these tensions, "race" continues to offer "a welcome short-cut into the favored forms of solidarity

[173] Goldie discusses the fragmentations which divided the queer movements due to the belief that gay men could oppress lesbians due to their patriarchal privilege (20). Other Canadian writers and critics mention experiencing similar difficulties within the feminist movement, where racial and class differences were subsumed (Bannerji, *TT* 49; Maracle, *TI* 166).

and connection" (25). Gilroy argues that raciological thinking is therefore in crisis, as the New Racism, which proposes absolute cultural and national difference instead of fixating on skin colour as the marker of inferiority (32), is being supplanted. Current technological advances entail that "race" is "no longer confined to cognitive and perceptual habits" (34) but has been "drawn by technological and conceptual changes toward ever-smaller scales" (34). The effects of such genomics on raciological thinking is that the "contemporary discourse animating 'races' and producing racialized consciousness" has become "anachronistic" (37). Gilroy links his argument to gender through a reference to new workout strategies designed to reduce the distinction between male and female bodies for military purposes, an example which demonstrates how science can be employed to alter differences once understood as biologically predetermined (16-17). Gilroy's proposition that genomics will ultimately reveal the "irrelevancy of race" (37) does not entail that racism no longer exists or that the world is "colour blind." Rather, Gilroy signals that "race" as a concept has been transformed: it initially moved from a biological, perceptual, and empirical "fact" to a cultural/national argument, but is now located in a molecular understanding which prevents the ossification of race (34). Bodies are still affected by raciological thinking,[174] but they circulate and are perceived differently than they once were. The manner in which "race" intersects with gender, sexuality, and class in *Venous Hum* is thus complicated because the very concept of "race" has undergone multiple transformations.

[174] One such example is listed in Compton's "Pheneticizing Versus Passing," where he discusses the appearance of an Irish actor, Anthony David Lennon, who is perceived to be mixed-raced despite being, genetically speaking, Irish. Lennon demonstrates the extent to which "race" has shifted because he suffers from racial discrimination without being genetically "black," as the eye has been trained to perceive "race" through facial/physical features, even though such features are not accurate indicators of ancestry or genetics (46-53).

Venous Hum points to the limits of intersectionality through various strategies, as the novel questions the notion that all systems of oppression are interconnected.[175] For instance, the novel refuses to identify Lai Fun's, as well as her classmate Daisy's, ethnicity until quite late in the narrative. Readers find out on page 90 that Lai Fun is "half black, half white," and on page 151 that "Daisy was the only other black girl at the school." Beverley argues that this delay invites readers to question how and why they imagine(d) the characters in a certain way, as well as the impact, if any, that this information will have on the narrative (243). This refusal to identify ethnicity from the very beginning also points to Mayr's hesitation to portray characters that are both of colour and homosexual ("Vampires" 337). Indeed, it is almost as if each subject can only be treated individually: the section which deals with Lai Fun's childhood deals predominantly with race and racism, while the other sections focus on her sexual identity in adulthood. It is true that Lai Fun faces homophobic discrimination while in high school, as noted through her nickname "Lez Fun." However, none of her fellow classmates actually know that she is a lesbian, and are in fact bullying her on the basis of her perceived sexual orientation without much cause, since Lai Fun is in love with Lloyd. Meanwhile, race has been evacuated from the contemporary scenes of the novel. It is almost as if racism and homophobia only intersect, though partially, during Lai Fun's high school years. In those scenes, racism and homophobia are experienced in the public realm, in the school and in the street ("Aren't many people who look like you, shouts the man. Just wanted to take a picture to show the wife!" [89]). Once Lai Fun becomes an adult, homophobia has

[175] For instance, Maïr Verthuy argues that "patriarchy, colonization and sexism are synonymous: it is patriarchy that produces both oppressions" (114). Such a statement might appear intersectional in that it links together various modes of oppression. However, it also erases the fact that women can, and have, actively participated in the process of colonization, and conflates the operations of these different power structures. It is in this tendency to homogenize that intersectionality proves risky.

been "privatized." It is noted in the way her neighbours call her home the "Lesbians' House" (135),[176] which not only reduces homosexuality to a behaviour solely practiced within the home, but also directs their discomfort towards this privatized space.[177] The dissociation of racism from homophobia in the text thus foregrounds the rise of conservative politics, where these public issues have been transplanted into the private sphere, where they can be easily ignored.

The characters' personal thoughts and assumptions also point to the limits of intersectionality. For instance, despite her endorsement of Trudeau's concepts of multiculturalism and sexual liberation, Louve entertains homophobic thoughts.[178] During Lai Fun's wedding, she asks her daughter if "griffins are some kind of gay symbol like the rainbow" (Mayr, *VH* 23), and later muses that the lack of seasonal change in the Prairies is responsible for Lai Fun's sexual orientation (89). When she finds out about Lai Fun's affair with a man, she is "secretly happy but also unbearably sad because she knows this is no doubt a phase for Lai Fun, a lesbian mid-life crisis" (155). Louve might be confronted with racism, through the question "where do you really come from?" (89; 176), but it does not prevent her from endorsing other forms of oppression. Lai Fun's assumptions also point to the dangers of subsuming everyone within one power paradigm, as she tends to conflate other people's experiences with her own. Lai Fun believes that she shares a bond with Lloyd because they are

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[176] Both the public and private articulations of racism and homophobia operate through social interpellation, where Lai Fun, Jennifer, and Louve are hailed and categorized according to visual signifiers (skin colour, sexuality).

[177] Mayr indeed seems preoccupied with the tendency to reduce homosexuality to a private behaviour. In her fourth novel *Monoceros*, two middle-aged partners keep their homosexuality secret. One of the two partners even complains that "public displays of affection [give] everyone a bad name" (120), a statement which ultimately blames the visibility of homosexuals for homophobia.

[178] While calling Louve homophobic might seem a bit strong, her reflections on the nature and causes of homosexuality demonstrate the extent to which she wishes it did not exist. Louve knows better than to share these thoughts with her daughters, but the readers have access to them. It is therefore up to them to determine whether or not they believe Louve is homophobic.

both, in her view, homosexual. Lloyd does not reciprocate her enthusiastic declarations that they are “twins” (131) and “secret best friends” (50). He appears merely thankful that she will not reveal his same-sex desires to others (123). Further, readers know that their experiences cannot be equated, as Lai Fun’s unpopularity makes her the target of homophobic and racist bullying (97; 192-193), while no one dares do the same to Lloyd.[179] Lai Fun also presupposes that Angélique will support her because they are both lesbians. When the latter dismisses her concerns regarding the importance of having children in wedlock, Lai Fun is disappointed: “Lai Fun doesn’t think Angélique’s that funny. It’s not so unreasonable not to want your child to be a bastard. Angélique is a lesbian. She thinks Angélique of all people should understand” (19). The problem with Lai Fun’s train of thought is that she assumes that lesbians automatically share the same values. Mayr thus sets up *Venous Hum* within a conservative framework, one which prevents the characters from moving beyond the rigid categorizations that mark their hegemonic vision of Canada, race, and sexuality.

2.4 Destabilizing the Conservative Framework

However, the conservative framework within which the novel operates is systematically undermined through Mayr’s resistance towards categorization (“Vampires” 332; “CL” 59). *Venous Hum* is set in the suburbs, a space which is associated with conservative politics, homogeneity, whiteness, and class privilege (Jones-Correa 183; Donaldson 148). Historically, it was a space marked by segregation (Goldberg, *RC* 188), but the increased diversification of the suburbs has altered the relation between space and identity. While the belief that suburban spaces are homogenously conservative was always a myth

[179] However, when Lai Fun surprises Lloyd kissing a boy, she defuses his anger by resorting to homophobic name-calling: “You’re the lez, Lez Weaselhead. It’s so obvious. And I really don’t care. So what if I like girls? So what?” (122). Her reaction further emphasizes the limits of intersectionality, since she too mobilizes homophobic language.

(Donaldson 148), increased immigration does not necessarily make the suburbs more "city-like" (Jones-Correa 185). Suburbs in general are not rigid spaces, and while space certainly has an impact on the plot of *Venous Hum*, the novel is not set within a stable setting. Indeed, Louve and Fritz-Peter's desire for "boring suburban lives" (Mayr, *VH* 179), coupled with the description of the "identical lawns, identical picture windows" (145-146) that surround Lai Fun's house, merely disguise the heterogeneous lives enacted within this homogenized space. The chorus "This is the way of the suburbs" (133; 137; 139; 142; 148) follows diverse experiences that undermine the possibility of categorizing the characters.[180] "The way of the suburbs" describes the newly unemployed lawyer Angélique, now living in Lai Fun's basement and acting as her sister's underpaid nanny. It describes Stefanja's failing marriage to Thor, and Lai Fun's affair with her best friend's husband. The chorus also applies to Thor's growing interest in Lai Fun's mother. In other words, the seemingly contained, homogenized, and conservative space does not prescribe that the characters will lead "boring, suburban lives" (179). Rather *Venous Hum* destabilizes this impression through the clash between the setting of her novel and her characters' actions, so that the novel ultimately concludes that "this is the way of the city" (229).

Similarly, sexuality and relationships unfold according to patriarchal and heteronormative standards, but *Venous Hum* criticizes such formations. Several moments in the novel point towards Lai Fun's continued struggle over her sexual identity, as she is only able to articulate her behaviour through the categories of homosexuality and

[180] For Mayr, the suburbs "have incredible fictional potential … because they're a homogeneous environment built for people who don't necessarily conform" (qtd in Andrew, "Fang" 37).

heterosexuality.[181] Lai Fun identifies as "gay" (Mayr, *VH* 49), yet is disgusted by the fact that she is "screwing her next-door neighbour Thor, a fucking *boy*" (49). Lai Fun's discomfort is understandable: she is, after all, cheating on her wife and feels guilty. However, her assertion that her infidelity does not "count" because it is with a man (48), coupled with her description of sex with Thor as being "masturbation" (163), overemphasizes her need for justification. Considering her high school years, it may be that Lai Fun is bisexual,[182] but unable to come to terms with this sexual identity. The fact that she calls Lloyd a "traitor" (84) because he married a woman points to Lai Fun's inability to acknowledge that Lloyd might be bisexual rather than a closeted homosexual. As Beverley notes, Lai Fun perceives Lloyd within a "homo/hetero binary" (265) that might be too rigid for Lloyd's sexual identity. Even Lai Fun has trouble articulating her own sexual identity:

> she wasn't gay then. Although she was always gay – gay from the second she was born – she just got swept away in the other girls' hysteria … Yes she was utterly gay then, but it was too difficult in school. And how could she realize when everyone *told* her she was supposed to want boys' cocks in her mouth and between her legs? (49).

The temporal disjunction between being gay now, but not then, yet always being gay, points to Lai Fun's troubled relationship with the past, with the possibility that she may have been attracted to men. She thus looks for excuses, as she firstly blames the other girls' hysteria and then social expectations for her heterosexual desires. The text does not resolve Lai Fun's

[181] Mayr herself does not like those categories, since she disagrees with the tendency to define heterosexuality "by the fact that it's not homosexual" (*Why* 173). She therefore argues that her novels undermine and questions this conception of sexuality (173).

[182] While the text neither confirms nor denies my conclusion, Mayr has written that she explores the "bisexual experience" in *Venous Hum* ("Vampires" 337).

discomfort, but merely suggests that Lai Fun's sexuality is more complex than she would like to believe.

Mayr also challenges categories of racial identification and pheneticization through the character of Lai Fun. Wayde Compton has defined pheneticization as the desire to identify other people's ethnic identity based on their physical appearance (24). He distinguishes pheneticization from "passing" through the active/passive role of the one deemed "other:" individuals pass when they wilfully deceive, but are pheneticized when it is an outside force that defines them as "ethnic" (22; 24). Lai Fun herself cannot be fixed. Her neighbours see her as "half black, half white" (Mayr, *VH* 90), a statement which points to the difficulty of assigning a single identity to "mixed" children.[183] However, Mrs. Blake attempts to solidify Lai Fun's identity as "black" (90). The scene where she forces Lai Fun to draw herself with a black crayon (99) betrays this intent because she subsequently turns to Lai Fun's classmates: "See class? Isn't black a better colour for Lou Anne?" (99). By appealing to the "common sense" logic of the rest of the class, Mrs. Blake pheneticizes Lai Fun and encourages others to perceive Lai Fun as "black" and not as "half black, half white." But Mrs. Blake does not succeed, since Lai Fun identifies as "brown" (115) during her teenage years, only to simply identify as "tall, gorgeous, and gay" (48) as an adult. Katie Petersen has argued that Mayr's earlier works, *Zebra Talk*, *Moon Honey*, and *The Widows*, challenge categorization by allowing subjects to be "multiple and contradictory" (¶2). When examined from this perspective, Lai Fun certainly challenges rigid categorizations, since even her homosexuality is not as rigid as she argues. The conservative framework which marks *Venous Hum* is then

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[183] I place "mixed" within quotation marks because using this expressions assumes that races exist. However, the adjective "mixed" is required to describe the uneasiness the novel explores, since, as Mayr argues, "the language and metaphor-bank are extremely limited in describing biracial experiences" ("Vampires" 333).

challenged throughout the novel, as the setting, plot, and characterization support yet undermine the rigid categorizations they generate. It is this instability which makes *Venous Hum* such an effective critique of Trudeau's Canada. Mayr's novel embeds the characters within conservative patterns that challenge those who interpret Trudeau's policies as threatening, and yet undermines interpretations of the text that would rigidly categorize the characters and the plot.

3.1 Resisting Categorization: Contamination as a Literary Strategy

The importance Mayr accords to style, structure, and form also contributes to *Venous Hum*'s challenge of its conservative framework and rigid attempts at categorization. In a review of the novel, Mridula Chakraborty argues that the novel's satiric intent is ruined by its "unexpected, and completely unnecessary, horror pin" (36). However, the vampires, cannibals, and ghosts/zombies the novel deploys are neither unnecessary nor unexpected.[184] They rather metaphorically articulate the biracial and bisexual experience (Mayr, "Vampires" 336-337), because they operate as humorous literary strategies of contamination which undermine and ironize the novel's rigid context, literature, as well as *Venous Hum* itself. Mayr has mentioned in interviews that she favours genre blurring (*Why* 165), magic realism (169), and rejects linearity (165; "Exploring" 449). Such literary strategies prevent her novels from being easily categorized, which is why both Mayr and Braz criticize George Elliott Clarke's "Canadian Biraciality and its Zebra Poetics" (Mayr, "Exploring" 446; "Vampires" 333; Braz, "Outer" 129). In this chapter, Clarke offers a reading of Mayr's *Zebra Talk* and *Moon Honey* in order

[184] While the novel's ending might seem unexpected on a first read, it is impossible to view the emergence of monsters as unexpected upon a second reading. The epigraph "Florence Nightingale was a cannibal, you know" (Mayr, *VH* 8) foreshadows Louve's cannibalistic tendencies, since she is a nurse. The text also references Louve's lust for good veins (60; 177), ghosts in the hospital (56), Mrs. Blake's vampiric tendencies (101; 103), and shows a six-year-old Lai Fun eating a human finger (94). There is enough foreshadowing in the text to assume that Mayr sets up the ending with care.

to define the aesthetics of biracial Canadian writers. However, he omits Mayr's *The Widows* because he argues, mistakenly, that this novel does not contain any black characters (294). While Mayr praises Clarke for drawing attention to works by biracial writers ("Vampires" 333), she also fears his chapter will result in their homogenization (333) through the creation of this category of writing.[185] My reading of *Venous Hum* will then entail a refusal to homogenize the text within a neat category. At a very basic level, Mayr's use of magic realism prevents such homogenizing attempts, as it effectively dismantles divisions (Peterson ¶13).[186] Further, as the metaphors of the text have no fixed referent, they create internal contradictions which contaminate the novel and destabilize all attempts to impose a single hegemonic meaning.

Contamination is not a new literary strategy in Canadian literature. Historically, contamination describes early colonial anxieties towards children of "mixed" unions whose existence threatened to contaminate both the race and its culture (R. Young, *CD* 54; Brah and Coombes 1; Stoler, *Race* 24; L. Young 157).[187] This biological interpretation of the hybrid as a form of contamination or pollution has led to the literary representations of "mixed" offspring as suspicious, threatening, or tragic. In a Native American context, Elizabeth Cook-Lynn deems "mixed-bloods" threatening to "real" Native American communities (69-71), while Ann Stoler mentions that Dutch colonial authorities interpreted creole and mestizo populations as potential threats to the metropolis and its values (*Race* 43). Similarly, George Elliott Clarke

[185] Mayr is also resentful that Clarke's "Zebra Poetics" do not include her whole oeuvre, since he excludes *The Widows* even though both Cleopatra Maria and her mother are "mixed race" characters.

[186] Peterson makes this argument in reference to Mayr's *Moon Honey*, in which a white woman is transformed into a black woman. For Peterson, "transformation is contrary to categorization" (¶13). While *Venous Hum* does not deploy the concept of transformation to the same degree as *Moon Honey*, the characters' hybrid belongings serve a similar function.

[187] While the threat posed by "mixed" children to the colonizer's culture is not often mentioned, Robert Young argues that since culture was "racially constructed," then any threat to the allegedly pure racial stock also constituted a cultural threat (*CD* 54).

notes that "the catalogue of treacherous Creoles … in New World African literature – is so long as to be almost convincing" (213). Another literary convention was that of the "tragic mulatto," whose presence betrays a discomfort towards people of "mixed heritage" because their ability to transcend categorization entailed they could not belong to the white or black communities (212). Thus, these characters were often eliminated or evacuated from the text because they could not be fixed; they were inevitably "doomed" by their blackness (Mayr, "Vampires" 332). It is thus the concern over purity that has generated the notion of contamination, a biological anxiety betrayed in the literary representation of "mixed" characters. It is a tradition against which Mayr writes, and which she contests in her first three novels.

Contamination has however been resignified positively in Canadian literature. Following an accusation that her poetic use of French in her English poems was "contaminating our Canadian literary scene" (Tostevin 13), Lola Lemire Tostevin reconfigured the insult into an empowering literary strategy. For her, contamination entails that "differences have been brought together so they make contact" (13) in ways that prevent the solidification of an illusionary sense of authenticity. Diana Brydon draws on Tostevin's argument in "The White Inuit Speaks" in order to emphasize what Canadians might share with colonized groups ("White" 97). Her article came out of a desire to challenge Hutcheon's assertion that there has been no creolization in Canada and that only First Nations writers speak from a "true" postcolonial perspective ("Circling" 76; 78). Brydon is right to point to Tostevin and the Métis as examples of creolization (98), but her argument that Hutcheon's article constitutes a "cult of authenticity" (98) from which First Nations have nothing to gain (99) is misguided. For Brydon, white writers who incorporate indigenous spirituality in their

works are producing a creole text (99). However, as I argued in chapter two, the imbalances of power between indigenous peoples and the dominant culture are such that these texts contribute to oppression instead of instigating dialogue. Brydon's idea of contamination as a literary strategy is then more useful if it is interpreted as a technique through which contact within a text reveals prejudices or subverts hegemonic visions. Contamination then becomes a form of contact that refuses to homogenize and which, as Gunew argues, lifts the subject above nationalist discourses and signals the instabilities of hybridity ("Serial"7). Contamination as a literary strategy must then be self-critical, and should not be perceived as a tool through which *others* can be understood.

In the context of *Venous Hum*, contamination allows Mayr to argue that "monsters are alive and well in Alberta" ("Vampires" 331), and that a regional space can also be monstrous (331). For Mayr, monsters are entities that cannot be bound by categories. However, the specific monsters she represents in *Venous Hum*, vampires, cannibals, griffins, as well as ghosts/zombies, also evoke specific colonial and literary histories that make them particularly efficient metaphors. Hybridity is the main constitutive value shared by these monsters, which are situated between the living and the dead, the human and the animal. While Mayr had focused on the zebra in her previous writing as a metaphor for hybridity (333; *Why* 174), the monsters of *Venous Hum* allow her to explore biraciality and hybridity in new ways. For instance, the griffins which recur throughout the novel (*VH* 14; 23; 36; 50; 167; 214; 225; 227) and occasionally lend their hybrid quality to Lai Fun (36) and Mrs. Blake (225), are monsters "in the medieval sense" (Mayr, "Vampires" 337; Cohen 96), since their hybrid parts cannot be separated, nor do they result in feelings of ambivalence. Instead, they are composed "by means of the nontotalizable 'and … and … and'" (Cohen 96). This form of hybridity generates

a composite whose varied parts constitute the whole, suggesting togetherness rather than ambivalence, without being caught within "both/and" or "either/or" binaries. A griffin without its wings is no longer a griffin, but a lion. The griffin statues which are constantly watching Lai Fun and haunt her imagination thereby function as a foil for Lai Fun, since their form of hybridity is contrasted to Lai Fun's inability to combine her different identities (as biracial, lesbian, bisexual). They contaminate the text through their unwanted presence at the key moments of the text: at Lai Fun's wedding (23), her parents' dinner party, and at the reunion (214). They constantly remind readers of what Lai Fun should be, yet, they do not homogenize her experiences: Mrs. Blake also acquires griffin qualities after she decides that "she should dance more" (225). As a metaphor, the griffins remind readers and characters through their contaminating presence that there are alternatives to Lai Fun and Mrs. Blake's desires for normalcy and rigid categorizations.

Literary contamination is at its most effective in Mayr's use of vampires and cannibals, whose colonial and literary histories have a specific relevance to *Venous Hum*. For instance, Bram Stoker's *Dracula*, has been examined as betraying anti-Semitic and homophobic sentiments (Halberstam 337; Craft 111; Case 9).[188] The female vampires in *Dracula* have also been interpreted as deviant through their ability to penetrate the male (Craft 117). These readings point to the threatening and contaminating role of vampires, whose blood-sucking challenges norms and results in undesirable mixings. Yet, Craft reads Dracula as "a border being who abrogates demarcations" (117), and while this skill is clearly a threat in the novel, it is one which Mayr probably values. Halberstam also insists that gothic fiction does not merely

[188] Halberstam makes her argument through Stoker's anti-Semitic connections as well as through the widespread belief in the "blood libel" at that time. Craft reads *Dracula* as betraying, while also displacing, homoerotic desires. For Sue Ellen Case, the vampire stands for the queer body and lesbian reproduction, as the outlawed body.

demonize the other, but simultaneously reveals "the mechanisms of monster production" through its generic instability (349). The presence of monsters does not generate a stable category of monstrous otherness, but rather demonstrates the extent to which monsters are created with a certain function in mind. The cannibal constitutes a great example of this monster production, as current debates in anthropology dispute the idea that cannibalism was ever practiced (Arens 41-45; Hulme 7).[189] Instead, studies on cannibalism now look at the accusation as an attempt to differentiate civilized Europe from other, "uncivilized" peoples (Hulme 7; Root xiii; Kilgour "Function" 239). During colonial times, cannibalism allowed colonizers to project their desire for appropriation onto the colonized (Kilgour, *Communion* 5). For that reason, instances of appropriation of the other are often examined through references to cannibalism and consumption, such as in bell hooks' "Eating the Other." Like the vampire, the cannibal blurs the distinction between the eater and the eaten through incorporation ("Function" 240), but Diana Fuss warns that the two practices should not be conflated. According to her, both monsters incorporate alterity, but the vampire reproduces itself through this act of assimilation, since vampirism is "both other and self-producing" (730). In other words, vampirism is an act of contamination, since what makes Dracula terrifying is that "we" will become like "him" (Turcotte 77). Examining the vampires and cannibals in *Venous Hum* then requires paying attention not only to what they eat and why, but also to what is produced during the act of incorporation.

Vampirism enters *Venous Hum* both literally and metaphorically. At the literal level, Mrs. Blake feeds on her "ethnic" students in order to affect their learning (Mayr, *VH* 103). As

[189] While Arens' position has been strongly criticized, as he documents in his article "Anthropophagy Revisited," his argument is particularly relevant to my own inasmuch as Arens does not set out to prove or disprove the existence of cannibalism as a social practice. Rather, he is interested in the position it holds in the Western imagination, where it has been transformed into an absolute sign of "otherness" (42).

Beverley mentions, she is metaphorically monstrous in the way in which she treats the children, which is why her being *literally* a monster constitutes "just a further extension of the real" (Beverley 274; Mayr, *Why* 168). Her vampirism vacillates between two different types of metaphorical consumption. Mrs. Blake indeed rations her appetite for the "Orange Group," which is composed of the ethnic children she classifies as "stupid," because "it's rare to find exotic out here on the edge of the prairies" (*VH* 103). Her pleasure is here described in terms which denote the metaphorical consumption of the other, and the desire to appropriate their otherness (hooks 21) in order to "spice up" her hegemonic English-Canadian identity. Mrs. Blake enacts this tendency in her decision to stage the controversial musical *The Mikado*,[190] as her management of the play proves that she is unaware of its satirical intent (Beverley 253). Mayr satirizes Mrs. Blake's play when a student of Japanese heritage mocks the students who participate: "Whenever Kim shows up, they do imitations. … and Kim has the prettiest voice of all imitating Hadley imitating an Englishwoman imitating a Japanese woman imitating an Englishwoman" (Mayr, *VH* 121). Through this multi-layered imitation, Mayr signals the appropriative tradition of the play that Mrs. Blake is recreating. However, when Louve, the other vampire, confronts Mrs. Blake and accuses her of "feeding on children" (219), Mrs. Blake affiliates herself with a different form of vampirism, that which aims to reproduce itself in the other: "I am just doing my job, says Mrs. Blake. Assimilating them" (219). This interpretation of vampirism as assimilation is meant to allow the other to return as the same, but Mrs. Blake's behaviour throughout the text never permits any of the children to assimilate. Instead, she continues to view the children of immigrants as "invaders," "creeps," "bums," "monsters," and "freaks" (219). That is, as contaminating presences. In other words, Mrs.

[190] Andrea Beverley tracks down the controversial and satirical aspects of the play in her dissertation (253-254)

Blake prevents her acts of vampirism and cannibalism from becoming synonymous with incorporation and assimilation, and thus prevents readers from firmly identifying her metaphorical referent.

While Mrs. Blake's fear of contamination precludes her from assimilating the children on whom she feeds, Louve's desire to assimilate Canadianness contaminates *her*. Louve attacks Lai Fun's lover Thor, who has become enamoured with Louve. Thor's interest in Louve stems from his belief that she has mafia connections, and borders on harassment once he reads her novel and realizes the depth of her knowledge and experience (Mayr, *VH* 171). It is this insistence that motivates Louve's attack. However, once she finishes drinking Thor's blood, Louve feels unwell because "she sucked back three bottles of wine, ten sucks at the asthma inhaler, and two breakfast marijuana joints with all that blood" (180). While Louve's nausea testifies to Thor's questionable lifestyle choices, it also points, metaphorically, to what Louve has absorbed through her act of incorporation. Thor stands for a certain type of Canadianness: he is named for the Viking god of Thunder, a figure appropriated, via Wagner's operas, by fascists in their myths of white supremacy. Thor is also a misogynist, as his anti-abortion stance (29) and his description of Louve as a "housewife" who does not have the right to produce literature (171) betrays. In contrast, he is described as an unoriginal and clichéd writer (157; 160-161). Once she feeds on him, it is all of this negativity that Louve absorbs, her act of vampirism demonstrating the toxicity of Thor's Canadianness.

While this scene acts as a pharmakon, where the blood that should feed Louve poisons her (Derrida, *dissémination* 113), it also points to the similarities between Louve's vision of Canada and that embodied by Thor and Mrs. Blake. If their Canada is poisonous, then so is Louve's, especially as she argues it from a hegemonic perspective. Indeed, the subsequent

cannibalization of Thor's body is juxtaposed with a celebration of Canada, more specifically, of Trudeau's Canada. While she is cooking with Fritz-Peter, Louve refers to Canada as "the land of liberation" (Mayr, *VH* 186). Feasting on Thor's body allows Louve to celebrate and assert her own Canadianness, as though the feast marked the defeat of those who, like Thor, would question her Canadian identity on the basis of her skin colour (176). Beyond its overtones of revenge,[191] the cannibalistic feast presents an unflattering portrait of "immigrants" feeding on the body of the dominant Canadian, to legitimate their presence in the country. Those negative connotations however prevent *Venous Hum* from becoming a hegemonic text, since that scene does actualize the fear that immigration erodes the dominant Canadian identity.

Yet, it is not merely Thor's blood which makes Louve sick, but the feast itself. The blood "gives her gas" (Mayr, *VH* 178), and she anticipates that the meat "will give her horrible runs and heartburn for days" (179). The novel repeatedly insists on the excess of the feast, which lies in the amount of food that will be consumed (185-186), accompanied by recipes for deep-fried fingers and brain fritters (187-188). This excess echoes Louve and Fritz-Peter's enthusiastic response to Trudeau's Canada. The novel creates links between the cannibalistic feast on Thor's body and the version of Canada Louve and Fritz-Peter desire, the toxicity of both elements being insufficient to deter them or undermine their enthusiasm. However, the feast constitutes an empowering moment for Lai Fun. As a child, and a "child of all Canada" (93), Lai Fun had been coerced into embodying her parents' vision. As an adult, she is also coerced into attending the dinner party, after her mother asserts that she must because "Lai

[191] There is indeed a tradition of cannibalistic feasts as acts of revenge, notably in Greek mythology and in Shakespeare's *Titus Andronicus*. Considering that Mayr is in dialogue with various canonical texts, the cannibalistic feats can certainly be read as an act of revenge.

Fun, it's your Heritage" (200). While this comment appears to be about Lai Fun's diasporic heritage, the lack of references to any non-Canadian heritage proves that Louve is speaking about her idealized version of Canada.[192] Lai Fun does attend the dinner, but she refuses to eat. Louve speculates that Lai Fun "will know Thor by the yellowy taste of nicotine under the shrimp-shell fingernails, the aftertaste in the soup, and will be furious with her mother" (200). At the dinner however, Lai Fun only makes "a token nibble at a black-bean finger" (228). Lai Fun is aware that Thor is being consumed, but her refusal to eat has everything to do with her dedication to veganism, to her belief that "tofu is a little bit like heaven" (228). The characters' relationship to veganism complicates the feast further, since Louve and Fritz-Peter had abandoned cannibalism upon settling in Alberta in order to "put down roots deep into the earth and live normal, boring suburban lives" (179). If their decision to feast upon Thor's body reconnects them with Trudeau's Canada, then it also severs them from their regional identity. In contrast, Lai Fun rejects her parents' nationalism in favour of regionalism – the latter being her chosen affiliation.

The fact that *Venous Hum* makes both Mrs. Blake and Louve, two seemingly different characters, vampires, indicates that the two women might be more similar than they appear. While Beverley suggests that Lai Fun's family and Mrs. Blake "are monstrous for very different reasons" (275), I would argue that their literal differences cease to matter in their metaphorical meaning. After all, both women are self-referentially identified as a "metaphor" (Mayr, *VH* 101; 178), and the use of the word in its singular form indicates that they must share some metaphorical function. Louve attacks Thor in self-defense when he comes to her

[192] The CRTC famously attempted to construct a common sense of identity throughout the 90s through a series of segments called "Canada's Heritage Minutes" broadcasted in both English and French. These segments always ended with the line "part of our Heritage." It is this line that Louve echoes when she urges Lai Fun to attend the dinner party (http://www.histori.ca/minutes/default.do?page=.index).

apartment, undresses while she is out of the room, and intends to steal her ideas for a screenplay (175-176).[193] Despite Louve's request that he "put [his] trousers on" (175), Thor remains half-naked in her apartment until she bites off one of his fingers and starts sucking his blood (177). Beverley reads Louve's action as vengeful (277) because Thor had dared to ask "where do you really come from, Louve?" (176).[194] However, Thor's predatory attitude before Louve attacks, coupled with Louve's inability "to resist a perfect vein" (177), casts her reaction as an act of self-defense enacted through her instinctual lust for blood. Similarly, Mrs. Blake does not construct herself as predatory, but as protecting dominant interests. Through her assertion that she is "just doing [her] job," Mrs. Blake trivializes her actions as being simply part of the system, as though she could not be held responsible for what she does. Mrs. Blake denies all accountability further once she projects her monstrousness on Louve: "Who gets to feed on whom! Taking jobs away from people who deserve them and were here first. You're an invader. You're not only a creep and a bum, you're a monster and a freak" (219). Through this projection, Mrs. Blake constructs her acts of vampirism as self-defense against the "monsters" who are invading her country and stealing jobs. What both women have in common is their denial that their predatory instincts are their sole motivation for their acts of vampirism.

Both Louve and Mrs. Blake also deceive others into thinking that they are, or could be, benign. As Beverley notes, Mrs. Blake's appearance clashes with her racist behaviour (Beverley 274-275); she is portrayed as "that creamsicle of a woman with her blonde, perfect

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[193] This scene interestingly reverses the traditional act of vampirism, as the victim is here the one who desires the vampire. Thor "behaves brazenly and sexily" (175), while Louve feels that she "might regurgitate her soy and oatmeal" (175).

[194] This question is cited in most critics of multiculturalism as being both racist, because it assumes that non-whites cannot be Canadian, and irritating. Lawrence Hill even devotes an entire chapter to it in *Black Berry, Sweet Juice*.

page-boy" (Mayr, *VH* 98), a description which stresses her innocuous appearance. According to her, this dissonance indicates that Mrs. Blake "incarnates a metaphor for racism and discrimination that are both camouflaged and palpable" (275). Her name echoes William Blake, a poet associated more with struggles for social justice, as with his two poems on "The Chimney Sweeper," than with institutional racism. The name seems redeeming, since Mayr could have called Mrs. Blake "Mrs. Kipling" or "Mrs. Conrad" had she wished to overemphasize her racism. By calling her Mrs. Blake, Mayr rather makes a subtle connection between her character's tendency to make strict separations between her white and black students, and William Blake's poetry of sharp contrasts which constantly come together as one.[195] What distinguishes Mrs. Blake from Blake's poetry however, is her unwillingness to let the dualities merge. Similarly, Louve's name is strongly suggestive of her predatory instincts, yet her appearance as "a housewife wearing *tube socks*" (Mayr, *VH* 178) seems to be what bothers Thor the most as she sucks his blood. This juxtaposition between the monstrous and the benign, the homely which suddenly becomes unhomely, is also attributed to a man who simultaneously resembles Dracula and Trudeau: "the old man turns the corner … and his cape whips around like he is some kind of Dracula, like he is some kind of Pierre Elliott Trudeau" (76). As metaphors, Louve and Mrs. Blake function similarly, since, like Trudeau's policies, they both evoke a threat cloaked in a seemingly benign appearance. In other words, neither woman can be cast as a villain.[196] Instead, they both evoke the dangers that lie in hegemonic worldviews.

[195] For example, "the Tyger" opens with "Tyger! Tyger! Burning *bright*,/ in the forest of the *night*" (ll.1-2 my emphasis), where the brightness is dependent on the darkness of the night. In "The Marriage of Heaven and Hell," Blake deploys good and evil but reverses their value (Abrams et al, 72), as the poem ultimately argues that "without contraries there is no progression" (73) and that "Opposition is true friendship" (81).
[196] Mayr mentions that she does not believe in villains: "different characters have different motivations for what they do, even when what they do seems malicious or evil" (*Why* 166).

4.1 "Menace in Resemblance": Intertextuality, Debate, and Playful Contamination[197]

Cannibalism becomes more than a metaphor in *Venous Hum*; it becomes the text itself as it cannibalizes previous works in order to mock literature and itself. The cannibalism enacted literally in the novel, along with its symbolic implications, illustrates the dangers of hegemonic visions, regardless of their seemingly positive or idealized intentions. Along with the griffins, the cannibals warn and demonstrate[198] that the rigid categorizations that frame the novel must be subverted. *Venous Hum* then needs to ironize itself, to prove that it is not attempting to establish itself as an all-encompassing critique of Canada. The novel does so by initially satirizing canonical texts and writers, such as Shakespeare, Bram Stoker, William Blake, and Samuel Beckett, as well as Canadian ones, like Margaret Atwood, Margaret Laurence, Aritha van Herk, Hiromi Goto, and Michael Ondaatje. In this section, I argue that Mayr's references to these texts constitute a new form of literary cannibalism rather than simple intertextuality, as Mayr's satirizing intent comments on the authoritative position some of these texts occupy, and engages in playful debate with them in order to challenge and contaminate their arguments.

Literary cannibalism resembles but is more extreme than intertextuality. As a form of postcolonial resistance, literary cannibalism comes from Brazilian writer Oswald de Andrade's "Manifesto Antropòfago" (1928). His argument was for a literature which would draw upon European models to then "indigenize" them, and subvert the civilized/savage binary which defined Brazilian literature at the time. This desire is made apparent in the line:

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[197] "Menace in resemblance" is a phrase coined by Felisa Vergara Reynolds to describe literary cannibalism (22). It is a play on Bhabha's theory of mimicry where the mimic is both "resemblance and menace" (Bhabha 123).

[198] The word monster comes from the Latin "monstrum," which is a combination of the word monere, that which warns, and demonstrare, that which reveals (Cohen 86; Mayr, "Vampires" 337). For Mayr, this etymological definition allows her to reveal racist discourses and to warn of their dangers, as well as of their potential collapse (337).

"Tupi or nor not tupi, that is the question" (38), as this passage cannibalizes Shakespeare's *Hamlet* by replacing "to be" with "tupi," "the generic name for the Native Americans of Brazil" (44). Reynolds defines acts of literary cannibalism as being motivated, like Andrade's manifesto, by feelings of revolt and resistance (20) camouflaged through apparent flattery (214). She initially differentiates literary cannibalism from colonial mimicry, as the latter literary strategy is simultaneously resemblance and menace, while literary cannibalism constitutes menace in resemblance (22). Like literary cannibalism, Bhabha's colonial mimicry destabilizes the colonizers in their exercise of power (Bhabha 130), but mimicry firstly requires the alienation of the colonized in order to become "menace" (123).[199] Reynolds distinguishes literary cannibalism from intertextuality because the latter pays tribute to the original text, while the former is an "engaged endeavour" (220) which allows the colonized to find their voice (219).[200] This focus on the relationship between the colonizer and the colonized entails that Reynolds does not examine the cannibalization of texts that do not share such a relationship. While literary cannibalism is definitely grounded in a context of resistance, it should also be extended to include texts which engage with and comment on the omissions or problematic contexts of the cannibalized works. A novel such as *Venous Hum* cannibalizes other texts in a playful manner, as canonical authors can be mocked because of the very authoritative position they occupy. Mayr also deploys literary cannibalism to engage in debate with other writers, challenge or subvert their position, or extend their arguments to new levels.

[199] Colonial mimicry also *depends* on the colonizers' perception in order to function as menace, as its threatening features do not seem to rely on any destabilizing intentions on the part of the colonized beforehand. In contrast, literary cannibalism is about the agency of the colonized, who want to subvert their relationship of dependence with the colonizers.

[200] In other words, literary cannibalism is a form of intertextuality, but not all intertextuality constitutes literary cannibalism.

The texts which Mayr cannibalizes do not all belong to outright colonizing cultures, nor does she choose to cannibalize a single text. Rather, Mayr levels the playing field between Canadian and "canonical" texts[201] and writers by making them all ripe for appropriation, rectification, and subversion. As explored earlier, Mayr's choice to name the racist teacher Mrs. Blake draws attention to the similarities between the clash of light and dark in William Blake's poetry and racist discourses. Likewise, Louve's friend Dr. Stoker, who is, like her, an elderly chain smoker and cannibal, is a straightforward reference to Bram Stoker, author of *Dracula*. In these two instances, *Venous Hum*'s references to these writers, and the negative connotations she attributes to them through these characters, contaminate the manner in which they are generally represented in the British literary canon. Beyond Stoker's anti-Semitic, homophobic, and misogynist views, Mayr dislikes the vampire myth as it has been constructed by and through Stoker: "What pisses me off about the vampire myth, though, is that all the major vampires seem to be tortured, rich, white, young-ish men – there is nothing tragic or horrific about being rich, white, and male" (qtd in Dudek 170). Mayr's references to Blake and Stoker in *Venous Hum* are then grounded in a form of resistance manifested in playful debate, where she challenges their writings and invites readers to reconsider their previous interpretations of these two figures.

Mayr's references to Shakespeare and Beckett function differently, as she playfully satirizes these writers' canonical position and the manner in which people deploy their knowledge of English literature. Both writers are mentioned in discussions between Thor and Louve, where Thor is the one that quotes, while Louve is the one that provides the (silent)

[201] My differentiation between Canadian and canonical texts should not be interpreted as a denial of the Canadian canon, or as an argument for a single, uncontested canon of English literatures. Rather, I use "canon" to comment on the overwhelming prevalence of writers such as Shakespeare, as opposed to the lesser known Canadian writers who are only "world famous" in Canada.

critical commentary on Thor's choice of quotations. Thor quotes from *Hamlet* ("that is the question, says Thor. To be or not to be. Ha ha ha" [Mayr, *VH* 157]), but fails to impress Louve. Instead, she thinks "everyone who tries to be smart drags out poor, exhausted William Shakespeare. Shakespeare would have been embarrassed. Imagine. Working so hard and ending up a dead cliché" (157). This reference to "poor, exhausted" Shakespeare does not constitute literary cannibalism as Reynolds elaborated, since Mayr is not re-writing one of his plays in order to shed light on contentious content. In this passage, Shakespeare becomes an object of pity, as his canonical status means that he is now an exhausted, dead cliché. Louve's negative reaction turns Shakespeare into a catachresis, an abused metaphor who can be quoted by a less than intelligent character. Later on, as Thor stands in his underwear in Louve's apartment, "he asks her to please call his penis Samuel Beckett" (Mayr, *VH* 175), which is why Louve decides that she has had enough: "now he is dragging out poor Beckett when Beckett of all people deserves some peace" (175). Louve's reflections not only transform two authoritative canonical figures into objects of pity. These two passages also comment on the use people make of the canon, whose works have become overly cannibalized. Louve's anger when faced with Thor's cannibalization of Shakespeare and Beckett then comments ironically on her own literal act of cannibalism. In that way, *Venous Hum* playfully engages with canon debates, as Thor's use of literary references demonstrates the extent to which the canon has transformed authoritative and respected writers into clichés.

As a cannibal text, *Venous Hum* also operates within a Canadian feminist tradition, yet, one which the novel contests and supplements. Intertextuality in Canadian feminist texts is nothing new, since it has been used to challenge the concepts of textual originality and authority (Hutcheon, "Shape" 225). Hutcheon also aligns this strategy with postmodernism

because extensive intertextuality can become parody when it implies "difference at the very heart of similarity" (226). Mayr's intertextual use of other feminist texts certainly operates within this tradition, when, for instance, her novel re-enacts a moment from Goto's *Chorus of Mushrooms*: Kim recalls that her mother "wanted Kim to dye her hair blonde to play Alice in elementary" (Mayr, *VH* 117).[202] But *Venous Hum* is not merely intertextual, since it does not leave all referenced works "as is" within this new context. Rather, Mayr references Atwood's *The Edible Woman*, van Herk's *Restlessness*, and Goto's *Chorus of Mushrooms* in order to engage with their arguments. The epigraph from Atwood's *The Edible Woman* which opens *Venous Hum*, "Florence Nightingale was a cannibal, you know" (9), initially functions as foreshadow, since Louve, who used to be a nurse, is a cannibal. In Atwood's novel, Duncan utters this sentence to Marian, as though her attentions would prove dangerous for him. Mayr reconfigures this danger, when Louve suggests that Nightingale "died of syphilis. A little too ardent in her care" (60), which implies that the relationship endangers the nurse rather than the patient. The warning that Nightingale was a cannibal goes beyond Atwood's exploration and critique of gender relations in Mayr's text: it comes to stand for the way in which good intentions, and seemingly benevolent visions, always contain (and conceal) a threatening component. Mayr also deviates from Atwood inasmuch as the former privileges literal cannibalism over Atwood's symbolic act of consumption. The novel contains a veiled reference to *The Edible Woman*'s woman-shaped cake when Lai Fun dreams that Thor is handing her a bowl of noodles (173). Throughout the text, Lai Fun's parents call her "noodle," a nickname which transforms her dream into an instance of symbolic cannibalism. However, this scene is a reversal of Atwood's text, as it is the man who presents Lai Fun with the food,

[202] In Goto's novel, the parents in charge of producing the play ask the protagonist's mother to dye her daughter's hair so she can play the title role in *Alice in Wonderland*, and she accepts despite her daughter's protest (177).

as though he was expecting her to consume herself, which *she does not*. Mayr then revisits Atwood's critique by subverting the gender relations the latter examined, in a move that goes beyond symbolic resistance to the patriarchy, but to its actual subversion.

Mayr's alignment with Atwood seems necessary in a Canadian context, as Atwood remains to this day the most well-known Canadian writer at both the national and international level.[203] But when *Venous Hum* recalls the work of van Herk and Goto, the novel goes further in its destabilization of discourses. Mayr criticizes *Chorus of Mushrooms* because Goto "undermines Naoe as an older character by first magically transforming Naoe into a young, nubile woman before" her one night stand ("Vampires" 226).[204] Mayr writes against this tendency to make older women asexual in her novel *The Widows*, and continues to do so in *Venous Hum*, not only through Louve and Fritz-Peter, but also through Thor's attraction to Louve despite her old age and appearance (*VH* 160). Mayr thus actively re-imagines Goto's fiction. Thor is also a reference to Laurence's *The Fire Dwellers*, where a former resident of Manawaka, now named Thor, transformed himself in order to become a successful businessman who pries into his employees' private lives. Mayr's Thor is a parody of this character, as *Venous Hum*'s Thor fails to reinvent himself, is financially unsuccessful, and literally takes drugs instead of being a drug supplier. Similarly, *Venous Hum* contradicts van Herk's *Restlessness*, a novel that links Calgary's anti-historical drive, enacted through its demolition projects, to the city's need for ghosts, specifically because it buries and destroys its history (van Herk, *Restlessness* 177; 159).

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[203] In fact, writing this dissertation has made me realize that it is nearly impossible to write on Canadian literature without referring to Margaret Atwood, Robert Kroetsch, Frank Davey, Barbara Godard, and Linda Hutcheon. Much as I wish to resist these canonical figures, they are, like Mrs. Blake, everywhere.

[204] However, it should be noted that Naoe is not asexual as an older woman (Goto, *CoM* 39). It is the transformation before the life changing adventure that Mayr criticizes, and it is the reason why the old women in *The Widows* remain old as they go over Niagara Falls.

Venous Hum also equates demolition with haunting in order to describe Lai Fun's depression: "Lai Fun is not a girl, she is a haunted house … she has a condemned building for a heart … it implodes like a worn-out hospital, like a used-up, sandstone school" (131). However, Mayr rethinks and modifies van Herk's arguments, as *Venous Hum* is full of ghosts. The city's demolition project for the school constitutes the impetus for the reunion. This obsession with ghosts and haunting has a particular resonance in Canadian literature, as current criticism often focuses on the gothic and haunting in varied contexts.[205] For Roy Miki, Earl Birney's declaration that "Canada lacks ghosts" (qtd in Miki, "Global" 154) can be interpreted as representing "the others born out of [the] nation's lack and who come to constitute its exclusionary boundaries" (154). In *Venous Hum*, the ghosts act as a "return of the repressed," though not in a frightening form. Rather, the dead who attend the reunion all seem to have suffered under Mrs. Blake's hand, which means that they return as those who have been repressed by the discourses of success and popularity. Their return allows them to prevent the once popular students to control the unfolding of the event (Mayr, *VH* 221), and provides the novel with its cathartic "reunion" moment where "football players hug computer nerds" (324). Through this cannibalization of van Herk, Mayr destabilizes the notion that history can be destroyed. Instead, it returns in the form of a haunting that has the simultaneous potential for subversion and coercion. Indeed, it is not only Mrs. Blake's victims who return from the dead, but Mrs. Blake herself, a resurrection which points to the difficulty of repressing any discourse, even one as negative as institutional racism.

4.2 Contaminating and Ironizing the Text as Cannibal

[205] See for instance Sneja Gunew's *Haunted Nations*, Cynthia Sugars and Gerry Turcotte's *Unsettled Remains*, and Justin Edwards's *Gothic Canada*.

Since *Venous Hum* cannibalizes other texts and writers to destabilize the hegemonic narratives they construct, the novel ultimately needs to ironize itself in order to prevent its own solidification into a master discourse. To that effect, *Venous Hum* continuously undermines its narrative structure, a strategy which prevents it from becoming a rigid discourse. Stylistically, the narrative's self-referentiality and matter of fact tone provides an ironic commentary on literary devices as well as on the coherence of the text. I have already noted how *Venous Hum* overemphasizes the fact that Louve and Mrs. Blake are metaphors (Mayr, *VH* 101; 178). But the text goes further after Louve has murdered Thor and announces what she plans to do with the body to her husband:

> Fritzy! Let's have a dinner party.
>
> You mean *keep* the body? *We're not like that anymore*.
>
> Fritz-Peter hates italics. He never speaks in italics except in extreme situations. (180)

By asserting Fritz-Peter's disdain for italics, the novel not only becomes self-referential through this reminder of the textual elements that make this text a text. It also mocks the very literary strategies required in order to construct a narrative, as though characters could hate the conventions that govern the creation of the narratives they inhabit.

Venous Hum also assumes that its plot and assumptions are obvious. The novel contains a few references towards what "all the kids know" (Mayr, *VH* 97; 103), a formulation which is echoed later when the narration states that "monsters are delicate eaters. Everyone knows this" (227). The reliance on this sort of "common sense" understanding turns the fantastical aspects of the novel into something ordinary, as though the novel was not magic realist but merely realist. When Lai Fun wants to have her dreams analyzed, the proposed

interpretations are narrated through the same stylistic device which makes the fantastical commonsensical:

> Shit. Shit means money. If you dream you're having a bowel movement and you produce a stool that means you're making money or you're going to make money. Blood in the stool? No explanation needed. (13)

Through this denial that some might need further explanation, the novel signals that what does not appear to make sense in the novel should simply be accepted as perfectly normal *for the characters*. The narrative voice also shows how the characters think, but simultaneously mocks their train of thought. When Lai Fun decides to go ahead with Stefanja's plan for the reunion, she explains her reasoning as motivated by a dream:

> last night, she dreamed she was sitting on the toilet and peeing and that obviously means she should go ahead with the reunion if she wants to sort out her marriage unhappiness and her deteriorating maternal skills, if she wants to save the antique building, keep her friendship with Stefanja, remember her place in the world as a good wife/mother/employee, of course that's what dreaming of peeing means. (65-66)

This passage ironizes Lai Fun's thoughts not merely because they betray her unrealistic expectations towards the cathartic power of the high school reunion, but also because she connects all of those ideas together and links them to a dream about urinating. The matter of fact tone and its appeals to common sense through the insistence inherent in the words "obviously" and "of course" point to the lack of coherence between the different elements the novel brings together: Lai Fun's marital troubles, the reunion, motherhood, and the demolition of buildings. Indeed, if Lai Fun's train of thought is disjointed here, then so is the novel's juxtaposition of all those elements in a single narrative.

Venous Hum also undermines its generic structure and the expectations that accompany it, which are respectively that of the "reunion" and the cathartic moment it must, ultimately, deliver. Despite the slight attention Lai Fun's high school reunion has received in this chapter, it is in fact the event which drives the plot.[206] The novel is framed by two letters to Ann Landers, both of which have high school reunions as their focus. The first one precedes the Atwood epigraph and the two Trudeau moments discussed at great length in this chapter, which demonstrates that it should take precedence over those other textual components. This letter argues that "people should attend their high school reunions. They can give you a real lift" (Mayr, *VH* 9), and the undersigned uses the fact that a former bully apologized to him at his reunion as proof. The very last letter is written by Louve, who complains that, ever since the cannibalistic feast, her old friends and colleagues "keep calling me wanting to get together for coffee, jogs in the park, séances, and on my nerves to rehash old times" (230). Louve's letter draws a contrast between herself and her friends, arguing that she has moved on while they "seem stuck in the past" (230). This notion that reunions can only be pleasurable or cathartic if one is "stuck in the past" is enacted and contradicted in the novel. It is enacted in the commemoration of *The Mikado* that some attendees want to stage (214), but contradicted when the crowd, instead of listening, "gets louder" (214). It is also contradicted because Lai Fun, who is the one "stuck in the past," cannot get her cathartic reunion moment. Indeed, Lai Fun complains that most attendees' memories are "holey as lace" (51), which is why no one seeks apologies or retribution. In contrast, Lai Fun decides to confront her former classmates, and thereby undermines the reunion genre through a cannibalized quotation: "the truth shall set you free" (204). While the quotation originally comes from the Bible (John 8:32), it also

[206] The original title of the novel was in fact *Reunion* (Mayr, "Exploring" 450), which demonstrates the degree to which Mayr views this moment as central to the whole novel.

evokes Michael Ondaatje's *Anil's Ghost* in that it is Anil's belief in this verse that motivates her forensic research into government wrongdoing in Sri Lanka, and which ultimately results in the murder of another character. It is this catastrophic context that signals the dangers and potential ineffectuality of Lai Fun's endeavour.

The confrontations which follow Lai Fun's decision that "the truth shall set you free" proceed to undermine the plausibility of a cathartic reunion moment, while successfully convincing Lai Fun's former classmates that "she is a truly negative person capable of carrying grudges for twenty years" (208). The truth that Lai Fun wants to unleash on her classmates is that

> all those happy-ending, high-school reunion movies are capital-c Crap … they're fun if you were popular and happy in high school and now you're so successful you shit gold doubloons, but what kind of mutant is that? Truly happy in school and then truly happy as an adult? Barf. (204)

But instead of convincing the others of the same, Lai Fun's confrontations fall flat as her former classmates assert that "Isn't it great? To see everyone again?" (207). While their reactions reassert that "just as [Lai Fun] was a mutant in school, so she is a mutant now" (207), the unwillingness of her classmates to accurately recall their high school days emphasizes that healing comes through forgetting. The reunion, instead of allowing the formerly popular students to take charge of the event, becomes a raucous dance in which Mrs. Blake's victims dance to "I will survive" (216; 221). They even urge Mrs. Blake to "come on and dance!" (216), while Lai Fun seems to be the only one initially incapable of facing her (216). Lai Fun only moves on later, as she realizes that "she's thirty-eight and no longer eight, Mrs. Blake just a woman, a woman with claws and fangs, but still essentially just a woman"

(224). In contrast, Louve cannot let go of the threat Mrs. Blake represents, and strives to come to the rescue of "her baby" and "her grandchild" (224). For Beverley, this scene "defangs" the impact Mrs. Blake's actions have had on the Orange Group children, and points to a racism that has been rendered powerless (285).[207] Yet, Lai Fun and Mrs. Blake's reconciliation also dismisses Mrs. Blake's potential as a "walking metaphor" (Mayr, *VH* 101) now that she is "just a woman" (224). The novel here defuses its own metaphorical power. Her subsequent transformation into a being that has griffin-like qualities (225) indicates that she is now a different kind of monster, one that has more in common with Lai Fun than with Louve. While this scene demonstrates Lai Fun's ability to heal, it simultaneously points out that Louve *cannot*, despite the letter she subsequently writes to Ann Landers.

The ending is cathartic inasmuch as it allows Lai Fun to let go, but it is not cathartic in the traditional "reunion" genre. Lai Fun's confrontation with Lloyd should result in the latter either accepting that he has been dishonest by concealing his homosexuality, or in his fear that Lai Fun might reveal his sexual orientation to others. Instead, Lloyd dismisses Lai Fun's right to confront him by saying "I'm not afraid of what *you* think" (225), and also confronts *her* about the absence of her wife at the reunion. While Lai Fun vows that she will "get Lloyd Weaselhead back at the forty-year reunion" (226), this scene demonstrates the extent to which the "reunion rules" the novel had previously asserted do not hold. Those "rules," which Lai Fun dismisses as "myths … maybe" (205) proclaim that reunions can only be good if one has moved from being a "fat girl" to "gorgeously skinny" (205), or from a "big, fat virgin" to a "successful Executive" (205). What Lloyd demonstrates is that none of those changes are prerequisites to enjoy the reunion, as he was popular in school, and is successful as an adult. If

[207] Beverley also mentions that this scene could be interpreted negatively, as though Mayr wanted to dismiss the impact of racism (284).

the “losers” have their moment in the novel, it is not necessarily at the expense of the former “winners,” and their catharsis does not require the humiliation of, or even an apology from, those who made their life difficult. *Venous Hum* can thereby be interpreted as undermining its main generic structure by *partially* defying its conventions. The cathartic moment between Mrs. Blake and Lai Fun is undermined by the lack of catharsis between Lai Fun and Lloyd, and Louve’s assertion that she has moved on is undercut by her continued fear of Mrs. Blake. Put differently, the novel refuses to be categorized, and only recalls certain conventions in order to destabilize them.

Conclusion: A Contagious Monstrousness

In this chapter, my reading of *Venous Hum* sought to capture the connections and disruptions that make this novel such a powerful subversion of hegemonic narratives of categorization. The novel’s conservative framework, through which the characters attempt to categorize others and establish their unifying vision, allows for a reconsideration of the category of prairie writing. While the strict antagonism between the national and the regional is staged in the novel, it is simultaneously undermined through metaphor, plot, and Mayr’s experimental style. Meanwhile, the various monstrous figures which contaminate the text destabilize any attempt to establish an authentic or pure national, sexual, or racial narrative. If the text appears disjointed in the way of “Frankenstein’s Monster” (Andrew, “Demons” ¶13), Mayr’s humour holds its disparate components together and enables it to function as a satire. As the cannibalization of literary texts illustrate, *Venous Hum* does not take itself seriously, in that it does not seek to assert itself as a didactic, all-encompassing critique of Canadian multiculturalism, homophobia, institutional racism, and cathartic reunions. Rather, its sustained humorous tone actively encourages readers to question the discourses *Venous Hum*

presents, and the framework it constructs, without articulating a specific argument. In other words, Mayr's fear that her work would be perceived as being "too full of 'issues,' as too didactic" ("Vampires" 337) led her to adopt a style that conceals her concerns through a layer of humour. This decision not only generates a rich text that can be interpreted in various ways, but also camouflages critiques that risk alienating readers. *Venous Hum*'s monstrous hybridity thus lies in its ability to mimic Louve and Mrs. Blake, as it cloaks its threatening destabilizations through a seemingly benign and humorous style.

Chapter 4: The Hybridity of Abjection: Global Complicity in Rawi Hage's *Cockroach*

In an interview with Rita Sakr, Rawi Hage laments that literary critics "focus exclusively on one aspect, motif, or detail in my work and thus overlook the multiple other important dimensions and meanings that it comprises or suggests" (qtd in Sakr 346). Jesse Hutchison's "Immigration and Liminality in Rawi Hage's *Cockroach*" for instance, focuses on the narrator's ability to conciliate his cultural heritage with that of Montreal, but fails to account for the novel's violent ending, its experimental style, or the protagonist's mental instability. Trauma and traumatic retelling also figure prominently in the critical works on Hage's two novels (Rahman; Sakr; Hout), because critics interpret the Lebanese civil war (1975-1990) as the focus of contemporary diasporic novels even when the war itself is not discussed (Hout 330-331). In their readings of *Cockroach*, both Syrine Hout and Rita Sakr stress that trauma is central not only to the narrator's past, but also affects Hage's use of symbolism (Hout 339; Sakr 344) and his distinctive writing style (345). This focus on traumatic memory provides valuable insights into the narrator's conversations with Genevieve, but, like Hutchison's reading, it can only examine one location the novel proposes at the expense of the other textual elements *Cockroach* foregrounds.

In order to provide an analysis which accounts for *Cockroach*'s "multiple other important dimensions and meanings," this chapter reconciles Hutchison's nationalist critique with the global contexts explored in Rahman, Sakr, and Hout's articles on Hage's novels. I argue that the multiply displaced local, national, and global scales of Montreal prevent the narrator from occupying a pure space of resistance. The multiple and blurring scales of the city also allow me to reinscribe the local and colonial connections *Cockroach* explores, and situate the novel within two emerging areas of Canadian criticism: city writing, and globalization

studies.[208] This methodology meets Hage's demand for multilayered criticism, but it simultaneously leads me to contradict him on a crucial point. While he argues that his "characters are not hypocritical" (qtd in Sakr 347), I propose that *Cockroach*'s interpenetrating scales underline the narrator's complicity with the discourses he criticizes, just as he bears some responsibility in his alienation from the dominant at the local level. Because *Cockroach* is set within a contradictory space, the metaphors the narrator mobilizes do not have a stable referent. The narrator is continuously and ambiguously situated between agency and victimhood, a position which subsequently leads him to disavow his involvement in the very discourses and actions he seeks to condemn. I am therefore not interested in identifying the narrative features which confirm the narrator's traumatic past. Rather, this chapter foregrounds the highly constructed nature of the narrator's tale in order to point out that resistance in the novel can only be partial, as it is inextricable from complicity. To that effect, I contrast the narrator's tale of exile with those he extirpates from Shohreh, Fahroud, and Youssef to demonstrate how the narrator simultaneously subverts, yet replicates, the Western consumption of the other.

While Hutchison and Hout explore hybridity as a cultural phenomenon in *Cockroach* (Hout 333-334; Hutchison 4), I contend that it constitutes a literary strategy of abjection, where the abject and apocalyptic language the narrator mobilizes describes both his state of alienation and the people he despises. The instability of abjection as a literary strategy becomes hybrid in that its metaphorical referent constantly oscillates between empowerment and victimhood. It also emphasizes complicity, as both oppressors and their victims are encapsulated within the same metaphorical language. The final section of this chapter then

[208] There is a tradition of Canadian urban literature, as well as numerous literary texts which intersect with globalization, but critics have only recently begun to explore those issues in greater details.

combines the novel's scalar interpenetration with the narrator's abject discourse in order to demonstrate the destabilizing effects of abjection. I therefore interpret the novel's dramatic conclusion not as an event which enables Hage's protagonist to overcome his traumatic past (Hout 339), but as a desperate attempt to solidify the constantly blurring boundary between the local and the global, since he echoes Canadian biopolitical narratives of security, rescue, and disavowal. In other words, I interpret *Cockroach*'s violent ending as a manifestation of Western intervention, rather than as an act of revenge against old world oppressors.

1.1 Local, National, and Global Scales: Situating City Writing

Cockroach belongs to the tradition of Canadian city writing, but the novel opens up this category as the localized setting of Montreal is penetrated by global forces and determined by national ones. Since Canadian criticism on urban literature has generated several local and national discourses that have proved difficult to challenge or overcome, such as that of the two solitudes, Hage's novel supplements the category of city writing in Canada as it has been theorized through modernist fiction. *Cockroach* intersects with the concept of the global city,[209] since this novel explores the refugee and diasporic condition as well as international trade. If the global city warrants an opening up of the category of Canadian city writing, *Cockroach* also expands the discussion of Sassen's global city to include the continued relevance of colonialism and postcolonialism within a global framework. I therefore localize the global city within the context of Canadian city writing in order to produce a critique of global and globalized interpretations that gloss over abject subjectivities. Indeed, stigmatized and marginalized identities, such as those of the homeless, stateless, exiles, and refugees, are

[209] Sassen coined the term "global city" in her book of the same name. However, while she understands the scales of the city as interdependent ("Many" 83), I understand them as interpenetrating (Dirlik 32) to the point of near collapse.

often ignored in Sassen's work, or classified within the same category as privileged subjects. In contrast, Canadian criticism on urban literature in general, and on Montreal writing in particular, tends to focus on marginalized people, which enables their reinscription within globalization studies. A discussion on urban literature and global contexts in Canadian literary studies can then illuminate the manner in which *Cockroach* challenges the persistent myth of the two solitudes,[210] as well as the modernist and postmodernist articulations of Montreal writing which precede it. An analysis of the blurring scales of the global can subsequently complicates the protagonist's status as "abject" and as "traumatized," as his abjection is simultaneously empowering and disempowering.

City writing and global perspectives constitute two areas of critical investigation which have received limited attention in Canadian literary studies, though the interest in both categories is growing. In both cases, this oversight can be traced to the antagonistic relationship which urban literature and globalization studies share with the national. While Canadian city writing can be traced to Frances Brooke's *The History of Emily Montague*, Walter Pache and Domenic Beneventi identify urban literature as an overlooked category in Canadian criticism (Pache 1149; Beneventi 11). This partial erasure of urban writing is relevant to my study of Hage's *Cockroach* because it stems from two problems which relate to the relationship between the local and the national scales of the city. Since Canadian criticism has long been concerned with establishing a national narrative, urban literature has been neglected because city dwellers do not necessarily conceptualize their identity in relation to

[210] The narrative of the two solitudes is often enacted in literary works that focus on interactions between French and English Canadians. For instance, A.M. Klein and F.R. Scott both paid attention to the marginalization of French Canadians in their poetry, a focus which Klein extended to Jewish-Canadians and indigenous peoples. Contemporary writers such as Gail Scott, Leonard Cohen, Erin Mouré, Madeleine Thien, Kim Echlin, Tessa McWatt, and Robert Majzels explore the experiences of indigenous peoples, refugees, the homeless, and the issue of transnational adoption, but these narratives often operate within the framework of the two solitudes.

the nation (Simon, "Translating" 171). In addition, Canadian cities are diametrically opposed to the way in which most people imagine Canada through the vastness of its landscape (Beneventi 12; Ivison and Edwards 4). The arguments I made in chapter three about prairie writing, whose coherence as a field hinges on the expectation that the landscape bears a predetermining quality on the literature, can be extended to a certain type of Canadian literary criticism which associates Canadian literature with its landscape (4).[211] The field of Canadian city writing has been fractured by the fact that most urban literary production is categorized as "minority," "multicultural," or "diasporic" literature. For instance, Clarke's *Toronto Trilogy*, Brand's *In Another Place, Not Here*, Lee's *Disappearing Moon Café*, Lai's *When Fox is A Thousand*, and Hage's *Cockroach*, are all set (predominantly) in Canadian cities, but have global and diasporic connections which have been the main focus of the criticism on these works.[212] The classification of these texts as "multicultural" rather than as urban impedes the development of the field of Canadian city writing. Further, in a Canadian context, "city" often means Toronto, Montreal, or Vancouver, but rarely, if ever, does it mean Halifax, Calgary, or Winnipeg. This narrow conceptualization of urban space restricts city writing to the Toronto novels of Robertson Davies, Timothy Findley, Michael Ondaatje, and Margaret Atwood, but cannot include Suzette Mayr and Hiromi Goto's Calgary, Priscilla Uppal's Ottawa, or Hugh

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[211] Beneventi cites the examples of Frye's "where is here?", Atwood's *Survival: a Thematic Guide to Canadian Literature*, and John Moss' "geophysical imagination" as critical works which have overlooked cities and urban literature in order to affiliate Canadian literary production with the vastness of the Canadian landscape (7-8). This figuration of Canada persisted well into the 1990s, as illustrated by Atwood's 1991 Clarendon Lecture Series in English Literature, where she discussed "the malevolent north" in Canada because she felt that "the literature of urban life" (*ST* 5) would not interest her audience to the same extent as cannibalism would. This type of landscape-based criticism has also been criticized in Graham Huggan's *Territorial Disputes* and W.H. New's *Land Sliding*.

[212] George Elliott Clarke identifies this trend in *Odysseys Home*, where he comments that critics tend to label Brand a "poet of exodus" even though she writes about Toronto and Ontario (266).

MacLennan's Halifax. Canadian critics therefore need to account for the multiplicity of urban spaces in Canada, as well as of the diverse experiences they allow.

Globalization studies have also faced certain challenges in Canadian criticism, as globalization is commonly perceived as a force which erodes national specificities. While the collection *Canada and Its Americas* and Dobson's *Transnational Canadas* examine Canadian literature through hemispheric and global/transnational perspectives respectively, many national critics hesitate to engage with globalization studies. This reticence has a specific impact on Canadian city writing and criticism, since cities are often interpreted as the local in globalization studies.[213] The hesitations of a critic such as Cynthia Sugars to engage with globalization perhaps stems from the manner in which the global city was theorized. Indeed, Saskia Sassen's initial configuration of this space as a new scale of global interaction depended on the "denationalization" (*Globalization* xxviii) or "weakening" of the nation (*Global* xviii), since cities now interact directly with global markets (xxii). While Sassen always insists that each global city has its own set of social processes which derive from its national specificity (4), the idea that globalization strengthens cities while weakening nation-states is a disturbing notion for Sugars. According to her, a dissolution of the nation, or an endorsement of postnationalism, could lead to "negative repercussions" such as

> a caving in to capitalist commodification, a fading into the realm of the homogeneous, a flattening of local styles, a reification of a position of international subordination, a

[213] For instance, Ivison and Edwards argue that their focus on Canadian city writing in *Downtown Canada* will reassert "the local in an increasingly globalized Canadian literature" (6). Such an understanding of the relationship between the local and the global without the mediating presence of the national can prove threatening for nationalist critics, who see in this conceptualization the erasure of nation-based criticism.

failure to imagine new social relations, and a succumbing to political apathy masked as celebratory cosmopolitan relativism. ("Worlding" 45) [214]

However, this interpretation of the global as a force of homogenization is reductive, in that it inaccurately represents the flows of globalization as a manifestation of U.S. imperialism and forgets that globalization also produces heterogeneity.[215] It also overlooks the fact that the nation-state is already complicit with the global,[216] and that, while the national may be the local in a "cosmopolitan context" (44), it nonetheless enables and benefits from global economies (Sassen, *Global* 8).

Attempts to configure the national as the space from which the global can be resisted are also flawed because the local, national, and global are not mutually exclusive forces. Sassen has recently nuanced her interpretation of the global city through an emphasis on the interdependent scales of the global. She points out that certain social processes, such as human rights and environmental struggles, have global aims despite being enacted at the local or national level ("Many" 83). This argument for interdependence is echoed in other theorizations of globalization within the humanities and social sciences, where the consensus is that the local and national can no longer be interpreted as alternatives to global forces (Dirlik 32; Nyers, *RR* x; Hardt and Negri, *Empire* 44-45). While Sugars is right to point out the homogenizing power of global and transnational studies, an approach which takes into

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[214] Sugars is not alone in her defense of the nation. George Eliot Clarke's recuperation of a national African Canadian literary archive is similarly articulated as an opposition to diasporic approaches, as Karina Vernon documents (23). For Sunera Thobani, globalization is synonymous with American sovereignty (220).

[215] See Jameson's "Notes on Globalization as a Philosophical Issue" (57-58).

[216] For instance, national narratives of peacekeeping, which are essential to a certain type of Canadian nationalism (Jefferess 710), are embedded within modes of global intervention where Canada imperialistically engages in war "to secure its national interests and those of its allies" (711). Kit Dobson's *Transnational Canadas* also reads the nation "as complicit with the dictates of such corporatism" (164).

account that the local, national, and global scales can no longer be separated can avoid these risks if it remains critical of the narratives which all three scales generate.

In *Cockroach* the scales of the global are not merely interdependent, but blur as they continuously interpenetrate. The local becomes inseparable from its global and national implications, as the scales Sassen theorizes become multiply displaced. Because of this configuration of the local, *Cockroach* challenges and supplements the tradition of Montreal writing. Modernist Montreal writing, for instance, intersects with the narrative of the two solitudes, which Hugh MacLennan elaborated in his 1945 novel of the same name to illustrate the relationship between Anglophones and Francophones in Canada (Moyes, "prétendues" 18).[217] While this narrative was meant to be a national one, it resonates in Montreal because it insists on a form of divisiveness and competition which, for some writers and critics, characterizes this local context (18; Simon, *TM* xiv; Scott 5). This narrative encourages critics of Montreal writing to focus on the language divide between French and English, or on how these languages are brought together in a single literary text.[218] In *Cockroach*, this divisiveness is multiply displaced as the narrator interprets the French as having abandoned their cultural background. Hage's protagonist refers to the Québécois as those "ex-Catholics" (124) who "one hundred years ago, were ordered by the priest to get pregnant and to kneel beside Church benches every Sunday" (225). This interpretation casts the distinctiveness of Québécois

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[217] The discourse of the two solitudes can be employed to examine a number of texts set in Montreal, such as the Montreal writings of Mavis Gallant, Leonard Cohen, Mordecai Richler, A.M. Klein, and Gail Scott, though some of these texts open this narrative to with references to indigenous peoples and Jewish communities.

[218] See for instance Sherry Simon's *Translating Montreal: Episodes in the Life of a Divided City*, Catherine Leclerc's *Des langues en partage?*, and Lianne Moyes' work on the writings of Gail Scott, Erin Mouré, and Robert Majzels. These three postmodernist writers can be said to challenge the two solitudes when their texts allow for the line between English and French to blur, but they do not eradicate this narrative in that it still constitutes the mode through which their texts are articulated. In fact, arguments for "third" and "other solitudes" persist even though this type of supplementary reinterpretation merely reinforces "the internal coherence and symmetry of the first two" solitudes (Moyes, "UA" 168).

history as a residue of a prior era, rather than as immediately relevant. Meanwhile, wealthy Anglophones affect poverty by dressing "like beggars" (228), a habit which prompts the narrator to declare "I have never understood those Anglos, never trusted their camouflage" (228). For the narrator, the two solitudes are not experienced as they once were, since the Francophones have abandoned their heritage while the Anglophones seek to conceal their privilege. Nonetheless, the "end" of the two solitudes does not entail that *Cockroach* is a diasporic novel. Unlike Marwan Hassan's *The Confusion of Stones*, *Cockroach* does not focus on the Lebanese civil war or on the notion of return.[219] Diaspora plays a crucial role in the text, but the communities are open to different interactions now that they have been displaced in Montreal. For instance, the narrator befriends the Iranian diaspora rather than other Arabs. He might be a "dirty Arab" to Reza and other Iranians (15), but he is not so to Shohreh. *Cockroach*'s affiliations are then multiply displaced, as the novel's locality blurs through contact with the global.

Hage's *Cockroach* does engage with previous Montreal writing, but his novel opens up this category. Hage does not use the language of the francophone majority in order to develop the same form of stylistic experimentation that marks the work of Gail Scott, nor does he deploy linguistic cohabitation to the same extent as Robert Majzels and Erin Mouré. *Cockroach* rather uses Montreal's francophone background as a way to distinguish its local setting from the urban non-spaces criticized in *Downtown Canada* (Ivision and Edwards 4).[220] Hage thereby prevents the erasure of French in his Anglophone text. For instance, Mavis

[219] Hage here distinguishes himself from other (diasporic) Lebanese writers such as Abla Fahroud, Elias Khoury, and Wajdi Mouawad, who all, to different extents, write of return and recovery. For Roseanne Khalaf, "post war fictions are 'concerned with sorting out the past'" (qtd in Hout 15). Hage does explore recovery in *Cockroach*, but I argue that the text stresses its impossibility rather than its empowering potential. With the publication of his third novel *Carnival*, Hage distances himself even further from diasporic Lebanese fiction.
[220] Ivison and Edwards argue that the tendency to avoid naming cities in Canadian novels makes urban texts less Canadian. They interpret this practice as "[inhibiting] Canadian writing" (4).

Gallant and Hugh McLennan's francophone characters speak English even amongst themselves, a technique which caters to a unilingual Anglophone readership by creating the illusion that the local is a space of resolved tensions.[221] In *Cockroach*, the French presence is emphasized when segments of French conversation remain untranslated (Hage 10-11), and when the narrator mocks Matild, Reza's roommate, whose French accent is rendered on the page: "it was you who was stealing the toilet paperzzzz, and they all look at me bad because I was the one who recommended you forrr zee job" (12). Such a passage emphasizes tensions, as Matild's Parisian accent might sound ridiculous to the narrator, but she remains, despite her immigrant status, more at home in Montreal than he is. Hage also uses immediate translations when the French exchange is of significant narrative importance. Maître Pierre's racist comments are thus immediately translated: "tu es un peu trop cuit pour ça (you are a little too well done for that)" (29). For Simon, parallel translations allow the original language to persist despite the translation ("Paris" 147), because it "reveals, rather than conceals, difference" (147). The difference emphasized here is the exhaustion of the two solitudes, which cannot account for the type of discrimination the narrator faces. In other words, Hage's Montreal differs from MacLennan's vision, as his novel pushes "Canada's French and English solitudes … into the background" (Wagner ¶15). Even though Hage does not engage with linguistic experimentation to the same extent as other Montreal writers, he nonetheless affiliates *Cockroach* with the tradition of Montreal writing as his text is unsettled by national and global contexts.

1.2 Abjection as Marginalization: Status and the City

[221] This linguistic problem is explored in David Fenario's *Balconville*, where Francophones address each other in French within this predominantly Anglophone text. For Wasserman, this stylistic choice foregrounds the linguistic debate and the problems of miscommunication, and force unilingual Anglophones to "work" in order to understand the play (277). These tensions cannot exist in a work where the French language is absent.

The interpenetrating scales of the local, national, and global indicate which types of subjectivities are marginalized in Hage's novel, and what forms of citizenship are privileged at the expense of others. Kit Dobson notes, for instance, that racialized communities in Sassen's global cities "have been subjected to increasing segregation and stratification" (183), which is why he insists, in reference to Dionne Brand's *What We All Long For*, that the city contains both dangers and possibilities (181). However, the multicultural protagonists which inhabit Brand's novel, and which are the focus on Dobson's analysis, are still relatively privileged, as they enjoy a form of mobility that is denied to those, such as Quy, who do not have official citizenship status.[222] When examining social abjection, critics tend to emphasize the possibilities for resistance which lie in liminal positions.[223] For Sassen, the presence of marginalized peoples within the global city allows for the formation of a "global citizenship," where citizens can challenge and transform their nation-states ("Repositioning" 190-191). This argument is echoed in Pico Iyer's desire to imagine society as a hotel, with "all its inhabitants in their own separate, comfortable, well-serviced spaces, yet with common areas downstairs for dining, dancing and attending civic responsibilities" (*Imagining* 24-25). Iyer's comment illustrates the limits of an idealized form of global citizenship, since it relies on the erasure of those who provide the services he mentions.[224] Sassen, Iyer, and Dobson are reluctant to configure certain subjectivities as victims of globalization. They recognize that some are always marginalized, but their emphasis on what can be gained overshadows the little

[222] Carrie Dawson tracks those inequalities in "On Thinking Like a State and Reading (About) Refugees."
[223] Spivak criticizes the tendency to emphasize the agency of marginalized peoples in "Can the Subaltern Speak?" According to her, marginalized subjectivities are spoken for and spoken about, but rarely spoken to, which strengthens their subaltern status (92; 103).
[224] Iyer's "global souls" seemingly include those whose migrations stem from exile (*Imagining* 46), but it is difficult to pinpoint how their experiences can be equated to the "multinational businessmen and computer wizards and tribal backpackers" which constitute the other side of that term (46). Iyer's *The Global Soul* similarly conceals inequalities, as Iyer's understanding of the "multiculture" acknowledges ethnic difference but ignores the economic marginalization of racialized peoples (124-125).

attention they foster on subaltern and abject subjects.[225] An analysis of Hage's *Cockroach* through the interlocking and blurring scales of global can then tease out the discrepancies in wealth and mobility that complicate these three scales.

In Canadian criticism on city writing, marginalized subjectivities also face specific conceptual challenges because critics privilege the empowering possibilities that lie in the fringes. Current criticism on Montreal writing tends to interpret the city as "cosmopolitan" (Moyes, "UA" 172; Simon, *TM* 3), a term which is meant to describe Montreal's multi-lingual and multi-cultural population.[226] This understanding of urban literature explores issues relating to citizenship, belonging, and mobility, as well as the cultural hybridization which results from these three processes. Simon's critical work identifies translation and multilingualism as a form of empowered citizenship (*TM* 10). She acknowledges that such empowering possibilities are not accessible to all (8), but she does not dwell on these inequalities. In contrast, both Moyes and Beneventi pay attention to marginalized figures as they relate to city writing and citizenship. For instance, Moyes insists that Majzels' representation of homelessness in *City of Forgetting* does not represent an idealized form of Otherness ("UA" 172), and while she goes on to address the possibilities for citizenship that the novel offers, she stresses that some will always be alienated from cosmopolitan and citizenship

[225] Dobson does dwell on marginalized subjectivities in *Transnational Canadas*, but does so mainly within the national scale. His astute readings of Canadian literature and of poststructuralist, Marxist, and postcolonial theory emphasize the degree to which all of these discourses can contribute to an erasure of indigeneity. However, Dobson does not extend this argument to marginalized subjectivities as experienced on a global scale, despite the fact that Brand's *What We All Long For*, to which he dedicates a chapter, deals with human trafficking, refugees, and illegal immigration. As for Sassen, she discusses the lives of undocumented migrants, but only in terms of their alternative forms of citizenship ("Repositioning" 181-182). The risks of deportation which they continuously face, as documented in Nyers' "Abject Cosmopolitanism," are not featured in her analysis.

[226] My use of multi-culturalism is here intended as a demographic fact rather than as a reference to Canada's state-sponsored policy. The term cosmopolitan is however much more complex, as Moyes tracks in her article "Homelessness, Cosmopolitanism, and Citizenship: Robert Majzels' *City of Forgetting*."

discourses.[227] Beneventi also explores abjection in city writing, which he defines as projected onto the body of those who are deemed marginal (28). Nyers echoes this sentiment in his theorization of "abject cosmopolitanism" as a status which the state's immigration policies create.[228] However, abjection in these instances tends to be approached as one which offers agency and resistance. *Cockroach* complicates this interpretation as the narrator's abject status is determined by his poverty and exiled status, but he also mobilizes his displaced condition for financial gain. *Cockroach* then raises questions regarding how subjectivities are marginalized in urban and global spaces, as well as what kind of space can be afforded to resistance within the interpenetrating scales of the novel.

1.3 Space-Time Connections: Abjection, Colonialism, and Montreal

However, *Cockroach*'s blurring scales and their effects on marginalized subjectivities is such that Sassen's spatial understanding of scaling must firstly be extended to include the legacy of colonialism and imperialism. In her review of Hage's novel, Seiler mentions that *Cockroach*

> highlights the inescapability of the continuing connections between past and present and the impossibility of regarding Canada as a haven from the manifold injustices of a fallen world. The links between East and West via colonialism and the global trade in drugs and arms may be largely underground, but their existence drives the novel's thriller-like plot and centres its thematic vision." (236)

[227] Moyes approaches cosmopolitanism in Majzels' novel as modernity's dream of producing "cultures in exile" ("Homelessness" 7), a dream which, when exile comes to stand in for homelessness, challenges traditional citizenship and modernity itself.
[228] Nyers' "abject cosmopolitanism" describes the ambiguous and contradictory status of Algerians whose refugee claims were denied, but who cannot be deported because Algeria is deemed too dangerous ("AC" 1071).

Seiler's interpretation is important because it adds a "temporal" dimension to what Sassen understands in spatial terms; that is, that issues of colonialism also interact with the local, national, and global scales. For instance, postcolonial theories contributed to the Canadian national imaginary (Brydon, "Reading" 172),[229] while Québécois writers appropriated Fanon and Memmi's anticolonial writing "afin d'exprimer leur propre marginalité à Montréal" (Schwartzwald 182). Majzels' *City of Forgetting* also links globalization to Montreal's colonial history through the recurrence of cruciform structures in Montreal (Lapierre ¶3). The cross-like shape of Place Ville-Marie, which Majzels presents as an echo of colonial religious crosses, also points to the rise of economic globalization, as Place Ville-Marie is "l'emblème de la pleine intégration du Québec aux tendances montantes du capitalisme mondial" (Schwartzwald 189). Colonialism then interacts with the spatial scalings Sassen develops, and allows for a re-examination of Montreal's spatial scales and the subjectivities they generate.

The interpenetrating spatial and temporal scales of *Cockroach* point to the various forces which contribute to the narrator's liminal position. Hutchison reads the novel through the national discourse of state-sponsored multiculturalism (4), and while this reading aptly identifies the narrator's alienation, it is too limited to examine how the narrator contributes to his sense of marginalization. For Hutchison, the narrator is caught between his desire to retain his cultural identity "and his desire to live successfully in Canada" (4). However, the manner in which multiculturalism impacts the narrator's disillusionment cannot be isolated from its global and local implications. The narrator's immigration to Montreal can be traced to the civil war in his home country and to the image Canada wishes to project on a global scale. Since

[229] For instance, Dennis Lee's "Cadence, Country, Silence" seeks to decolonize language so that it can speak of the Canadian experience. Rick Salutin's *1837: The Farmers' Revolt* also sought to speak from a postcolonial perspective (Wasserman 101).

Canada mythologizes itself as a "haven from the manifold injustices of a fallen world" (Seiler 235), it becomes an appropriate choice in the face of violence. The narrator draws attention to this global perception of Canada in the opening pages of the narrative, where he notes that "here in this northern land no one gives you an excuse to hit, rob, or shoot, or even to shout from across the balcony, to curse your neighbours' mothers and threaten their kids" (Hage 4). In contrast, violence is always present in his homeland, where "everyone is used to gunshots" (64). While the narrator's comments on the lack of violence in Canada are formulated as a complaint, they nonetheless constructs Canada as a space of "safety" from aggression.

In exchange for this safety, the nation expects the immigrant, exile, or refugee, to be grateful for what the nation offers (Granados ¶2; Dawson, "Thinking" 68-69). In *Cockroach*, the therapist Genevieve expects the narrator to be thankful for his treatment and to make steady progress because she has "a responsibility towards the taxpayers" (60) who are financing his therapy in a public clinic. The novel satirizes this expectation when the narrator meets a Native cook and wants to "thank him [the cook] for the food, for the trees, the mountains, and the rivers" (292). This statement mocks the taxpayers' desire for the protagonist's gratefulness, as it is indigenous peoples the narrator wishes to thank.[230] The narrator acknowledges that "yes, yes indeed, I should be grateful for what this nation is giving me. I take more than I give" (65), but he only expresses thankfulness towards dominant Canadians when his needs are met: "on my days of pay I am grateful, I am grateful for everything, and it shows" (226). His gratefulness leads him to forgive "humanity for its stupidity, its foulness, its pride…" (226), and even to forget "about the bonny [sic] infants with the African flies clustering on their noses, the marching drunk soldiers on their way to

[230] The narrator's statement however fetishizes indigeneity, as it uncritically equates Native peoples with the land.

whorehouses" (227). The narrator's critique of the nation and of global oppression is thereby undermined in this passage, since he participates in the Western erasure of global violence. Such a passage foregrounds that alienation and liminality cannot be absolute categories of resistance, since when the nation fulfills its promise of safety and comfort, the narrator forgets those who do not share that privilege on the global scale.

The narrator's wavering gratefulness is also caused by the nation's failure to provide an environment free from discrimination. As I argued in chapter three, Canada's state-sponsored Policy of Multiculturalism did not translate into anti-racist policies, and Hage's narrator faces discrimination in the work place. After asking Maître Pierre if he could become a waiter at a French restaurant, the narrator is refused the promotion for racist reasons: "Le soleil t'a brûlé ta [sic] face un peu trop (the sun has burned your face a bit too much)" (Hage 29). The narrator's marginalization here intersects with the local scale, as this scene indicates that despite the national discourse of multiculturalism, he is an unwanted immigrant in Montreal. While Mayr's *Venous Hum* points out the extent to which racialized people are cast as invaders in the whole of Canada, in *Cockroach*, this type of narrative is constructed as specifically provincial. The narrator draws a contrast between those who immigrate out of necessity and what he understands as a Parisian invasion encouraged by the Québec government:

> The Parisians are highly sought after and desired by the Quebec government… The Québécois, with their extremely low birth rate, think they can increase their own breed by attracting the Parisians, or at least for a while balance the number of their own kind against the herd of brownies and darkies coming from every old French colony, on the run from dictators and crumbling cities. (27-28)

This contrast between wanted and unwanted immigrants exposes multiculturalism as a lie, since it points out that certain types of immigration are favoured. Even in the rest of Canada, it is successful immigrants such as Rohinton Mistry which are lauded for the degree to which they reaffirm the benevolence of Canadian multiculturalism at an international level (Staines 17; Thobani 241).[231] It also foregrounds neocolonialism, as *Cockroach* casts the local Québécois as complicit with French imperialism on a global scale. After all, the narrator configures the Québécois not as a colonized people, but as being of the same "breed," the same "kind" (Hage 27-28) as the French colonizers he criticizes.[232] This intersection of local, national, and global scales, and their connection to colonialism, facilitates the narrator's marginalization from the dominant.

Hage's novel also emphasizes Montreal's colonial past to indicate the narrator's ambiguous position within the marginalizing spaces which spatial and temporal scales generate. The narrator's exiled status, as one who was born in a war-torn country, presents him as the victim of colonial and global forces at home, and suffering from discrimination in his new country. As he remembers that his grandmother once witnessed the death of a young boy during a famine, the narrator declares that it is his background which makes him unwilling "to be part of anything because I am afraid I will become an invader who would make little boys hunger" (Hage 210). This fear is contradicted as the narrator also configures himself as one who benefits from colonialism in Montreal. The protagonist accepts to steal a trunk full of

[231] Mark Libbin's paper "Mobility and Cultural Contamination in Rawi Hage's *Cockroach*" presented at ACQL-ALCQ in May 2011, looked at Hage's *Cockroach* in contrast to Mistry's "Swimming Lessons." He argued that Hage's narrator functions as an unsuccessful immigrant, while Mistry's tale focused on successful integration.

[232] In this instance, Hage sets himself in opposition to Majzels' *City of Forgetting* and Cohen's *Beautiful Losers*, as these novels emphasized the "double" colonization which Montreal experienced (Simon, "Translating" 180). While Hage identifies colonialism in Québec through references to indigenous peoples, his text is not concerned with English-French relations. Hage's understanding of Montreal within a global framework thus marks a rupture with the modernist discourse of the two solitudes, on which the postmodern novels of Cohen, Scott, and Majzels focused.

artifacts which a former colonial agent "stole … from the Indians, or the Chinese. Maybe he paid nothing, or very little" (41) because he wishes "to watch the loot of war buried, the stolen treasure put back where it belongs, in the underground" (42). After they steal the trunk, it is not buried in the literal sense, but taken to the janitor's basement apartment. The narrator benefits directly from this "counter-imperial looting" (251), as he acquires new boots and socks which allow him to walk "above the earth and its cold white crust, feeling warm and stable" (253). This passage conflicts with the narrator's repeated assertions that he occupies the underground because of his liminal status (22; 24). Once he acquires the colonizer's boots, he suddenly confidently occupies a space "above the earth" (253), which points to the manner in which he does not necessarily construct himself as merely the victim of acts of invasion and imperialism.

The narrator further aligns himself with invader-settlers through two references to coyotes. As he attempts to sell a stolen briefcase to Youssef, the narrator dismisses his potential buyer's reluctance to purchase it: "what land is not stolen, what seat is not claimed, what container is not the product of theft and destruction? We are all coyotes in this land" (Hage 272). This passage does not necessarily refer to Montreal as a colonized space, but the fact that it is uttered in Montreal certainly underlines that the land the characters inhabit was stolen, particularly when he uses the collective "*we* are all coyotes" to specify that all benefit from this theft. However, the person who does not profit from this theft is the one whose briefcase was stolen, an omission which foregrounds the interconnection between colonialism and marginalization. This allusion to colonialism is strengthened when the narrator meets an indigenous cook who tells him a story in which a coyote, coming over on a ship from a foreign land, steals the drum the creator used to make the world, with destructive consequences for the

earth. Once more, the coyote is affiliated with an act of theft. He is also associated with European imperialism because his origins lie on "the other side of the sea" (293), and because he is "looking for food and anything he could steal" (293). The coyote's imperialistic actions lead to destruction, since the absence of the sun allow the bugs to "[cover] the land and [eat] everything" (293). The narrator's fear that participating in the world will make "little boys hunger" (210) is thereby confirmed, as the narrator's self-designation as a "coyote" betrays his complicity with and participation in destructive forms of imperialism and invasion.[233] The temporal connections which the novel foregrounds then construct the narrator as participating locally in the processes that marginalize him on the global scale.

The blurring scales of the global also underline that the narrator is not solely a victim of a marginalization that is projected on him from the outside, as he bears a responsibility in his abject status. The narrator's complicity with his position is best illustrated through his desire to be "invited in" (Hage 286). For him, the city is an unwelcoming space: "Not even a nod in this cold place, not even a timid wave, not a smile from below red, sniffing, blowing noses" (9). This indifference has been read as a local and urban problem (Seiler 234), where the novel gives "a less-than-flattering vision of Montreal" (234). It is also interpreted as a national one, where "the immigrant is constructed as being something other than the role that is constructed for the dominant group" (Hutchison 6). In both instances, it is the dominant that is unwelcoming towards the protagonist, but Hage suggests a different answer for this apparent inhospitality. He comments that there is an "obsession with privacy in this culture"

[233] This reference to coyotes could be interpreted as an appropriation of West coast First Nations cultures, as the coyote is a trickster figure for the Salish (Reder xv). In traditional stories, coyote learns "lessons the 'hard' way" (Archibald 197). It is possible that Hage chose the coyote because of this animal's predatory nature, but its connection to indigenous storytelling has the potential to rob indigenous peoples of their agency, since the story portrays the coyote as an unstoppable and destructive imperialist, rather than as the figure who is complicit with imperialism but strives to make things right, as in Thomas King's work.

(qtd in Wagner ¶3) which is why his narrator breaks into several homes, such as Genevieve's (Hage 80-84), Youssef's (149-151), and the couple he observes through a restaurant window (89-91). These home invasions represent the narrator's ability to force "his welcome … By forcing himself into people's houses, he is forcing himself into their lives" (qtd in Wagner ¶18). When read from this perspective, the narrator's break-ins help him contest his marginalization. For instance, he breaks into the rich couple's house to steal the man's "gold ring, his cigarettes, a Roman vase, his tie, and his shoes" and also takes "the time to carefully pick clothes that [suit his] dark complexion" (Hage 90). The items he steals specifically relate to status, and allow him to project the illusion that he occupies a dominant position in society. His actions here recall, with a difference, the recurring trope of the thief as artist in Canadian literature, where, like Ondaatje's Caravaggio and Atwood's Zeina,[234] he is able to transform himself in order to contest attempts to categorize him as a "victim" and as "impoverished" (van Herk, "Ondaatje" 113-114; Heilman 181).

However, Genevieve and Youssef's reactions to his transgressions only reinforce his marginalization, as he lets them know that he broke into their homes. This knowledge leads Genevieve to refuse him further therapy ("I can't help you anymore [Hage 260]), while Youssef declares the narrator to be insane and threatens to call the police (297). The protagonist does attempt to defuse their reactions. He calls Genevieve a hypocrite because she "tolerated [him] breaking into other people's places" (260). Similarly, when Youssef walks away from him, calling the protagonist "un fou, un fou" (297), the narrator declares Youssef to

[234] I say "with a difference" because Ondaatje's thieves often steal to protect, like the monks do in *Handwriting* (van Herk, "Ondaatje" 113), while Caravaggio "was too curious and generous to be a successful thief" (Ondaatje, *EP* 169). In *The Robber Bride*, Zeina steals men from their lovers, which is why she is often interpreted as subverting gendered fairy tale conventions, and as reflecting what each woman in the text seeks to repress about herself (Fand 72; Tolan 52; Duncan 78; Heilman 172). Hage's narrator steals for revenge, and leaves traces of his passage so that people will be aware of his presence. His "thieving" allows him to make himself visible, while Caravaggio relies on invisibility and art in *In the Skin of a Lion*.

be the madman: “he looked like a goner, a little lost imposter” (298). The narrator’s desire for intimacy, to gain insights into Genevieve and Youssef’s lives thus results in further alienation. Hage’s protagonist bears a responsibility in his marginalization, since he actively seeks to antagonize various types of communities, marginalized or otherwise. While Youssef, Reza, and Shohreh all gravitate around members of their diasporic communities, the protagonist deliberately enrages Youssef and his friends (278), and his friendships with Reza and Shohreh often suffer setbacks due to his verbal and physical violence. His aggressiveness separates him from potential allies, and emphasizes his need to occupy a dominant position. While Hutchison does not read the narrator’s instability as a contributing factor to the challenges he faces in Montreal, Seiler notes that the narrator “is a self-confessed compulsive seducer of women and inveterate liar and thief, as well as … mentally unstable” (233).[235] This mental instability is a metaphor for the narrator’s condition, one which Abla Fahroud also deploys in her novels dealing with diasporic Lebanese families living in Montreal.[236] The narrator’s tendency to violate privacy in a search for intimacy and his tendency to antagonize those around him indicate that his alienation is not solely caused by social factors, but also lies in a crisis of belonging which he attempts, but fails, to resolve.

1.4 Orientalism and the Marketing of Otherness

The narrator’s partial control over his status within the city enables him to determine how he can represent himself, as the interlocking scales of the global provide a framework through which his abjection can be expressed and rendered profitable. Much like indigenous

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[235] In fact, Hutchison reads the narrator and the narrative as “coherent, unified, and structured” (8), three features which might apply to Hage’s well-constructed novel, but not to the narrator’s personality. Hage himself has asserted that *Cockroach* explores mental illness (qtd in Sakr 348).

[236] Fahroud’s *Le bonheur a la queue glissante* and *Le fou d’Omar* both feature a mentally unstable character. In these novels, the character’s disability disturbs the stability of the family unit, and, in the latter, it prevents connections with the local community. In other words, mental illness represents the fractures of exile.

identities, the marginalized experiences of exiles and refugees have become desirable commodities for a dominant culture that consumes otherness to fulfill a need for excitement (hooks 21-31). This tendency is interpreted negatively in *Venous Hum* through the figure of Mrs. Blake, while Ruffo's *Grey Owl* criticizes the marketability of indigeneity. In *Cockroach*, Hage complicates this desire for the foreign as his characters manipulate this demand to their own ends. Market demands shape the representation of otherness, as recent research in human rights narratives demonstrate. For instance, Joseph Slaughter notes that stories detailing the lives of immigrants are only acceptable if they focus on misery (295-296), because they then confirm the opinions and expectations of their audience (296). Schaffer and Smith argue that memoirs are highly constructed narratives, since a survivor's tale must adhere to a set of preconditions in order to obtain a positive reception (5). In a Canadian literary context, Dobson's critique of the Giller prize points to the influence of the global economy on national literary production, as multiculturalism and otherness must be packaged in a benign fashion to meet market demands.[237] Racialized texts, Dobson argues, should no longer be automatically associated with a progressive politics of resistance, as their "marginality" no longer aims to challenge the national imaginary of their readers (158). In other words, the instances of global inequality and violence which often result in the presence of refugees and exiles in Western countries are placed under erasure as the global market insists that otherness must be presented in a non-threatening manner. For that reason, the memoirs and novels which Schaffer, Smith, and Slaughter examine are articulated through the rhetoric of human rights, one which often justifies "benevolent" Western intervention in the global South (Schaffer and Smith 6;

[237] Mistry "Swimming Lessons" ironically provides the recipe for successful immigrant literature: "I am sure they are interested there [Canada] in reading about life through the eyes of an immigrant, it provides a different viewpoint; the only danger is if he changes and becomes so much like them that he will write like one of them and lose the important difference" (253-254).

Slaughter 38).[238] Similarly, the Canadian literary market appropriates racialized texts in order to define itself as the "locus for cosmopolitan diversity in a globalized world" (Dobson 159). The manner in which global expectations shape national literary production therefore influences how marginal subjectivities can be represented, and also predetermines the reception of these subjectivities.

Hage's narrator subverts this literary expectation for the exotic by manipulating his marginalized status and market demands for otherness to his own advantage. Hutchison notes that Hage's narrator must tame his otherness in order to be accepted in Canada (7), since the latter declares that "the exotic has to be modified here – not too authentic, not too spicy or too smelly, just enough of it to remind others of a fantasy elsewhere" (Hage 20). Hutchison interprets this passage through Said's "Orientalism," where the narrator confirms "firmly held Western convictions" about the East, the Orient, or the Arab world in order to live successfully in Canada (Hutchison 7).[239] For instance, he never mentions his country of origin by name,[240] but rather calls it "that place where I come from" (Hage 22), while his therapy sessions relate his "tale of growing up somewhere else" (4). This omission generates a mystery around the protagonist's origins, and orientalizes his cultural heritage in that it casts

[238] I realize that the division of the world into "East" and "West," global "North" and global "South" has its conceptual limitations, as illustrated in Mohanty's "'Under Western Eyes' Revisited" (226-227). However, these divisions, regardless of their artificiality, continue to be the mode through which military-style interventions are legitimated, a fact which warrants their application in this context.
[239] Hutchison interprets "successful living" as the ability to adopt the role of the immigrant as advanced by the dominant society (6). However, successful living in Canada could also be interpreted as an immigration which results in increased wealth and status, since Canada's immigration policy relies on a point system meant to ensure the applicant's potential for financial independence (Abu-Laban 73-74). In that case, Hage's narrator does not fall within a pattern of successful immigration.
[240] Wajdi Mouawad also uses this technique in his cycle of plays *Le sang des promesses*, where the countries to which characters return in *Littoral* and *Incendies* resemble Lebanon but are never named as such. It can be interpreted as a strategy which makes a specific situation more "universal." In *Cockroach*, the unnamed country can be identified as Lebanon: the narrator mentions civil war, militias, and he is Arabic but not Muslim. More specifically, Hout notes four references that clearly identify Lebanon for readers familiar with the country: the local currency, the local beer, Phoenicians, and a Beirut landmark (340; fn 12).

the narrator as "other" but erases his local specificity. When read in this light, the narrator's stories allow him to occupy the exotic role of the immigrant the West desires. However, this interpretation casts the narrator in a passive role, where he contributes to his marginalization in order to fulfil the expectations of dominant Canadians. In contrast, I argue that the narrator demonstrates agency within this context, as his ability to render "the exotic" benign benefits *him* more than others. Hage is not replicating the form of otherness which Dobson pinpoints as responsible for Vincent Lam's controversial 2006 Giller Prize win.[241] The narrator rather uses this national and global demand in order to achieve limited gains out of his abject status at the local level.

For instance, the novel often foregrounds instances of storytelling which allow privileged Canadians to absorb the excitement and foreignness which the other embodies. Sylvie and her friends socialize with the narrator because he "gave them a sense of the real… the fuckable, exotic, dangerous foreigner" (Hage 199). Like the "Earth-loving vegans" (21) the narrator criticizes for their consumption of Eastern philosophies, Sylvie and her friends are presented as consuming the exotic because it adds flavour to their lives.[242] The narrator also claims that his therapist shares this consumerist tendency, which is why he seeks to withhold information from her as he narrates his life story:

> Why don't you finish the story for me [Genevieve]?
>
> It might take a while, I said.
>
> Yes, that's okay. I want you to finish it for me. (239)

[241] Lam's *Bloodletting and Miraculous Cures* is said to have won the Giller because it espouses the "sort of multicultural Canada" the older generation of Canadian writers, such as Atwood and Munro, desire (162).

[242] This consumerist approach to otherness is encapsulated in Stanley Fish's concept of "boutique multiculturalism," which he defines as the "multiculturalism of ethnic restaurants, weekend festivals, and high profile flirtations with the other" (378). *Cockroach* also affiliates the consumption of the other with food, consumerism, and sexual relations.

The narrator's accusation is that Genevieve participates in the Western consumption of the other, that she seeks a thrill that his stories can provide.[243] Hage also employed this narrative strategy in *De Niro's Game*, which Rahman interprets as a way in which he makes "complicit those who hear [the story]… the listener or reader is … forced to hear [the story] and placed uncomfortably in a voyeuristic position" (810). Simultaneously, this technique underlines the listeners' uncomfortable desire to hear violent stories. This narrative style implies a critique of and resistance to this form of consumerism, as it generates feelings of guilt and shame out of the listeners' desire to hear the story.

The narrator's critique is later complicated by another effect of his narrative strategy, which is that it *creates* the desire for his story to be heard, as the delay increases the suspense: "I knew she was hooked, intrigued. Simple woman I thought. Gentle, educated, but naïve, she is sheltered by glaciers and prairies, thick forests, oceans, and dancing seals" (104). In this passage the narrator associates Genevieve's interest in his past with her bland Canadian heritage, which is encapsulated in a few clichéd references to the Canadian landscape.[244] The narrator, along with Reza and Youssef, subsequently benefits from the West's desire to consume their tales. Canadian women metaphorically feed on Reza's "sad stories," but they also literally feed Reza for them (69), a technique which the narrator (122) and Youssef (116; 182-185) duplicate. Marginalization is then no longer the force which excludes the characters from social spheres of interactions; it has become their way into environments they would be unable to enter without their "exotic tunes and stories of suffering and exile" which allow

[243] Hage deliberately sets out to subvert these narrative expectations, as he asserts that *Cockroach* "implicitly satirizes the Western culture of confession" (qtd in Sakr 348).
[244] The narrator's comment replicates Beneventi and Pache's complaint that Canada is imagined as a "non-city" (Beneventi 12; Pache 1151). Although the narrator lives in Montreal, that urban space does not correspond to his notion of Canadianness.

them to "bewitch" their "hosts" (25). The desire for stories of exile then has positive repercussions for the characters of *Cockroach*, who are able to manipulate this demand to their own ends.

The narrator's self-representation as "orientalized" then does not reaffirm Western prejudices or their image of the East. Sylvie, her friends, and Genevieve might consume the narrator and Reza's stories and their altered version of the exotic as though it were an orientalized product, but the narrator's manipulation of those orientalist preconceptions emphasizes that the Western understanding of foreigners, exiles, and refugees has no substance. The narrator is not a victim of this form of marginalization. Rather, he appropriates his marginalization for private gains, and uses it to expose the naivety of those who mistake "Orientalized" others for "authentic" subjects. The narrator's subversion of "orientalist" assumptions aligns him with Ruffo's representation of Grey Owl, where Belaney's appropriation of indigenous stereotypes exposes the ease with which Western expectations facilitate deception. This subversion is crucial because it casts doubts on the narrator's personal story which Hout and Sakr associate with traumatic memory (Hout 339; Sakr 344). While Sakr and Felman assert that trauma represents a "crisis of truth" (Sakr 344; Felman 6), the narrator's tale is not disrupted because of its inconsistencies[245] and traumatic fragmentation. In fact, it is narrated in a controlled and linear fashion which dissociates it from theories of traumatic memory (Herman 5-6; Caruth 4).[246] Rather, Hage's protagonist presents his tale precisely as the West wishes to consume it, a strategy which allows him to get the

[245] Readers know that the narrator's story is inconsistent (Hage 258), and the narrator himself mentions that he lies to appear more interesting (183; 258).

[246] In contrast, Anne Michaels' *Fugitive Pieces* and Madeleine Thien's *Dogs at the Perimeter* replicate traumatic memory in a literary form through stylistic fragmentation, shifts in perspective, and an emphasis on what cannot be expressed. The "crisis of truth" Felman elaborates concerns the (im)possibility of knowing what happened during a trial which relies on testimonial evidence and which the verdict can resolve (6). In contrast, readers of *Cockroach* cannot know if the protagonist's story is true, false, or partially true.

attention he craves because his lies construct him as a fascinating "noble savage" (Hage 183). This manipulation of his abject status enables him to use his very marginalization to contest his abjection from the dominant.

2.1 Abjection as Hybrid Discourse: Filth, Cockroaches, and the Underground

The blurring scales of Montreal identify the narrator's "abject" status as a form of alienation from the dominant, but abjection is also a discourse he mobilizes to describe himself and others. Much like the narrator's marginalized status within the city, this abject discourse betrays his complicity with the situations, actions, and people he criticizes. In *Cockroach*, this discourse stems from the narrator's attempts to resignify[247] the underground, filth, and cockroaches positively. However, these terms are not fixed metaphors in the novel, but rather constitute an ambivalent literary strategy whose hybridity enables multiple shifts in metaphorical referent. Hybridity in Hage's *Cockroach* is usually understood as cultural (Hout 333-334; Hutchison 4). Yet, the novel mocks Youssef's cultural hybridity, who "would get [his] circumcised dick sucked by those ex-Catholics, and smoke a last cigarette in bed, and in the morning a croissant would hover like a holy crescent at the break of dawn" (Hage 124). The croissant which becomes a holy crescent acts as a point of hybrid cultural belonging, where French cuisine meets the Muslim faith. It is an image which the narrator mobilizes to disparage Youssef's Franco-Algerian identity, particularly as Youssef's faith is desacralized through this equation with food.

In contrast, I examine abjection as a specific hybrid discourse which derives from Kristeva's feminist and psychoanalytic definition of abjection as both desire and fascination.

[247] For Butler, "the most injurious interpellations could also be the site for a radical reoccupation and resignification" (245), which defines resignification as the positive reappropriation of a derogatory term for purposes of resistance.

Since Kristeva's concept has been supplemented to include forms of discrimination such as racism, it is possible to identify the abject as being productive of hybridity, of what lies at the border between the self and the non-self. The narrator's manipulation of abject discourses relates to several issues I discussed in this dissertation so far, such as appropriation, racism, subversion, magic realism, and (playful) intertextuality. *Cockroach*'s abject discourse also introduces what Najat Rahman calls "apocalyptic visions" (800) as a hybrid literary strategy. The parallel between the narrator's suicide attempt and his definition of the underground as an empowering space indicates that the instability of the underground prevents the solidification of a pure space of resistance. It is the ambiguity inherent to the narrator's vision of the underground which subsequently associates this space with the national and global discourses of security, rescue, and disavowal central to the novel's climax.

Kristeva defines the abject as what lies at the border between the self and rejected self, as a pollution which is also desire. What the self understands as abject is the body's refuse, which it simultaneously produces and contains (Kristeva 4; 9). While these discarded bodily products inspire disgust and self-loathing because the self fears being annihilated, they also betray what the subject wants: to project the feelings of loathing which the abject generates onto the other (9). Kristeva's definition insists that the abject "disturbs identity, system, order…[and] does not respect borders, positions, rules" (4), and while the subject experiences joy in the rejection of the abject, the subject remains threatened by this refusal. For that reason, the abject is not a form of uncleanliness, but rather lies in what is "in-between, the ambiguous, the composite" (4). Kristeva does not use the word hybrid to describe the abject, but her emphasis on its in-betweeness and ambiguity corresponds to definitions of hybridity, particularly since Kristeva goes on to link it with ideas of pollution and purity which are

central to the raciological thinking of hybridity (R. Young, *CD* 54). Further, Iris Marion Young uses abjection to describe the process through which individuals reinforce the borders between themselves and others by understanding those who disrupt rigid categorization as abject ("Abjection" 207),[248] a theory which relates to hybridity as it has been historically defined.[249] Abjection can then become a hybrid discourse when filth, disgust, and desire are deployed to reinforce the distinction between the self and the other.

In *Cockroach*, the narrator mobilizes abjection as a way to distinguish himself from others. Yet, he constructs abjection in a contradictory way since it is a self-empowering strategy, but also a disempowering one when projected onto others. It is this contradiction which introduces the notion of complicity to the narrator's abject discourses. Because both he and those he criticizes share the same metaphorical language, his abject discourse points to connections between them instead of reinforcing the border which the narrator believes separates him from those he deems corrupt. The narrator also deploys self-abjection, a discourse which fails to differentiate him from others. Kristeva notes that self-abjection collapses the boundary between the self and the other since it refuses to cast the abject as other to the self (5). For Young, self-abjection occurs when discriminated groups adopt the dominant (white, male, able-bodied) perspective, which explains why racialized peoples can express racism, and why women can be sexist ("Abjection" 210). Young's reinterpretation of Kristeva's theory functions well in the context of *Cockroach*, as her approach emphasizes that those which abjection targets can be complicit with the very discourses that marginalize them.

[248] For instance, those who believe in hegemonic masculinity reinforce the border between themselves and others through sexism and homophobia, two discourses that project an abject status on those that threaten this sense of identity.

[249] As I mentioned in chapter three, people of mixed heritages were interpreted as threatening (Cook-Lynn 69-71), terrifying (Stoler, *Race* 43), and treacherous (Clarke 213) because they could not be easily classified.

The narrator's self-abjection stems from his status within the city. For example, the narrator's altercation with the police fascinates a couple eating in an elegant restaurant as he mentions that "the couple enjoyed watching me, as if I were some reality show about police chasing people with food-envy syndrome" (87). At the same time, the narrator emphasizes that he is beneath them:

> He was the driver.
>
> She was the driven.
>
> I was the insect beneath them. (Hage 88-89)

The protagonist's self-representation as an insect demonstrates that he anticipates how his impoverished status will be perceived. The word "insect" draws a boundary between the narrator and the privileged, and this self-abjection constructs the narrator's subsequent break-in into that couple's home as an act of resistance towards those who categorize him as abject. However, the narrator contradicts this impression when he refers to this couple as "bourgeois *filth*" (88 my emphasis), an expression which blurs the boundary elaborated in the passage above in that it also belongs to the realm of the abject. "Filth" is the narrator's most frequent insult (21; 30; 88; 158; 260; 273; 284), but it also describes the narrator's status as one who lives in "filth and hunger" (52). The narrator's unstable use of the abject then demonstrates his complicity with those he criticizes, since his abject language refers both to them *an*d to his status.

The instability which marks the abject in *Cockroach* also relates to the narrator's unsuccessful attempt to establish the underground, a space inhabited by the abject, as a space of possibilities. The novel opens with references to the protagonist's failed suicide attempt, which was motivated by feelings of oppression and a desire to resist them:

> my suicide attempt was only my way to escape the permanence of the sun … I had attempted suicide out of a kind of curiosity, or maybe as a challenge to nature, to the cosmos itself, to the recurring light. I felt oppressed by it all. The question of existence consumed me. (Hage 4)

The narrator mentions the oppressive powers of light[250] and the sun at other moments (6; 11; 32; 35; 118; 153). He defines spaces bathed in light as uncontrollable because "nothing made sense to [him] anymore" (32) when he occupies them. This configuration of light becomes an intertextual reference to Albert Camus' *L'étranger*,[251] a novel in which the protagonist inadvertently commits murder because he is incapacitated by the sun. Camus' protagonist proves incapable of controlling himself whenever there is too much light, or whenever it is too hot. Hage playfully engages with Camus' text not only through this intertextual reference, but also when the narrator declares that Youssef, the Algerian émigré, "wants to shower me with his existentialist questions" (10). Additionally, when the narrator breaks into Genevieve's house, he distances himself from his actions because he figures himself as a cockroach and constantly refers to himself as "the stranger" (84). This intertextuality also becomes playful because the sun, which baked the narrator's skin, is responsible for the racism which the narrator experiences at the hand of Maître Pierre (29). Lastly, when Majeed informs the narrator that Montreal is designing light weapons for child soldiers in Iran, the narrator responds "I am always suspicious of the light" (282), a statement which puns on the oppressive qualities of light, and light weapons.

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[250] In "White Mythology," Derrida notes that the sun as a metaphor recalls the oppressive power of patriarchal law (291; 318), while "light" is associated with genius, intellect, and reasoning (307). Hage's narrator engages with this construction because inhabiting the underground enables an escape from the law, and a succumbing to instincts over reasons, as the cockroach takes precedence over the human. This metaphorical application of the sun corresponds to that of Ondaatje's *The Collected Works of Billy the Kid*, where the sun is simultaneously an agent of oppression, as the scene coincides with Billy's arrest, and (passive) sexual pleasure.

[251] This intertextuality also engages with Hage's *De Niro's Game*, where the protagonist reads Camus' novel.

While this form of intertextuality may not appear to be a hybrid literary strategy of abjection, its presence and intelligibility within the narrative is dependent upon the narrator's desire to resignify the abject. The protagonist's lack of control in the presence of light is contrasted with his self-designation as "the master of the underground" (Hage 23), where "all [his] powers will be revealed from below" (26). The oppressive power of light stands in opposition to the narrator's use of drains as gateways to the underground. In *Cockroach*, drains lead to "a place where the refuse of stained faces, infamous hands, dirty feet, and deep purple gums gathered in a large pool for slum kids to swim, splash and play in" (22). In other words, drains allow for an escape into the underground, which is itself represented as a space the underprivileged can enjoy. Drains and sewers fascinate the narrator (Seiler 234), as is illustrated in his frequent references to Shohreh's pee (Hage 14; 246; 249). Sakr interprets the underground as embodying the narrator's quest for truth because it allows the protagonist to escape his traumatic past (344). The underground is connected to the literature of trauma, as Dostoevsky figured it as a space where resistance to oppression arises [see *Notes from the Underground* (Felman 12)].[252] The notion of escape is crucial to the manner in which drains operate in the text, but I would argue that they relate not only to the truth society denies and which the narrator seeks (Seiler 234), but also to the connections between victims and perpetrators which the narrator disavows.

While the narrator initially mobilizes abjection to contest his alienation and his poverty, it becomes an unstable and hybrid metaphor because it oscillates between empowerment and oppression. Unlike Kafka's *The Metamorphosis*, *Cockroach* initially configures the cockroach positively. For the narrator, the underground is the space "only

[252] Hage acknowledges that Russian writers, including Dostoevsky, have influenced his writing (Wagner ¶21).

vermin can go through" (24), an assertion which defines his status as a "cockroach" (5; 23; 79; 83; 245) and as an "insect" (34; 88) positively. Throughout the novel, the protagonist wilfully identifies as a "vermin" (Hage 24; 122) to underline his agency. He mentions he can go through spaces "only vermin can go through" (22) in order to emphasize his skill as a thief, and uses the same word to assert his existence and to insist that he is not a hypocrite: "I am not a hypocrite about it [being a welfare recipient]. Yes, I am poor, I am vermin (sic), a bug, I am at the bottom of the scale. But I still exist" (122). In this context, the narrator identifies as the abject, as representing poverty and what society does not dwell on. His voluntary identification with the abject thereby marks his resistance towards those who would deny the abject space he represents, that of "the bad smells from sewers, infested slums, unheated apartments, single moms on welfare, worn-out clothing" (182). Similarly, as he makes love to Shohreh, the protagonist mentions that "we rolled in the dirt and made love in the dirt until dirt became our emblem" (182), a passage which signals the narrator's desire to merge with the abject.[253] His association with cockroaches, which takes the form of frequent magic realist transformations, seemingly indicates that he understands those insects as empowering.[254] In his cockroach state, the protagonist can break into homes (79; 88) and follow people (124; 270), as his hybrid state enables agency.

However, it was also his sister who turned him into a cockroach during a sexualized childhood game.[255] This connection identifies the cockroach as both empowering (Hout 339) and traumatic, because the narrator feels responsible for his sister's death. The link between

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[253] This merging enables his transformation into a vermin, as a becoming-cockroach, to paraphrase Deleuze and Guattari, relies on entering "the zone of proximity of the animal molecule" (274-275), of extracting "a shared element from the animal" (279).

[254] Hage asserts that he "chose the cockroach because it's close to the earth … the cockroach is a survivor, not very welcome, resilient, and a creature that penetrates people's homes very easily" (qtd in Wagner ¶19-20).

[255] Similarly, in *The Metamorphosis*, the connection between Gregor and his sister is central to the unfolding of the narrative.

his sister and the insect illustrates the instability of the cockroach metaphor, as it soon comes to stand for oppression. The narrator indeed kills cockroaches because they are “invaders” (178), and believes, as he tells the albino cockroach, that these insects have an “evil” plan (202). His conversation with this giant cockroach demonstrates that the narrator does not always view cockroaches positively, since he views them as subordinates, while he has “the courage to refuse, to confront” (203). Later on, the narrator repeats the albino cockroach’s proposition that he is “part cockroach” (203; 245-246). He may have mixed feelings about being a hybrid human-cockroach, but the albino cockroach’s argument that the narrator will only overcome his incapacity to act once he joins the underground is appealing to him. When the narrator mentions that he “never wanted to” be a cockroach “it just happened. I think the species chose me” (246), he betrays the fact that his repulsion towards cockroaches has become desire. The resemblance between Hage’s novel and Kafka’s *The Metamorphosis* nonetheless casts doubt on the possibility for the cockroach to act as an agent of oppression, since the cockroach state functions as a projection of disgust onto a subordinated and exploited person, but also enables escape in Hage’s novel. The instability of the cockroach metaphor then prevents its complete resignification, and points to the coercive potential of the narrator’s acts of resistance.

2.2 Apocalypse: Between Destruction and Revelation

The narrator’s use of apocalyptic discourses disrupts his attempt to figure the underground as an empowering space even more. In her reading of Hage’s *De Niro’s Game*, Najat Rahman identifies apocalyptic narratives as a stylistic device which allows for the narration of destruction, traumatic memory, and hope (800). Apocalyptic visions are also a stylistic feature of Hage’s *Cockroach*, but they are developed to different ends. Hage does not

utilize the apocalypse as a generic feature, since it describes texts which portray an old order violently or abruptly transformed into a new and idealized one (Goldman 3). In her study of the apocalypse in Canadian literature, Marlene Goldman proposes MacLennan's *Barometer Rising*, Mitchell's *Who Has Seen the Wind*, and Watson's *The Double Hook* as examples of apocalyptic narratives, while texts like Ondaatje's *The English Patient*, King's *Green Grass, Running Water*, and Kogawa's *Obasan* subversively engage with the same form. She argues that these post-second world war Canadian novels modify apocalyptic visions because they focus on those who suffer from the violence the apocalypse unleashes (10).[256] *Cockroach* differs from the texts which Goldman examines, as it deploys apocalyptic *discourses* which rely heavily on notions of abjection, but do not feature the characteristics of the apocalypse narrative. Instead, Hage deploys "popular-secular[257] apocalyptic" visions "to shock, alarm, or enrage" (Bull 5). Redemption can be teased out of Hage's novel, but the visions of destruction which the narrator utters are meant as curses against those he deems corrupt. As a literary form, apocalypse relies on "the stark opposition between good and evil" (Goldman 11), an element which the narrator's use of apocalyptic discourse contradicts because it deploys the same unstable language he uses to reconfigure the underground. If apocalyptic visions are meant to highlight the distinction between the human and the inhuman (Rahman 802), or the elect and the non-elect (Goldman 4), then Hage's stylistic use of apocalyptic visions emphasize the hybrid space where these binaries collapse. More specifically, these apocalyptic passages betray the narrator's complicity with those he criticizes.

[256] It is also important to note that apocalypse connotes absolute destruction, but denotes the "unveiling" of the truth (Goldman 12-14)
[257] Bull differentiates secular manifestations of apocalypse in popular discourses, which focus on environment disaster or nuclear holocausts, from the religious, millenarian tradition.

The apocalyptic language the narrator mobilizes thereby destabilizes his reconfiguration of the abject further. The narrator asserts that he can “live in filth and hunger” (Hage 52) and that he “can tolerate filth” (52),[258] but “filth” and “residue” remain the primary words through which he condemns those he deems corrupt. In such instances, the abject is not deployed positively, but rather marks a distinction between the narrator and others, one which is essential to his apocalyptic visions since they require that the human be separated from the non-human (Rahman 802). Because he uses filth as an insult, the narrator presents himself as better than those he challenges and who are therefore deemed abject. This new configuration of abjection as a means through which others can be cursed is relevant to the narrator’s apocalyptic visions, where “the destruction and end concern the other, not the self” (Rahman 802). However, the narrator’s visions are so unstable that they do at times feature him as a doomed figure. When he criticizes his vegan neighbours for their acts of cultural appropriation, he comments that these “bleached Brahmins” (Hage 21) are “comedians on a Greek stage” (21) who will inevitably obtain corporate jobs. Meanwhile, he mentions that it is “I, and the likes of me, who will be eating nature’s refuse under dying trees” (21) while they go to barbecues. This vision of “doom” is not apocalyptic in the traditional “end of days” sense, but rather acts as an unveiling of the truth through which the narrator criticizes those who engage in acts of appropriation. In another instance, he denounces “all those McGill university graduates” who “love to hide their degrees, their old money, their future corporate jobs by coming here dressed like beggars, hoodlums, dangerous degenerate minorities” (228). While this passage does not feature apocalyptic connotations, it echoes the scene where

[258] The narrator however contradicts himself later on as he asserts that he does not like to smell poverty (Hage 121) and is repulsed by filth (279). These passages demonstrate that he cannot entirely resignify abjection as a space he can “master.”

Hage's protagonist criticized the "Brahmins" and their desire to conceal their wealth through cultural appropriation, though the graduates appropriate a "dispossessed" material condition. In these two contexts, the narrator's apocalyptic discourse exposes those who are "elected" from the perspective of the non-elect.

Yet, the narrator does not sustain this specific configuration, as he tends to represent himself as the only survivor of his apocalyptic visions. When Maître Pierre's racism forces the narrator to quit his job, he curses Pierre through a long apocalyptic vision where cockroaches and the oppressed take over his restaurant:

> I promised him that one day he would be serving only giant cockroaches on his velvet chairs. … better serve crumbs and slimy dew on your chewable menu, Monsieur Pierre, or your business will be doomed … Doomed you will be, doomed as you are infested with newcomers! … Repent you pompous erectile creatures! (Hage 30-31).

This vision details the abject taking over a space reserved for the privileged classes, which implies that the narrator will be unaffected by this change since the apocalypse corresponds to his current status. Similarly, his impression that he is "the last human on the planet" (118) has everyone else "destroyed by some bright white light" (118). His apocalyptic visions therefore enable him to imagine a world in which he is the only survivor, mostly because he figures himself as the non-elect. One of his visions has everyone "zipped up to heaven. Only the likes of me had been left to face the creatures, the future rulers of the earth [cockroaches]" (201). These apocalyptic visions point to the instability of the cockroach metaphor, as the narrator avoids destruction because he is one (30-31; 118), but cockroaches also stand for the new oppressive masters. Indeed, visions of cockroaches taking over the planet threaten both him and others (7; 30; 31; 210), and cockroaches also stand in for various oppressors.

For instance, Shohreh is inspired to kill them because "her country had also been left to the cockroaches" (53), and these insects represent those who prevent her "from showing [her] hair, from holding [her] lover's arm in public…" (54). This interpretation confirms the narrator's view that the albino cockroach has an "evil, oppressive" project (201). It also comments on the (im)possibility for apocalyptic discourses to bear the potential for change and renewal, since the Iranian revolution is configured through the abject language of filth and cockroaches, rather than represented as an idealized world order.[259] Meanwhile, the narrator's war on cockroaches in his apartment is based on a technique employed by a totalitarian regime, as his goal is to "keep those insects on their toes! Guilty or not, present or not" (128). In other words, the narrator here casts himself in the role of the oppressor preying on civilian victims, a vision which explicitly contradicts his belief that it is cockroaches who have an "evil" plan (201). Such metaphorical instability entails that the use of the abject in *Cockroach* constitutes a hybrid literary strategy; the text insists that it is impossible to reconfigure the abject completely because the metaphor always oscillates between empowerment and oppression. To do so would be to become like one of Sylvie's friends, who is obsessed with feces to the point where "he eats them… he calls them *mes petits bonbons*" (186).[260] Abjection thus becomes a marker of complicity because of its instability, which subsequently stresses the fragility of the boundaries the narrator elaborates between the self and the other.

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[259] The narrator's argument that the albino cockroach has an evil project stems from his belief that the world has just come to an end where "only the likes of me had been left to face the creatures" (201). He is here convinced that the albino cockroach is a member of the new ruling race, which constructs, through the cockroach metaphor, an apocalyptic connection with the Iranian regime as Shohreh interprets it.

[260] This man's action effectively eradicates the boundaries and classification through which the world is ordered. For Mary Douglas, the concepts of purity and pollution, and the danger that lies between them, have been elaborated to make sense of the world (3). For instance, cleanliness requires that "anything issuing from the body is never to be readmitted but strictly avoided" (152). Sylvie's friend then collapses the boundary between the clean and the unclean, but his transgression is not met with the usual ostracizing (121). Rather, the abject is here resignified and turned into candy.

3.1 Consuming Refugees, Reacting Like a State

The abject hybridity the text deploys also impacts *Cockroach*'s plot, and increases the blurring of scales that marks the novel's setting. The novel's climactic ending relates to the discovery that Montreal is selling weapons to Iran, a deal which Shaheed, Shohreh's torturer, is in Montreal to conclude. For Seiler, the novel's "dramatic conclusion" can be read as "evidence that the narrator has finally cast off the burden of guilt and indecision that has weighted so heavily upon him" (236). Hout echoes this sentiment, in that she believes that Shohreh's "request that he help her kill the Iranian who tortured and raped her offers him the chance to overcome his guilt complex" (339). However, Seiler also argues that the same scene could be interpreted as "yet another manifestation of madness, destructive, and, above all, self-delusional" (236), a statement which stresses *Cockroach*'s textual instability. The novel's conclusion can also be read as demonstrating that the narrator participates in the discourses he initially criticizes. Since Hage's protagonist consumes narratives of refugees and exiles in his interactions with Shohreh, Fahroud, and Youssef, he becomes complicit with the Western desire to read and "fix" refugees and their identities.[261] The binaries the narrator constructs allow him to determine whose refugee story can be believed, who can be saved, and who must die. These borders are however fragile, and even collapse after he discovers Montreal's involvement in the global arms trade. The border crisis which this discovery represents leads the narrator to rely on state discourses of security, where the distinction between the self and the other, the "here" and the "there," can be reaffirmed and reasserted through violence. Much like Western states, the narrator subsequently deploys the concept of rescue as a strategy

[261] Carrie Dawson's "On Thinking Like a State and Reading (about) Refugees" develops "reading refugees" as the technique through which (Canadian) citizens assign legitimate (or illegitimate) refugee status to claimants in an attempt to "fix immigrant identities" (61).

through which his violence can be resignified as "justice." Hout reads the narrator's final escape through the drain as constituting "a return to an equilibrium he had lost, to a self cleansed from a burden, and thus to his dead sister, whose presence once provided his only sense of home" (339). However, *Cockroach* does not present such a cathartic resolution. Rather, the narrator's escape from the novel constitutes a form of complicity with global oppression, as it allows him to disavow his actions.

Cockroach features a critique of the Western consumption of otherness, but the narrator also consumes Shohreh, Fahroud, and Youssef's tales of exile.[262] These life stories differ from the one which the narrator provides about his past, for Hage's protagonist foregrounds the constructed nature of his narrative. This subversive intent does not apply to Shohreh, Farhoud, and Youssef, whose refugee stories are presented coherently and interpreted through the same logic states employ to determine if a claimant is a legitimate refugee. Nyers notes that refugees must define themselves in relation to what he calls "refugeeness" (*RR* xv), a concept which encapsulates "a general condition of homelessness" (xv), and which understands refugees as speechless and invisible victims of oppression (45). Malkki stresses this point further when she asserts that refugees must be "pure victims" (378), since Western states view the notion of "refugee warrior" as an oxymoron (Nyers, *RR* 103). These expectations are crucial to an understanding of refugee narratives, because the refugee process relies on a coherent act of storytelling (Dawson, "Thinking" 61)[263] which will convince state officials that claimants have a "well-founded fear of being persecuted" (Nyers,

[262] Hage's protagonist also hears Majeed's story, but since this tale does not generate the same reactions as those of Fahroud, Shohreh, and Youssef, I will not explore it in this chapter.
[263] In her analysis of the literature of trauma, Tal also points to the importance of coherence while bearing witness. If theories of traumatic memory understand memory as fragmented and the traumatic event as impossible to represent (Herman 5-6; Caruth 4), the literature of trauma codifies the event to ensure that its retelling does not threaten the status quo (Tal 6-7).

RR 45). This narrative expectation forces refugees to occupy an in-between status, where they are caught between reason ("well-founded") and emotions ("fear") (45). A successful refugee narrative thus hinges on its coherence, and on the status of the claimant as "pure victim."

These state requirements influence literary production, in that refugee narratives must comply with certain norms in order to obtain the desired reaction. Schaffer and Smith note that narratives and testimonies concerned with refugees and human rights have the power to legitimize state intervention because they put a "human face" on suffering (Schaffer and Smith 3). They mention that the empathy which the text generates confirms that, while refugees might be victims, the Western audience constitutes an empowered agent for "humanitarian betterment" (25). Slaughter cites the example of *The Kite Runner* as a text which helped legitimize the intervention in Afghanistan (38). Texts about refugees and human rights abuses therefore have an impact on how Western audiences understand conflicts and the refugee condition, but only if they vilify, as *The Kite Runner* does, those the West understands as "barbarians" (Slaughter 38) and develop a sense of triumph over adversity (Schaffer and Smith 24-25). In "Reflections on Exile," Said criticizes the literature of exile because it objectifies and banalizes "an anguish and a predicament most people rarely experience firsthand" (174). Said's critique points to the impossibility of adequately representing the condition of exile in literature, and also exposes the expectation that a literary text can "authentically" represent refugees and exiles. Yet, the literature which explores exile and the refugee condition can still provide insights into the reception of refugee narratives, as well as the narrative structure these stories must adopt in order to be accepted.

In *Cockroach*, the narrator extirpates three refugee narratives, and the manner in which he obtains these stories, as well as his subsequent reactions to the information, expose the

manner in which tales of exile are consumed in and by the West. The narrator learns about Shohreh and Farhoud's pasts through first-person accounts. For instance, he tells Shohreh he will only help her if she tells him about Shaheed, a request which forces her to relate the circumstances of her arrest, imprisonment, and rape following the Iranian revolution (Hage 246). While Hage argues that Genevieve violates the narrator's silence when she asks him about his past (qtd in Sakr 348), the narrator enacts the same violation here. This scene qualifies as consumption because the narrator subsequently appropriates Shohreh's tale by equating her with his sister (248), which enables him to satisfy his own desires to make amends and exact revenge. Instead of helping Shohreh, the narrator is rather helping himself overcome the powerlessness he manifested when he could not kill his brother-in-law (243), meaning that he is transforming Shohreh's life into an event that is of significance *to him*.

My interpretation corresponds to Hout's, who reads Shaheed's murder as a "symbolic return… to his dead sister" (339). However, Hout's positive reading leaves out the narrator's appropriation of Shohreh's pain, as well as the sort of narrative Shohreh must produce. When the protagonist relates his traumatic tale, he exercises agency. He is involved in petty crimes, and even elaborates a plan meant to "save" his sister, but which instead results in her death. The narrator's status as a "victim" is thereby complicated because of the responsibility he bears in the traumatic event.[264] In contrast, Shohreh's story is straightforward and coherent. She figures herself as a student protestor arrested following the revolution, which constructs

[264] I do not wish to assert that the narrator's trauma is illegitimate. As Tal mentions, those who are simultaneously victims and perpetrators occupy a more ambiguous position than those conventionally understood as victims of trauma (10). The narrator's story then does not correspond to the conventions of trauma narratives, which rely on the "impossibility of knowing" (Caruth 10) the traumatic hold of the event. For Herman, trauma necessitates a clear demarcation between victims and perpetrators (5), one which Tal and Kaplan question (Tal 10; Kaplan 15). For Laub, the trauma narrative enables survival through telling (63), an assertion which the narrator also defies in that it is through actions that he handles the traumatic event, as shown in his decision to help Shohreh. Hage does not, however, employ the same subversive strategies with Shohreh or Farhoud.

her as the victim of a fundamentalist regime known in the West for its oppressive stance towards women.[265] This story configures Shohreh as a "pure victim" (Malkii 348; Seiler 235), especially since the regime, which Shaheed represents, exposes its religious hypocrisy when Shaheed rapes her repeatedly. The narrator's decision to help is then facilitated because Shohreh's narrative confirms preconceptions about Iran and constructs her as unable to act.

The narrator's request to hear Farhoud's story is less manipulative (107), but because the narrator does not share his story, this scene still acts as an instance of consumption. Farhoud is meant to provide the narrator with insight, since the narrator first asks: "how did we end up here [Montreal]" (107). Once more, the narrator manages to appropriate another's story to find excitement. Because a Canadian diplomat abused Fahroud, Hage's protagonist suggests wetting the diplomat's "towel with dog piss" (112) as an act of revenge, an idea which reaffirms the narrator's need for action in Canada. When interpreted in this light, both Shohreh and Farhoud's stories serve to "liven up" (hooks 21) the narrator's life. Like Sylvie and her friends, who "felt like they were in the presence of a noble savage" (183) as they listened to the narrator's violent stories, the narrator's desire for violence is only fulfilled through this consumption of exotic stories. Fahroud, however, refuses the narrator's suggestion, since the latter's desire to "settle a score" for Fahroud is met with anger: "what score? Do you know how many scores there are to settle in my life? Do you? Do you?" (112). Fahroud here confirms his status as "pure victim," not only because his story is coherent and clearly identifies Iran's homophobia and Canada's xenophobia as responsible for his suffering, but also because his anger following the narrator's suggestion demonstrates the emotional

[265] The assumption that Iran is repressive towards women is a common one, which Mohanty sees in the Western assumptions that the veil constitutes misogynistic oppression ("Under" 209). The idea of Iranian women as disempowered victims, in the way Azar Nafisi insists in *Reading Lolita in Tehran*, has also been challenged. See for example Fatemeh Keshavarz's *Jasmine and Stars: Reading More than Lolita in Tehran*.

weight of his trauma. Fahroud's story thus strikes the perfect balance between reason and emotions that refugee narratives require (Nyers, *RR* 45). Neither Shohreh nor Farhoud subvert narrative conventions with their tales of exile, and their coherence and construction of the subject as an absolute victim demonstrates the narrator's complicity with the forms of consumption he criticizes when he narrates his own tale of exile.

The protagonist's participation in this form of consumerism is also demonstrated in the manner in which he obtains Youssef's story. This narrative is not retold in the form of a testimony, but rather reconstructed when the narrator steals Youssef's immigration file from the latter's apartment. In this file, the narrator finds a passport, "a few X-rays, an official letter of amnesty addressed to the professor, and other documents in Arabic" (Hage 150). The distinction between Shohreh and Fahroud on the one hand, and Youssef on the other, signals the narrator's ability to occupy a state-like position. While Shohreh and Fahroud's stories cast them as victims of an unjust regime, Youssef's file requires that the story be pieced together, but without the first person testimony which would put a "human face on suffering" (Schaffer and Smith 3).[266] From the fragments of conversation Hage provides, readers learn that Youssef's status as a victim is not as straightforward as Fahroud and Shohreh's, since Youssef was tortured by "both sides" (116). Youssef claims that he "exposed the Algerian dictatorship for what it was, and also exposed the plan of the bearded ones for a theocratic state" (116). Youssef supports his assertions with documentation (116), but his ambiguous status as one tortured by both sides obfuscates attempts to understand what his position is. In other words, readers know what Youssef fought against, but they do not know what he is fighting for. In

[266] Souvankham Thammavongsa plays with the immigration file convention in her poetry collection *Found*. Like Hage's novel, Thammavongsa defeats the expectation for narrative as the documents cannot provide the emotional, yet coherent story which the audience desires.

contrast, Shohreh, Fahroud and Majeed all provide a clear reason for their persecution, as they are respectively a student protestor, a homosexual, and a socialist. Fahroud and Shohreh's stories inspire the narrator to intervene; but Youssef's story only generates the narrator's contempt. This distinction between the narrator's two different reactions exposes the precarious nature of refugee narratives, which risk dismissal if they fail to generate empathy. It also signals that the narrator engages in the same type of distinctions states make between deserving and undeserving refugees. Just like the narrator's apocalyptic visions allow him to distinguish between the elect and the non-elect, his consumption of refugee narratives enables him to determine whose tale deserves attention.

3.2 Security, Rescue, and (Il)legitimate Violence

The narrator's decision to help Shohreh subsequently connects the abject discourse he mobilizes with his ability to appropriate state discourses of security, rescue, and disavowal. Security constitutes a national discourse through which the state determines that its literal and metaphorical borders are under threat (Rahman 800) and must therefore defend itself through global military interventions (Brodie 691). As Rahman notes, the security of those under attack is rarely a concern (800), since security relies on biopolitical distinctions between the self, who must be protected, and others, who "must be killed so that we can live" (Razack "Afterword" 819). This narrative is enacted in Canada's self-designation as a "global peacekeeper" (Härting and Kamboureli 660), which casts military interventions as inevitable necessities (Brodie 701) and as "just wars" (Hardt and Negri, *Empire* xv; *Multitude* 23-24). Security discourses also reaffirm the border between the self and the other which global events threaten, and justify the increased militarization of Western countries (Brodie 691). For example, soldiers "have described their activities … as encounters with 'absolute evil'"

(Razack, *DT* 15), a depiction which effectively reinforces the border between the self as civilized and the other as savage.[267] For Razack, such claims not only replicate colonial and imperial constructions of the other (10; 17), but also understand the violence of military interventions as prompted by "the cruelties of Africa and Africans" (24). Security narratives then require the disavowal of this excessive force so that Canadians can maintain their belief that they live in "the nicest place on Earth" (Razack, *DT* 9; Coleman 36), even though Canada participates in torture (Somalia), imperialism (Afghanistan), and bombardments (Serbia, Kosovo) (Jefferess 712).[268] Security is then connected to the narrator's abject discourse, as both rely on firm boundaries between the self and the other and function through camouflage and disavowal.

Cockroach's narrator experiences issues of border crisis because his relationship with others and his understanding of space rely on the elaboration of firm boundaries between the self and the other, and between "here" and "there." These boundaries are impossible to maintain, not only because the narrator's abject discourse is unstable, but also because the scales of the global have become inseparable. The narrator's repeated use of the word "filth" to expose those he criticizes can thus be interpreted as a continuous attempt to re-establish threatened borders. Similarly, the narrator creates firm spatial distinctions between Montreal and his country of origin, where the predominant point of contrast between "over here" and "over there" is the wealth of Montreal contrasted to the poverty of his home country. For

[267] This form of imperialism is enshrined in literature, as explored in Razack's *Dark Threats and White Knights* and Said's *Culture and Imperialism*. Canadian novels such as Bush's *The Rules of Engagement*, Ondaatje's *Anil's Ghost*, and Echlin's *The Disappeared* also operate to legitimize, or argue in favour of, Western interventions, and do so without addressing the legitimacy of the West to intervene, or the manner in which it is complicit with dictatorial regimes or human rights abuses.

[268] Jefferess argues that every military intervention is constructed as an "aberration" which deters from Canada's peacekeeping mission (712). Likewise, Razack exposes the fact that the torture and murder of Somalis was constructed as the work of a few "bad apples" in the military rather than as symptomatic of racism (Razack, *DT* 89).

Jiwani, creating fixed demarcations between places configures certain issues as belonging "over there," while simultaneously erasing their existence "over here" (740). The narrator participates in this boundary construction until the end of the novel, since he assumes that Canadians are pacifists (Hage 98), while his home country is inherently violent (64; 78; 168). It is only once he learns that Montreal sells weapons to Iran (281) that he begins to understand that Montreal cannot be simply equated with peace: the local and the global blur, as Montreal depends economically on Iran, while the latter relies on Montreal's weapons to sustain its regime. This interdependence indicates the hypocrisy of the local, as its economic relations contradict its national dedication to democracy, and also demonstrates the degree to which relations between places are multiply displaced. The narrator is indeed surprised that Canada manufactures weapons, as his first impulse is to interrupt Majeed in disbelief while the latter explains the Iranian weapon deal: "but Canada..." (281).[269] The country's image as a peacekeeper indeed masks the "ugly side" of Montreal, which portrays itself as "this happy, romantic city" (281). This passage then not only signals that the local is implicated in acts of global violence, but also marks the collapse of the narrator's firm boundary between Montreal as safe and the "East" as unsafe.

The narrator's decision to kill Shaheed then functions as an attempt to re-establish the border between "here" and "there" that the arms deal threatens. In her discussion of trauma in Hage's *Cockroach*, Hout mentions that traumatic events can be collective and global in consequence (like the Holocaust), or personal when they stem from "rape and bereavement"

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[269] The exposure of Canada's undemocratic actions and complicity with global violence connects Hage's novel with a tradition of Canadian writing that include Lee's *Civil Elegies*, Kogawa's *Obasan* and *Itsuka*, Sakamoto's *The Electrical Field*, and Armstrong *Slash* and *Whispering in Shadows*. Those texts are often appropriated by dominant Canadians to reinforce their dedication to civility, as they demonstrate that Canada does not hide its "mistakes" (Coleman 36).

(331). In light of this dichotomy between the collective and the personal, the novel's climactic ending can be read as a localization and personalization of a global and collective trauma. If the literature of trauma relies on a constant retelling of the experience in order to "make it 'real' both to the victim and to the community" (Tal 21), many novels which explore traumatic global events tend to personalize these events in order to make them more intelligible.[270] *Cockroach*'s focus on Shohreh's story functions in the same way. The novel exposes Canada's complicity with Iran, but the violence the novel then deploys targets neither Canada nor the Iranian regime responsible for Shohreh's torture. Rather, this global network of violence is personified in the figure of Shaheed, whose death can restore the narrator's boundary between Montreal and the East, because Shaheed acts as representative of Iran and oppression. It is Shaheed, and not Canada, who is dehumanized through an association with cockroaches (54), which allows global oppression to be displaced and relocalized in Montreal. The plan the characters elaborate would not alter the status quo, as it cannot affect Canada or its economic interests. Instead, it constitutes a symbolic attack on what threatens the characteristics the narrator associates with Canada, a feature which aligns his reaction with security discourses that aim to maintain a state's interests.

The narrator's decision to help Shohreh also relies on rescue narratives, which allow him to mask the violence his plan entails. Because security discourses are performed with specific interests in mind (Rahman 800), they tend to be configured as humanitarian (Härting and Kamboureli 661). Current military interventions thus mobilize the concept of "rescue" to

[270] For example, Rushdie's *Shalimar the Clown* discusses terrorism through a character whose terrorist affiliations stem from a failed relationship. Rushdie's *Fury* explores the rise of a global sense of anger and resentment through a father's near act of domestic violence. Ian McEwan's *Saturday* personalizes the 2003 invasion of Iraq through a man's escalating altercations with a mentally ill driver, and Echlin's *The Disappeared* makes the Cambodian genocide intelligible through her Montreal protagonist's passionate relationship with a Cambodian refugee.

argue for the need to "save" women; conflicts are thereby portrayed as "just," and in the interest of peace (Hardt and Negri, *Empire* xv; 12).[271] Rescue is connected to security discourses because both depend on biopolitical distinctions, and on a patriarchal vision which stipulates that racialized others and women need to be dominated (Razack, *DT* 59). The narrative of rescue constitutes a re-articulation of former imperialist policies where white men strove to "save brown women from brown men" (Spivak 92), which demonstrates how the temporal distinction between imperialism and globalization tends to blur. However, rescue is not an absolute discourse. In order to be saved, women must first be considered as deserving of rescue (Jiwani 735), a logic which, like the refugee category, requires women to be absolute victims of patriarchal power (735). Like security narratives, rescue separates the self from the other: women "abroad" are exotically configured as quintessential victims of violent men, while gendered violence in Western countries is understood as isolated occurrences rather than as a societal problem (740).[272] It also requires the adoption of a contradictory form of hegemonic masculinity where men are simultaneously gallant protectors and violent aggressors. The chivalric men who wish to protect women and children must first construct their protégés as subordinated to them, a role which depends on the image of the male as the "selfish aggressor who wishes to invade the lord's property and sexually conquer his women" (I.M. Young, "Logic" 4). The rhetoric of rescue therefore conceals violence and its colonial legacy in its enactment of hegemonic masculinity.

[271] In *Multitude*, Hardt and Negri distance the concept of the contemporary "just war" from that of rescue. For them, a "just war" now aims to maintain "a permanent stasis of global order" (24).

[272] Rescue narratives are also linked to a form of Eurocentric feminism, one which Mohanty criticizes in "Under Western Eyes" and in "'Under Western Eyes' Revisited." The sixteen year gap between the two articles demonstrates the extent to which the issues Mohanty discussed in 1986 have persisted, though they are now manifested in different forms. While I read rescue as the discourse which camouflages security narratives, the two differ in that the latter describes a contemporary situation which requires the increased militarization of the state: security no longer focuses on the welfare of citizens, but is rather concerned with defending the state through pre-emptive and imperialistic interventions abroad (Brodie 703).

While Hage's protagonist initially appears to disagree with rescue narratives, his behaviour often adheres to them in all of their inherent contradictions. At first, the narrator's relationship with Shohreh contradicts the logic of protection which Shohreh's Iranian acquaintances endorse. Reza, for instance, argues that Shohreh "is not that kind of girl, she is Iranian. She is like a sister, and I have to protect her from dirty Arabs like you" (Hage 15). In contrast, Shohreh sleeps with the narrator because she wants to make "Reza and his like … understand, once and for all, that I am not their virgin on hold, not their smothering mother, not their obedient sister. I am not a testament to their male, nationalistic honour" (52). Since the narrator accepts Shohreh's conditions, it would appear that he rejects the logic of rescue by which she would need to be protected. Initially, their relationship allows them to challenge the way in which Reza views them, as a "sister" and as a "dirty Arab." However, the narrator's relationships with women demonstrate that he is both the violent chronic seducer *and* the chivalric protector which Young criticizes ("Logic" 4). The narrator blames his mental instability on the fact that he inhabits a world he "can neither participate in nor control" (Hage 5), but his therapist identifies his interactions with women as the source of his problems (5). Indeed, his self-abjection and his cockroach state derive from his interactions with women, since his sister is the one who first turned him into one during a childhood game so that they could "play underground" (5-6). The narrator himself wonders at his

> need to seduce and possess every female of the species that comes my way. When I see a woman, I feel my teeth getting thinner, longer, pointed. My back hunches and my forehead sprouts two antennae that sway in the air, flagging a need for attention. I want to crawl under the feet of the women I meet and admire from below their upright posture, their delicate ankles. I also feel repulsed – not embarrassed, but repulsed – by

> slimy feelings of cunning and need. It is a bizarre mix of emotions and instinct that comes over me, compelling me to approach these women like a hunchback in the presence of schoolgirls. (3)

This passage signals the links the narrator draws between seduction and possession, between admiration of women, and his own cockroach-ness. He constructs himself as simultaneously seducing, yet aggressively possessing women, where his admiration of their form requires that he occupies an abject position because he admires them from below, without their consent. This expression of his masculinity is contradictory, because he is simultaneously subordinated to women, yet he expresses his attraction through the hegemonic language of seduction and possession.

His admiration is also one which repulses him, an admission which points to simultaneous fascination and disgust, but also underlines that he loathes his role as an admirer and seducer because it requires "cunning and need" (3). Further, the narrator's self-abjection does not always place him in a subordinate position. Not only does he tell his sister that he intends to make the girls who like him cry (234), but his struggle with Shohreh in Montreal also indicates that he wishes to subordinate women to him. That scene begins playfully with a snow fight, but soon turns violent as the narrator "[wrestles] her in the snow… [and crucifies] her wrists" despite the fact that Shohreh tells him to "let go" (74). The narrator maintains Shohreh in the snow even longer:

> I pressed her some more, and she turned and shook her whole body violently. Let go, you bastard. Now! I still held her, not letting her go. When I tried to hold her face between my palms, she liberated one of her hands and scratched my face, cursed me, and threw ice in my eyes. (74)

The narrator affirms that he is "in love with Shoreh" (3), but this symbolic rape demonstrates the extent to which the narrator's love is laced with a form of violence that strives to control and subordinate those he loves, as he desperately seeks to keep them close to him. This domination also characterizes his relationship with his sister, where his desire to kill her abusive husband was in direct contradiction with his sister's wishes (234). The narrator's relationships with women then reveal the extent to which his masculinity is at odds with their desires.

In addition, the narrator articulates masculinity and love through his self-designation as a saviour of women. For example, he fantasizes about rescuing the women murdered in *A Thousand and One Nights*:

> Maybe I could have been the saqi who slipped a few poison drops from my ring into the king's wine … I could have stuck a dagger through his silky purple robes, opened his poisonous entrails, and watched his eyes flicker in awe and disbelief as he anticipated the next and final episode. (67)

His desire to "save … those women" (67) is inextricable from violent means, and the amount of detail he provides regarding his chosen method also casts this hypothetical murder as *needlessly* violent. The narrator's sustained defense of violent methods is criticized in the novel, as a neighbour in his home country, Joseph Khoury, explains that although the narrator feels he "should protect [his] family … violence is not the only way" (138). Like the narrator, Khoury adheres to the logic of rescue, since he stops the narrator through an appeal to his "mother and sister, look at the children and women around you" (138). Khoury differs because he criticizes violence, but the narrator ultimately rejects Khoury's argument because his inability to kill his brother-in-law results in his sister's death, and also prevents him from

avenging her. Once Shohreh identifies Shaheed as her torturer, she manages to convince the narrator to help her by equating what happened to her with what happened to his sister:

> My torturer and your brother-in-law are the same kind. [Shohreh]
>
> You and my sister are the same kind. (248) [Narrator]

This equation exposes both Shohreh and the narrator's goals in their decision to kill Shaheed. Shohreh equates Shaheed with the narrator's brother-in-law, which constructs revenge as her primary motivation. When the narrator compares Shohreh to his sister, he reasserts the logic of rescue as his guiding principle. The narrator's sister was the victim of her abusive husband, just like Shohreh was Shaheed's powerless victim. In both cases, the women do not, and cannot, exercise agency in order to alter their conditions. The narrator's sister does not believe she can escape because she is "surrounded by men that come from the same mould" (235), while Shohreh could not act because she was a prisoner. The narrator's comparison of Shohreh and his sister enables him to construct Shohreh as an absolute victim, one who is worthy of being saved because she does not want to be subordinated to violent men such as Shaheed.[273] Because he believes that he is responsible for their welfare, the narrator's desire to preserve his relationships with his sister and with Shohreh becomes inseparable from violence. When viewed in this light, his failure to protect his sister amounts to a failure of masculinity, one which is reinforced when her husband humiliates him.[274] The narrator's contradictory expression of masculinity then casts his enactment of rescue as a desperate attempt to preserve his relationships.

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[273] In contrast, the narrator blames his sister for her condition, since he accuses her of loving "that brute [her husband]" (235). The sister's death could then be linked to the fact that she is, according to the narrator's logic of rescue, complicit with her abuser, and therefore undeserving of rescue (Jiwani 735).

[274] Lebanese writers such as Alawiya Sobh and Rachid el-Daïf comment that Lebanon is too masculinist and has failed to account for the manner in which women and their roles in society have changed (qtd in Kacimi). *Cockroach* explores this tension as the protagonist articulates his relationships through the patriarchal rhetoric of rescue.

Not only does the narrator endorse the narratives of security and rescue, but his partial reconfiguration of the abject allows him to mask his actions through a process of disavowal. In *Cockroach*, the nation's ability to camouflage its actions and interests is exposed when Majeed explains to the narrator that "we come to these countries for refuge and to find better lives, but it is these countries that made us leave our homes in the first place" (Hage 223). The nation projects a democratic image (223), but this image only serves to conceal that, on a global scale, democratic countries "do not want democracy. They want only dictators. It is easier for them to deal with dictators than to have democracy in the countries we come from" (224). Similarly, the narrator masks his violence by presenting it as a *necessity*, as a means to restore and sustain the binaries he requires, and as a tool to protect those who are subordinated to him.[275] The narrator's ability to disguise his actions is demonstrated in his fascination with drains, as his resignification of the abject also generates a method for disavowal. While drains are a means to escape to the underground, where "all was good, all was natural, all was accepted" (156), they can also "eradicate" and "swallow" everything "below the surface" (156). This passage signals that drains have the potential to erase the abject, whether resignified or not.

As Shohreh attempts to shoot Shaheed but systematically fails, the narrator notes that he "watched all of this as if it were taking place somewhere far away. Everything was soundless. Everything was unreal, distant and slow" (305). The narrator's perception could entail that he is unconcerned to the point of detachment by what he sees, which is unlikely

[275] The narrator argues that guns can be useful "to get things, accomplish things, defend things" (Hage 98), and that force is acceptable "if there are no other options" (98). Such a statement aligns the narrator with Fanon's anticolonial assertion that violence is a necessary tool against the violence of the colonizer (83), but the narrator's justifications for his acts of violence associate his actions with personal revenge rather than with anticolonial violence.

because he keeps referring to Shohreh as "my lover" during this scene (304-305). The narrator also asserts that Shohreh looks "small and helpless" (305), qualifiers which reaffirm the protagonist's commitment to rescue narratives. At the very end of the novel, when the narrator steers a leaf "with [his] glittering wings towards the underground" (305), he escapes from a scene in which he has just murdered two men, leaving behind the woman he used to legitimize his violence. This final scene leaves the readers with an image that echoes dominant narratives of military intervention: the person who had nothing to do with the situation "fixes it," which is meant to leave the readers with a sense that justice has been done since the woman is now safe, while her oppressor is dead. The narrator's disappearance down the drain subsequently serves to disavow his actions, as it ensures that he will not have to "pay the price for [his] crimes" (244) despite the fact that he had argued for accountability in a previous scene (244). In other words, the narrator's final escape from the novel associates him with the tendency to mask and erase violence and its consequences.

Conclusion

My interpretation of *Cockroach* through the interpenetrating scales of Montreal understands the novel and its narrator as caught within processes of complicity and disavowal, one in which Hage's protagonist is uncomfortably placed between agency and victimhood. While critics and reviewers tend to read Hage's novels through a more sympathetic lens, where his protagonist suffers from instances of trauma which alleviates his complicity and guilt, this chapter rather reads the narrator as partially responsible for his alienation. His reliance on the discourse of abjection, one which he can only partially reconfigure, leads him to replicate the state-sponsored narratives of security and rescue which are inextricably tied to attempts to camouflage acts of violence. *Cockroach* then constitutes a *limited* critique of the

local, national, colonial, and global scales, as the novel subverts some expectations, but complies with many others. It is, of course, possible to read Hage's protagonist as an en empowered character who challenges preconceptions about Canadian multiculturalism and effectively resists old world oppressors. Such a reading, however, can only be applied to localized or diasporic interpretations of the novel that fail to take into account how these locations interpenetrate and blur throughout the narrative. Since the novel's ending cannot be severed from the narrator's initial critique of the local and national, *Cockroach* requires that critics pay attention to the central roles accorded to violence and disavowal. When critics analyze this violence solely as an act of revenge against old world oppressors, they reject the novel's exposure of Canada's complicity with acts of global violence. This interpretation subsequently reinforces the boundary between the "West" and the "rest" which the novel collapses. Focusing on the narrator's complicity then enables a critique of the nation's own complicity with processes of colonialism and globalization. My analysis of *Cockroach* might then appear as though it contradicts Hage's insistence that his "characters are not hypocritical" (qtd in Sakr 347), but ultimately, it deepens the novel's exposure of global violence because it relocalizes and politicizes the narrator's final act of violence instead of dismissing it as an act of revenge.

Chapter Five: Restraining Hybridity: Where Armstrong's *Whispering in Shadows* Meets *Slash*

Following the publication of her first novel *Slash*, Armstrong's work has received considerable critical attention, though there is a marked discrepancy between the attention accorded to *Slash* and the relatively limited material available on *Whispering in Shadows*. This unevenness is crucial to my reading of Armstrong's second novel, as the debates which have animated discussions of *Slash* have the potential to illuminate how *Whispering in Shadows* functions, as well as the dangers that lie in the methodology my dissertation elaborates. Beginning with the assumption that *Whispering in Shadows* "continues the project of *Slash*" (Sorflaten 284), this chapter aims to examine the multiple possibilities which Armstrong's second novel allows through its juxtaposition of competing genres and narratives of globalization within a heavily fragmented form. While this focus on form and genre seemingly corresponds to the notions of hybridity I have outlined in previous chapters, Armstrong's work distinguishes itself in that the multiple genres and postmodern form she employs, as well as her use of metaphors which oscillate between hope and destruction, actively resist the concept of hybridity. Hybridity is a fraught concept in an indigenous context because it always risks connoting assimilation, hence the dominance of canon debates in indigenous literary studies.[276] With the publication of *Slash*, Armstrong established herself as a writer committed to the retrieval and revival of indigenous cultures. This cultural/political project explains why the concept of hybridity cannot be seamlessly applied to her work, as it would dictate that the crosscultural encounters featured in her works flow from the indigenous to the dominant. For

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[276] Those debates focus on whether indigenous texts should be situated in national (Canadian and American), indigenous, or culturally specific canons.

that reason, I examine *Whispering in Shadows* as developing its own indigenous operating concepts.

While this chapter is not a comparative analysis of *Slash* and *Whispering in Shadows*, the concept of the spider's web which guides my analysis of Armstrong's second novel entails that I use *Slash* and its critical reception in order to establish how *Whispering in Shadows* overlaps several competing narratives of subject formation and globalization instead of insisting on a single dominant vision. The spider's web signifies "the connectedness of all things" (Armstrong and Cardinal 18), and it is this connectedness which generates En'owkin.[277] This concept relates to processes of building consensus through the idea that all viewpoints must be represented because they come from a place of sameness (Armstrong and Ng 31). The concepts of the web and En'owkin allow me to read Armstrong's *Whispering in Shadows* as a text that bridges debates on indigenous literary canons and globalization through its form, generic interplay, metaphor usage, and juxtaposition of competing interpretations. The indigenous perspective through which these debates are rearticulated through references to Coyote subsequently limits the coercive potential of hybridity because it generates a non-hegemonic narrative that is aware of its own failings. Conceptualising *Whispering in Shadows* as a web allows me to indicate the moments in which the narrative becomes entangled in itself, and to describe this strategy as one which saves the novel from its forceful didactic intent. To that effect, this chapter begins by examining how Armstrong's two novels address canonical debates in indigenous literatures. Because I read *Whispering in Shadows* as exposing the artificiality of the critical categories currently in use in much of the criticism, this

[277] These concepts have been featured in a large number of Armstrong's articles and interviews, as well as in the collaborative text *The Native Creative Process*. En'owkin is also the name of the centre Armstrong established (Williamson 7). It is an Okanagan word which can be translated literally as "to drop something through the top of the head into the mind or brain" (Williamson 7).

focus on canon debates allows me to explore how the novel's fragmented form works against fragmentation. This formal organization affects the content of the novel, as the overlapping narratives of subject formation enacted through indigenized Western genres and globalization generate a non-coercive vision. The novel is further complicated by its oscillating metaphors and inability to cope with complicity. Ultimately, *Whispering in Shadows* prevents itself from becoming a hegemonic discourse on globalization by reinterpreting it through indigenous transnationalism and references to Coyote. This indigenous re-articulation of globalization enables the novel to remain aware of its limitations. This chapter then interprets *Whispering in Shadows*' seemingly conflicting narratives and generic codes as indigenizing dominant modes of organization because they constantly overlap competing visions instead of elaborating a single argument.

1.1 Canon Debates and Indigenous Literatures: To Embrace, Separate, or Hybridize?

The place of indigenous literatures within Western canons is a contested issue.[278] The debate has seemingly split critics into two camps, between the literary nationalists on the one hand, and the "hybridized/postmodernist" critics on the other. For Weaver et al., Native American texts should be examined outside of Western literary canons. The methodology they propose focuses on national specificity, the connections indigenous texts draw between each other, and is guided by indigenous critical thought (15; 17). This critical perspective is often interpreted as "separatist" (Pulitano 14), but these critics should rather be understood as

[278] The debate on indigenous literatures also includes the definition of "Native literature," a concept which inevitably revolves around questions such as "what is an Indian" (L. Owens, *OD* 3). Owens answers it through an examination of content, form, style, and ancestry of the author. Yet, he notes that blood quantum and the Euro-American belief that Native texts must be about "entropy and loss" (22) constitute colonial modes of understanding indigenous peoples. Thomas King also invokes that question, and proposes that defining Native literature as the literature written by people of indigenous descent is the "best definition we have" (Lutz 108). For Weaver et al., indigenous literature "is of, from, by Native Americans, not about them – or, worse yet, set among them" (16).

stressing the autonomy of indigenous literatures from dominant modes of representation. While literary nationalism is mostly an American movement, some Canadian critics also stress the "sense of unity among indigenous peoples on this continent" (Hulan, *NNA* 9). For if the integration of indigenous literatures within Canadian or American literary canons risks subjecting them "to intellectual ghettoization" (18), a separate canon can protect their integrity (18). Ruffo's edited collection *(Ad)dressing Our Words* pushes this argument further, as its pan-Indigenous scope includes Canadian, American, Australian, and Sami perspectives. Examining Native literatures separately can also provide "solidarity and visibility to Native writers" (Fagan, "What" 242), which is why Armstrong herself favours the interpretation of indigenous texts as belonging to their own canon (Isernhagen 135).[279] Similarly, Dee Horne notes that the concept of American Indian literatures acts as a strategic essentialism, one which can adequately challenge "colonial essentializing practices that disavow" cultural differences amongst the different indigenous nations (xiv). Analyzing indigenous literatures separately can then stress the interconnections between different nations, while preventing their ghettoization within Western literary canons.

In contrast, *Creating Community: A Roundtable on Canadian Aboriginal Literature* insists that the Canada-U.S. border and its implications cannot be overlooked (Eigenbrod and Episkenew 8). The contributors therefore propose a methodology that analyzes indigenous cultural specificity *and* that of the invader-settler context (11).[280] Emma Larocque also insists on the importance of distinguishing Canadian First Nations from Native Americans because

[279] Armstrong insists on a non-homogenizing configuration of the category of "Native literature." In an interview with Freeman, Armstrong also states that "I've never really thought about being a Canadian writer, I've always thought of myself as a Native writer" (37).

[280] In this collection, Episkenew differentiates Canadian from American contexts even more, as she argues that Native American texts have already been incorporated into the American canon (52). In contrast, she believes that Canadian indigenous texts face academic prejudice in that they are considered to be "inferior" to non-indigenous texts (53).

"we can easily be eclipsed by White and Native American profiles" (9).[281] For Beth Brant and Louis Owens, individual tribal contexts are as crucial to literary studies as national borders (Brant 7; Owens, *MM* 18-19), but Owens also stresses that Native American literature "participates profoundly in the discourse we call American and world literature" (56). In other words, a separate indigenous canon can certainly provide insights into indigenous writing, but its isolation from dominant canons can never be absolute. This interconnection between pan-indigenous, culturally specific, and Western literary canons is particularly relevant to Armstrong's work. Because critics situate *Slash* within the Canadian canon and *Whispering in Shadows* within the indigenous canon, the continuities between Armstrong's two novels can illustrate the limitations of firm canonical distinctions.

Indeed, the critical reception of *Slash* and *Whispering in Shadow*s illustrates how the canon debate on indigenous literatures operates. Since its publication, *Slash* has received a large amount of critical attention, which ranges from generic and discursive studies to feminist, postcolonial, anticolonial, and nationalist interpretations. In light of these varied analyses, the critical material on *Slash* can be placed in dialogue with the so far limited criticism *Whispering in Shadows* has received. *Slash* has been classified as a Canadian novel, but all critics of Armstrong's second novel situate it within the tradition of indigenous and First Nations writing (Haladay 43; Härting 258; Haladay and Hicks 699; Eigenbrod "Necessary" 14; "Indigenizing" 83; Sorflaten 384). *Slash* has been interpreted as a national(ist) novel for various reasons. For Davey, *Slash* is resolutely Canadian and North American, since the actions it opposes cannot exist without these political configurations

[281] The uneven relations of power within the global publishing industry also entail that Canadian indigenous texts do not enjoy the same distribution and recognition outside of Canada as Native American authors do. An example of such unequal distribution can be seen in *American Indian Literary Nationalism*, as the authors list very few Canadian authors as part of their American Indian canon.

(*PNA* 56; 63). In contrast, both Fee and Helms focus on the manner in which Armstrong challenges the nation (Fee 168; Helms 99), although Fee (177) and Hoy (43) remain aware of the dangers which lie in canonizing *Slash* as Canadian literature. For example, the journal *Canadian Literature* published three articles on *Slash* in its special issue on Native Canadian literature in 1990, an editorial practice which certainly emphasized the importance of this novel as a *Canadia*n text.[282] *Slash*'s national context has however been questioned. Because it is generically connected to the *bildungsroman*, Godard argues that the novel undercuts the narrative of the birth of the nation the *bildungsroman* usually stages through the development and education of a young man because Slash does not change ("Politics" 219).[283] Similarly, Jones and Dobson argue that Armstrong's first novel cannot be national because it dismisses and undermines the nation (Jones, "Slash" ¶5; Dobson 114). However, the relationship between *Slash* and Canada is still central to Dobson's argument, as he analyzes *Slash* in *Transnational Canadas* and uses it to differentiate indigenous texts from multicultural writing. It is true that Armstrong's novel questions Canada's right to exist (127), but the novel remains embedded within his nationally bound readings of texts. In contrast, Nancy van Styvendale emphasizes the "trans/national"[284] connections of the novel, an interpretation which constructs the text's Canadian content as inseparable from the different nations (both dominant and indigenous) with which it engages. In other words, *Slash* does foreground issues relevant to a

[282] My 2002 reprinting of *Slash* bears the label "Canadian Classic" on its front cover, which demonstrates the readiness to situate this novel within the national canon.

[283] I disagree with Godard on this point: Tommy/Slash does evolve and change throughout the narrative. His decision to return home and focus on traditions and spirituality should not be interpreted as stasis, since his return would have been impossible without the knowledge and experience he has gained through his numerous travels and returns.

[284] van Styvendale borrows "transnational" from Renya Ramirez, who develops this concept to describe the multiple experiences of indigenous peoples "living at the interstice of various cultural or political communities" (14).

nationalist analysis, but that should not entail that its other localities must be reduced or subsumed to this national context.

Slash's critical reception also emphasizes the specific challenges indigenous literature has faced within Canadian criticism. Dobson notes that the reception of this novel has been "anxious" (123), because numerous critics stress the difficulties they experienced while reading or teaching the text (Greene 53; Hoy; Hoy and Hodne; Godard, "Politics" 218). The approach which these critics adopt, more often than not, emphasizes the shortcomings of *Slash* as a text instead of defending it from those who would dismiss the novel.[285] Hoy rightly argues that *Slash* resists critical and theoretical frameworks (32). However, this resistance has not prevented critics from attempting to categorize *Slash* within specific schools of criticism. For instance, critics have debated over whether *Slash* is a feminist (Currie 149; Greene 63; Million; 62; Bradford 16) or a rather unfeminist text (Davey, *PNA* 64-65; Godard, "Politics" 206; Hoy 39-40).[286] Only Emberley questions this approach as one that is too reductive to examine the role of racism and assimilation as determinants of sexism within the context of the novel (*ToD* 149). Other critics use postcolonial and anticolonial theories (Currie; Lundgren; Horne; Jones, "Slash"; Knopf) to emphasize the importance of *Slash*'s oppositional politics. In short, the critical reception of *Slash* demonstrates the limited possibilities that arise from firmly categorizing Armstrong's work. In light of this fraught debate, I would suggest that critics need to embrace the multiple and contradictory strategies *Slash* deploys. This focus

[285] Helen Hoy and Barbara Hodne's joint article on *Slash* demonstrates this point most clearly, as Hoy's defense of the novel is undermined when her former student mentions that Hoy expected her students to hate the book (71). Hoy's argument for sensitivity while reading indigenous texts is valid, but Hodne rightly stresses that Armstrong's didactic intent limits the novel's possibilities (Hoy and Hodne 81).

[286] This focus on feminism in *Slash* can be understood by the fact that Armstrong was active in feminist circles at the time. For instance, she was involved in the "Telling It" conference, wrote for the *Women and Words* anthology, and contributed to *Trivia: A Journal of Ideas*, notably in its special issue on the 3rd International Feminist Book Fair.

on wholeness rather than on fragmentation can best identify the connections between Armstrong's two novels, and the competing narratives of colonialism, indigeneity, and globalization they offer.

This shift in interpretation, from the urge to classify *Slash* as Canadian to the categorization of *Whispering in Shadows* as an indigenous text can be understood historically, since the idea that there is a separate indigenous canon can be traced to the works of the literary nationalists. Following the emergence of this movement, criticism on North American indigenous literatures created an artificial distinction between cosmopolitan/postmodern writings, which would include the work of Sherman Alexie, Thomas King, Gerald Vizenor, Louis Owens, and Eden Robinson, and traditionalist/nationalist ones, such as the writings of Jeannette Armstrong, Beth Grant, Craig Womack, Lee Maracle, and Ruby Slipperjack (van Styvendale 115).[287] The distinction between these two forms of writings is accepted in both Native and non-Native critical works. For instance, Elizabeth Cook-Lynn denounces writers who are not, in her view, sufficiently committed to communal values and indigenous sovereignty (70-71). At the other end of the spectrum, Elvira Pulitano creates a hierarchy between the "superior" – because postmodern and hybridized – criticism of Vizenor and Owens, and the "inferior" – because "separatist" – criticism of Womack, Warrior, and Paula Gunn Allen (Pulitano 7-8; 14).

However, the critics Pulitano classifies as "separatist" do not consider themselves to be in opposition to the postmodern criticism Vizenor and Owens advance (Weaver et al., 22). Armstrong's *Whispering in Shadows* in particular establishes a dialogue between the two sides of this debate, as its experimental form explores "traditionalist" content. Like van Styvendale,

[287] Van Styvendale underlines this dichotomy in her comparative chapter on Sherman Alexie's *Indian Killer* and Armstrong's *Slash*, as she indicates that the two writers are rarely "mentioned in the same critical breath" (114).

I argue that the distinction between the two "schools" of writing is an artificial one (115), and *Whispering in Shadows* certainly demonstrates the extent to which it is so. For Heike Härting, Armstrong's second novel is a "hybrid" text, though she does not deploy the concept of hybridity in a hegemonic fashion (259). Instead, the hybridity Armstrong develops is one which enables recovery and the analysis of "colonial desire" (260; 266). Simultaneously, *Whispering in Shadows* advocates for a return to tradition (Sorflaten 384; Haladay 43), as well as for a specific connection between indigenous language and land (36).[288] There is therefore a discrepancy between what is perceived to be Armstrong's project, the "return to Aboriginal localism" (Sorflaten 384), and the hybrid and fragmented aesthetics her novel adopts. An analysis which interprets this apparent contradiction as reflecting the false distinction between the traditionalist and the postmodernist schools of indigenous writing can then reconcile the two sides of the debate and demonstrate the continuities that are generated despite the ruptures the form seems to create. Drawing a connection between *Slash* and *Whispering in Shadows* subsequently allows me to reinscribe the Canadian specificity of Armstrong's second novel within its global, indigenous, and pan-indigenous contexts, in order to stress the multiple and displaced narratives of subject formation, globalization, colonialism, and localism the novel advances.

1.2 Postmodernist Strategies and Fragmentation: Towards Unity and Wholeness

In *Decolonizing Methodologies*, Linda Tuhiwai Smith argues that strategies associated with postmodernism, notably processes of fragmentation, are not, in fact, postmodern, but the

[288] Sarah Philips Casteel criticizes Armstrong's representation of indigenous peoples' relationship to the land as stereotypical because it uncritically endorses the "purported intimacy between indigenous peoples and the land (107). She contrasts the un-ironic representation of this connection in *Whispering in Shadows* to the satirical intent King and Highway develop in *Truth and Bright Water* and *Kiss of the Fur Queen* (107), a comparison which once more reinforces the boundary between the "postmodernist" and "traditionalist" forms of writing.

modern effects of colonization on indigenous peoples (97). Armstrong's use of a highly fragmented form in *Whispering in Shadows* might then convey the continued effects of imperialism and colonialism on indigenous peoples, where a linear narrative cannot take place without constant interruptions and fragmentations. However, given Armstrong's positive interpretation of postmodernist literary strategies as enabling the deconstruction of oppressive modes of categorization (Isernhagen 176), the hybrid form and multiple genres which her second novel deploys also work towards the reconstruction, recovery, and revival of what colonialism has fragmented. The importance I accord to form and genre in this chapter might then recall the attention I paid to the same structures in chapter two, but the use Armstrong makes of genre and form differs significantly from Ruffo's project in *Grey Owl: The Mystery of Archie Belaney*. Instead of generating tensions that challenge the process of subject-formation the text enacts, *Whispering in Shadows*' form and multiple genres generate a sense of wholeness that encompasses diverse and interconnected perspectives that can be symbolically represented as a spider's web (Armstrong and Cardinal 18).[289] The structure of *Whispering in Shadows* elaborates different narratives regarding the nature of its subject, Penny, while its self-reflexivity prevents the isolation of the subject from the narratives of globalization and indigenous transnationalism the novel also develops. The multiple genres Armstrong mobilizes then contribute to the novel's varied yet inseparable narratives, and work together to create complex perspectives on Penny as a subject. In that way, *Whispering in Shadows* is a novel that mobilizes fragmentation in order to resist fragmentation, as the text ultimately reformulates Western narratives through Penny's indigenous worldview.

[289] I see this web as related to the notion of weaving elaborated by Kimberley Blaeser (272), and reiterated in some of the critical work on *Whispering in Shadows* (Haladay 33; Eigenbrod, "Necessary" 14).

Formally, *Whispering in Shadows* is constructed like a collage. It contains prose segments, poems, the frequent visual representation of small turtles, letters, dreams, and notes collected from Penny's diaries and sketchbooks. For Manina Jones, the term collage suggests a "sense of fragmentation and radical recontextualization" (*That* 14), since it is created out of materials "from multiple- and often remarkably disparate sources" (14). In Armstrong's novel, the disparate textual fragments stress not only the constructed nature of the narrative, but also foreground the source of the documents inserted into Penny's life narrative. The headings that open each section indicate what kind of material is inserted, whether it be a letter, a prose poem, or a note. The headings do not let the readers interpret the nature of those documents, but rather foreground their position as found objects whose generic and textual function is maintained despite being inserted in the novel. The headings also insist on the source of the collected material: one note is announced as a "letter to Roberta" (15), while another one stipulates that the note was "found in her dresser drawer" (92). Announcing the source of the materials incorporated in Penny's narrative points to the novel's self-reflexivity, a term I use to describe how the narrative is set up as a fiction within a fiction. Armstrong also deployed this technique in *Slash*. In the Prologue, Tommy/Slash states that "the characters in this novel are fictitious. Any resemblance to persons, living or dead, is coincidental. The events are based on real events but are not meant to be portrayed as historically accurate" (13). Helms finds this passage puzzling, as she wonders "what would be the point of passing on to his son a fictional autobiography?" (109).[290] In an interview with Karin Beeler, Armstrong states that this particular staging comes from a storytelling convention, in which "the storyteller becomes

[290] For Dee Horne, this passage signals that the narrator of Slash is unknown: it could be Tommy, or it could be someone else, writing Tommy's story for future generations (91). However, the ending of the novel contradicts this interpretation.

the character… the character is the narrator" (145). Staging in Armstrong's work then creates an indigenous formal and generic structuring through which her novels operate.

Armstrong's use of the self-reflexive narrative can be interpreted in different ways. It is possible that Armstrong is inserting herself into the narrative as a character who puts the story together.[291] The metafictional markers also foreshadow the novel's ending, as though the story has been collected from various sources following Penny's death. The headings simultaneously authorize Penny's narrative, since they indicate that an objective and absent narrator has put the story together, but this staging leaves readers with questions regarding voice and reliability that cannot be answered: how was this narrative constructed? Where is Penny's voice coming from? In addition, the structural positioning of these fragments is such that they do not interfere with the chronological development of the novel. The letters, for instance, offer closure because they illustrate Penny's continued friendship with Roberta and Julie, while signalling that these characters have exited the novel. Meanwhile, a poem which asks "can we overcome dualism" (122) seeks, while being extremely fragmented through its lack of punctuation, to establish links between "awareness" and "consciousness" (122-123). This fragment, taken from Penny's diary, has been carefully placed between an activist standoff with a logging company and Penny's first art show. These two scenes feature the struggles that lie in overcoming dualism through the tensions that separate capitalist from environmental interests, First Nations from environmentalists, and the way in which Penny's art places "warm nature against hard science" (126). They also highlight the processes that lead "awareness" and "consciousness" to function as "a participant" (122) and "a witness" (122). The fragments might appear to have been accidentally found from disparate sources, yet

[291] The novel supports this assertion, in that some of the poems Armstrong inserted in the narrative were originally published elsewhere. In *Whispering in Shadows*, she attributes those poems to Penny.

they have been carefully placed between the scenes which best demonstrate Penny's subject development and growing commitment to activist and indigenous causes.

The idea that Penny's (mostly) first person narrative has been collected by an outsider, whose presence is stressed in the headings and frequent instances of omniscient narration, connects *Whispering in Shadows* to the form of the collaborative text. While the novel is different in genre from *Stolen Life* or *I, Rigoberta Menchú*, since it is clearly fictional, the destabilizing structure of the novel hints that Penny's life narrative has been reworked. McCall notes that collaborative authorship can deploy genre-bending and textual hybridity in order to stress the role of mediation in the Aboriginal, non-Aboriginal dialogue (*FPP* 11). Texts which foreground the collaborative aspect of this dialogue share authority, much in the way of *Stolen Life* and *The Book of Jessica*. In the case of *Whispering in Shadows*, the collaborative staging shapes the form of Armstrong's novel. It allows the narrative to express both Penny's interiority and an outside perspective on her life story. Simultaneously, it foregrounds that Penny's voice bears an authority that is simultaneously legitimated and put into question. In other words, the text questions "Armstrong's own political agenda" (Sorflaten 384) through the emergence of multiple perspectives on Penny's experiences.[292] For instance, Penny's art has a communal function for Tupa (Armstrong, *WiS* 46) and Josalie (265), is "sooo weird" for Roberta (9), is selfish (71), necessary (8), and then complicit (205) for Penny, is not sufficiently indigenous for some (126), but too political for others (202). The narrator is certainly sympathetic to Penny's perspective, but the novel's form always simultaneously questions and legitimates it. In this way, *Whispering in Shadows* prevents its fragmented form from being easily identified as traditionalist or postmodern. Its unstable structure could be

[292] Sorflaten mentions that Armstrong's political agenda is apparent because some "rather didactic passages … read more like political tract and sociological analyses than prose" (384).

interpreted as a form of structural hybridity that resists easy categorization, but its internal coherence demonstrates that the form functions as a cohesive whole that resists its own fragmentation.

The formal structure of *Whispering in Shadows* also addresses the tensions between the indigenous and Canadian canons through intertextuality. Armstrong explicitly references two Canadian texts: Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale* (*WiS* 201), and "Moonset" by the Mohawk poet Pauline Johnson (5). Aside from these explicit references, multiple connections are drawn between Armstrong's novel and other indigenous texts. The passage where Penny crosses the U.S. border and must describe her "blood quantum" recalls Thomas King's short story "Borders," in which border-crossing points to the contrast between indigenous identities and colonial forms of classification. Even though Penny's reaction is to state that "this is my country and why am I the alien" (195), the act of border crossing demonstrates the distinction between what constitutes indigeneity in the American and Canadian legal systems, and the manner in which Penny views herself. *Whispering in Shadows* also echoes Campbell's *Halfbreed*, as both novels illustrate the continuity between past and present generations through the important relationship between the protagonist and her great-grandmother. This intertextuality draws connection between both indigenous and Canadian literary canons.

There are also pan-indigenous connections in *Whispering in Shadows*, such as Silko's *The Almanac of the Dead*, and *I, Rigoberta Menchú* (Härting 268; 270). Armstrong has argued that Silko's novel requires an indigenous perspective which thinks "in terms of world change and North American context and change (sic), of globalization and the postmodern thought" (Isernhagen 154). Similarly, her novel challenges readers to understand capitalism and globalization through its effects on indigenous peoples and their communities. Like Silko's

novel, Armstrong's text creates alliances between indigenous communities and other groups who disagree with the dominant modes of accumulation.[293] *Whispering in Shadows* is also informed by Menchú's testimonial narrative, as both texts share a concern for the victims of globalization and expose the complicity of corporations in poisoning the environment and peoples in the name of profit (Härting 268).[294] In *Whispering in Shadows*, Penny continuously insists that indigenous peoples face similar challenges, but that their nationally specific customs differentiate their experiences. During a protest, Penny stresses that her "Native-ness" does not mean that she will be able to convince other indigenous peoples to support the activists' cause: "I don't know. But I know that the communities here are pretty small ... I don't know anything about their culture" (*WiS* 108). Armstrong and Menchú's texts refuse to homogenize, and demand that non-indigenous readers recognize that there is no single "Indian" identity, language, or culture.

The two texts also insist on the importance of witnessing, an act which is enacted literally in *I, Rigoberta Menchú* through the form of the testimony, and figuratively in *Whispering in Shadows* through Penny and David's travels. Before leaving for the Chiapas, David insists on the importance of bearing witness in terms that echo Menchú's project: "People who live in the relative comfort of this country can't know, unless we make sure they

[293] However, the novels differ since Armstrong's text focuses on environmental and activist connections, while Silko's novel illustrates that these connections operate across class and racial lines.

[294] It should be noted, however, that Menchú's (auto)biography was written and structured by the anthropologist Elizabeth Burgos-Debray, who chose to write her taped conversations with Menchú in the form of a testimony rather than as a dialogue (Burgos-Debray xx). This structural decision has led to a number of critiques, as Burgos-Debray distorted sections of Menchú's life story (McCall, *FPP* 29). Understanding *I, Rigoberta Menchú* as a reliable, authoritative, and authorized narrative is then contentious at best, since Menchú herself has stated discontent with the testimony (29).

know" (149).[295] These intertextual connections are crucial for several reasons. As other critics mention, they connect Armstrong's text to a tradition of indigenous literatures that span across borders. They also connect *Whispering in Shadows* to Canadian as well as to indigenous texts, demonstrating the potential for those varied literatures to inform, question, and expand each other. Intertextuality thus becomes a form of indigenous transnationalism, as Penny and her partner David travel throughout the Americas, which reinscribes Canadian contexts within pan-indigenous alliances.[296] In other words, combining the different canons allows for a greater understanding of Armstrong's text, and prevents the erasure of any section of her complex "web."

2.1 Weaving and Indigenizing Genres: Subject Formation in *Whispering in Shadows*

Like the form of Armstrong's *Whispering in Shadows*, the multiple genres the novel borrows work together in order to create the text's diverse and non-hegemonic narratives. Armstrong's use of multiple genres in her two novels has been criticized. The generic hybridity of *Slash*, in particular, generated two types of criticism. Some critics viewed it as destabilizing because its generic codes conflict with one another, while others attempted to "fix" *Slash*'s genres by isolating a singular mode. Helms, for instance, interprets the generic hybridity of Armstrong's first novel as difficult for readers, because they recognize the Western genres which the text contains and therefore expect generic stability (110). According to Davey, *Slash*'s generic codes are in conflict, and some even fail to establish themselves fully or coherently. For instance, he deems that *Slash* "cannot be a coming-of-age novel

[295] *I, Rigoberta Menchú* opens with the assertion that the text is "also the testimony of my people… My story is the story of all poor Guatemalans" (1). This statement signals the role of the testimony as an act of bearing witness.

[296] Silko's novel is also transnational in scope, but omits Canada entirely from its narrative and the emergent alliances it creates.

because it can find no agreed-upon codes for how a young Indian male might come of age" (*PNA* 58), and that the unsentimental depictions of Mardi and Maeg entail that romance is rejected (65). For Godard, *Slash* imitates and displaces dominant genres ("Politics" 194), while Jones identifies *Slash*'s predominant generic codes in Armstrong's didactic intent and in her "activist aesthetics" ("Critical" ¶17-18). *Slash* has also been interpreted as a postcolonial *bildungsroman* (Bradford 13) and as belonging to a tradition of "recovery narratives" (van Styvendale 2), which illustrates the contradictory responses Armstrong's use of multiple genres elicits.

This debate over *Slash*'s genre can inform a discussion of *Whispering in Shadows*' generic hybridity, as it illustrates the problems which lie in viewing generic codes as conflicting. As complicated as the text's generic instability can be, it cannot be stabilized through fixing the genre of the text. Rather, all genres contribute to the development of Tommy as a character and to Armstrong's curriculum project. As van Styvendale notes, mobility is essential to recovery (45), which entails that Tommy's healing process is not at odds with the picaresque genre or the romantic quest. Further, I would argue that *Slash*, while different from a Western *bildungsroman*, follows its generic conventions if only to indigenize them. Tommy's homecoming and decision to remain within his community does not entail that he has failed to change, since it shows Tommy's maturation.[297] Slash's journey certainly undermines the *bildungsroman* if understood as a narrative of Western progress and development (Godard, "Politics" 219),[298] but it is nonetheless about growth and change. A

[297] For instance, he moves from being "mad inside all the time" (*Slash* 132) to letting go of that anger (238).

[298] The bildungsroman can be applied to indigenous texts if it is understood as a "the story of a representative individual's growth and development within the context of a defined social order" (Hirsch 296). However, because this genre mostly concerns individual, as well as societal and bourgeois, development (Eigenbrod, *TK* 49), its application remains fraught in indigenous literary texts which explore communal growth.

return to traditional values and spirituality does not entail that the novel is arguing for pre-contact conditions, but rather acts as an assertion of a previously marginalized cultural identity that is now affirmed to the benefit of both the individual and the community, as neither, in Armstrong's view, can be separated (Lutz 16).

The manner in which these genres work together for the development of Tommy's subjectivity and the recovery and revival of his community is replicated in *Whispering in Shadows*. The multiple genres which Armstrong deploys in that novel contribute to the development of Penny's subjectivity as they conceptualize her growth and maturation from diverse perspectives. Because the novel contains several apocalyptic features, it also generates competing narratives of globalization. Paying close attention to the manner in which the novel's multiple genres interact then allows me to foreground what kind of subject, and what kind of narratives are produced in *Whispering in Shadows*. Importantly, I do not view these narratives as engaging in tensions or conflicts, but as interwoven to the point of inseparability. For that reason, it is difficult to separate the process of Penny's identity formation from the narratives of globalization the novel develops in its formal and generic interplay.

The *bildungsroman* and the *künstlersroman* constitute the predominant generic codes in *Whispering in Shadows*, although they seem to enter in conflict with Penny's decision to return home. In his article on the "homing" plots of Native American literature,[299] William Bevis argues that this generic structure is at odds with the American tradition of the *bildungsroman*, where leaving home leads to success and represents the "basic premise in our

[299] Bevis's homing plot features a return home where the protagonist's identity is reaffirmed through interactions with a traditional elder and the revival of indigenous traditions (585). For Beavis, these characteristics entail that Native American writers construct the tribal past as having "a gravity field stronger than individual will" (585). In other words, it is this focus on community which marks the contrast with the American *bildungsroman*, in which "the individual is the ultimate reality" (385).

mobile society" (581). For Joseph Slaughter, the *bildungsroman* constitutes a claim for inclusion within the social realm (4). He views the genre as instrumental in the canonization of "world literatures," since the familiar form facilitates their critical reception (33). This is not the case for *Whispering in Shadows*. Sorflaten argues that because the novel "flirts with genre and resists easy assimilation, it does not fit into any existing mould of Native literature" (384).[300] This statement demonstrates the challenges of canonizing indigenous literatures, in that the generic codes can be ignored or dismissed if one has a narrow definition of what constitutes "Native literature." By reading the genres as closely interwoven, I contend that Armstrong transforms the Western understanding of the *bildungsroman* and *künstlersroman*[301] by combining them with the homing and recovery genres. Such a strategy underlines the complex nature of Penny's development, as her subjectivity is always in dialogue with communal and transnational processes of identity formation.

Since the novel follows Penny from her late teens to her death, the genre of the *bildungsroman* applies easily to the form of Armstrong's narrative. The novel insists on Penny's continued maturation as she learns about and witnesses the consequences of imperialism, capitalism, colonialism, and globalization. This application of the *bildungsroman* differs from that explored in Laurence's *The Diviners*, Davies' *Fifth Business*, or Shield's *The Stone Diaries*, because it is concerned with a process of coming into individual and communal political consciousness rather than with personal subject-formation. As Penny begins a disastrous marriage, the text demonstrates her growth in that she begins to detect her

[300] I disagree with Sorflaten here, as flirting with genre and resisting assimilation is a common feature in texts written by Thomas King, Armand Ruffo, Tomson Highway, Eden Robinson, Lee Maracle, Marie Clements, and many others.

[301] Those genres are not applied in a Western fashion because Armstrong connects individual growth with communal development in her novels (Lutz 16). In other words, her novels are not concerned with exploring the individual will towards self-betterment and self-realization, but with tracking how an individual's growth benefits the community.

husband's sexist attitude: "Jeez. Who decided that women are supposed to do the cooking and cleaning? I mean I work too, same as he does" (16). Though she immediately dismisses this observation as "no big deal" (16), the novel follows Penny's growing awareness of the racist, sexist, and homophobic structures which seek to limit and control those deemed "other" by the dominant culture. Examples of this growing awareness can be found in her job interview to work on an assembly line, where her employer gladly states that he gets "a better subsidy for hiring minority and women" (24), and since Penny is an "Indian," he "can kill two birds with one stone" (24). She also experiences sexism and racism at the university (61-64), but through her involvement with Native friendship centres and activist circles, Penny gains a greater understanding of the structures that govern, and oppress, peoples around the globe. These events inform Penny's life decisions, notably her decision to return to the reservation, go to the Chiapas, and refuse certain kinds of cancer treatment. While the generic codes of the *bildungsroman* do not, in the case of *Whispering in Shadows*, coincide with the myth of progress and birth of the nation (Godard, "Politics" 219) or with "some irrepressible march of freedom and human rights" (Slaughter 39), they nonetheless document the emergence and solidification of an indigenous way of being in the world, in which personal growth coincides with communal responsibility.

While Godard would interpret Penny's return to the reservation following her cancer diagnosis as a form of stasis ("Politics" 219), Penny's decision is inextricable from the knowledge she has gathered on globalization throughout her travels. In other words, her return should not be interpreted as a circular return to the same point at which she started, since the home to which she returns is not the home she left, nor is it the replica of the home her Tupa

knew. The ending of the novel rather addresses a question which Tupa asked at the novel's onset:

> I wonder … how this one, my mother's name, will look at this same sun rising over this valley when she is drifting into the shadows, as I do now. Will she come to greet the day, her family, a thick warm quilt surrounding her? Will she reach this time of fading, under a sun which will then rise over many who do not greet the day?" (Armstrong, *WiS* 18).

Tupa's question relates to the endurance of tradition within a time where assimilation threatens the survival of her community. Penny's return, and her ability to convince her family to go "up into the hills together. Like long time ago" (275) and grow traditional crops (278) answer Tupa's question, and show that traditions can be preserved despite colonial pressure. While Bevis views return, whether manifested in a homecoming or in spiritual revival, as a form of regression,[302] van Styvendale specifies that "homing in" is rather a "regeneration" (36). According to her, the word regression is embedded within a linear conception of time, one which views the past as separate from the present (36). This understanding of history does not necessarily apply to indigenous temporality "that resituates the past as always-already a part of the present" (36). In *Whispering in Shadows*, ancestral ways are honoured when Penny and her sister strive to replicate Tupa's prayer (280-281). This passage shows continuity between past and present, but it also points to the ruptures that have occurred, as Penny wonders "How do I do this? Tupa always did it as far as I can remember. She always did the

[302] Bevis' argument on regression is less pejorative than it seems. For him, the notion of regression has been given negative connotations by the dominant culture, but it can be a positive force in a Native American context which views pre-contact forms of communal living as preferable to current, assimilationist modes of living (589-590). His comment nonetheless views return as a re-establishment of pre-contact conditions, which, as van Styvendale notes, characterizes Western linear time.

prayers" (280). Yet, Lena's prayer preserves Tupa's memory (281), which reinforces the idea that traditions endure. This revival is however undercut because Penny fears that she may have "missed the boat on Shanna" (144), her eldest daughter, since the latter is disconnected from traditional knowledge. In the novel, Shanna signals the fragility of recovery as well as the ongoing threat of ruptures between past and future generations. In other words, the return to the local is not as stable or idyllic as some critics assert (Haladay 43; Sorflaten 394). It does convey a sense of intergenerational continuity which some might interpret as antithetical to the *bildungsroman*, but the two genres rather work together to demonstrate Penny's growing self-awareness, as well as the precarious nature of recovery.

In contrast, I contend that in *Whispering in Shadows*, it is the *künstlersroman* rather than the *bildungsroman* that is interrupted because of the ethical challenges art poses for the protagonist. As Eigenbrod indicates, Armstrong links her novel to other indigenous texts through the figure of Penny as a painter, since the protagonist as artist is also featured in Highway's *Kiss of the Fur Queen*, and King's *Truth and Bright Water* ("Indigenizing" 80-81). Large sections of the narrative detail the development of Penny's artistic sensibility. As she attempts to paint a landscape at the beginning of the novel, Penny wonders why she wants "to get it like that for anyway? Why? It's talking to me that's why. It's singing" (*WiS* 8). The idea that colours speak to Penny is reiterated several times throughout the novel (9; 36; 37; 46; 75; 82; 126), and because Tupa advises Penny to "listen to them [the colours]. They never lie" (46), readers know that Penny's art has a communal purpose. The novel features two art shows, both of which demonstrate the relationship between Penny's art and political engagement, and the challenges this juxtaposition generates. During her first art show, a curator wonders why Penny does not follow Native American artistic conventions: "most

Native American artists incorporate or reconstruct symbolism from their heritage in their works" (126). This scene points to the tendency to ghettoize art and literature by indigenous peoples through the same stereotypes that made Grey Owl possible (Eigenbrod, "Indigenizing" 79). However, Penny's first art show also allows her to connect her art to her activism and ancestral heritage: "at some level the preoccupation I have with the positioning of warm nature against hard science comes from my Indigenous world-view, I suppose" (*WiS* 124). At this point in the novel, Penny is uncertain about this alignment between her concerns and her identity, as she ends her statement with a tentative "I suppose."

The art show which follows her journey to the Chiapas later solidifies this connection, as it depicts the violence the indigenous peoples of that region have encountered following NAFTA. As an artist, Penny is able to depict and bear witness to a violence she did not experience firsthand, and her ability to connect with the indigenous community she visits is tied to her sense of pan-indigenous solidarity. When faced with the reaction of the gallery owner, who views her work as "so very negative" even though the paintings "work as a political statement, I suppose" (202), Penny asserts that she wants to "shock some sense into people" (203). The curator seeks to tone down Penny's activist aesthetics because "this is about the business of selling, no matter how you look at it. Who buys the works? People with lots of money. In this business, social consciousness is secondary" (203). For that reason, he downplays the function of art as a "political statement" with the same hypothetical "I suppose" Penny uttered when the first curator sought to categorize her.

The second curator is then instrumental in the interruption of the *künstlersroman*, as he introduces the notion of complicity. His remarks lead Penny to destroy her paintings because she realizes that she has been "riding on the backs of the suffering" (205). Following this

passage, Penny abandons art altogether, a decision with communal implications since Tupa had insisted that Penny should dedicate herself to her gift. According to her sister Josalie, Penny's decision to give up art is responsible for her sickness (265), since "a person's got to do that they were given to do. They can't jump over it" (265). Through Josalie's statement, the novel criticizes Penny's rejection of art. Eigenbrod argues that Penny renounces art because she does not have "a community for" it ("Indigenizing" 80),[303] but Penny's sister seems to argue that art *was* Penny's communal function. In an indigenous context, communal function is crucial because "for a people whose culture rests on becoming, not becoming is tragic" (Maracle, "Oratory" 58), an assertion which Armstrong echoes when she states that an individual's skills belong to the community (Isernhagen 162). For that reason, Penny's interrupted artistic development leads to tragedy. The interruption of the *künstlersroman* in *Whispering in Shadows* could then point to Penny's inability to connect art and communal responsibility, which criticizes the project of *Whispering in Shadows* itself. Simultaneously, the *künstlersroman* in Armstrong's text connects Penny's subject development to transnational and communal responsibilities, and inform the different narratives of globalization the text also produces.

2.2 Resisting Hybridity: Apocalypse, Inevitability, and Traces of Hope

Indeed, *Whispering in Shadows*' multiple genres move beyond subject production and come to work for the development of competing narratives of globalization through Armstrong's insertion of apocalyptic under- and overtones in the novel. This apocalyptic

[303] In contrast, Eigenbrod notes that the artists in *Kiss of the Fur Queen* and *Truth and Bright Water* are ultimately able to connect their art to their communities ("Indigenizing" 77-78; 81). Unlike Laurence in *The Diviners*, Armstrong's deployment of the *künstlersroman* convention in *Whispering in Shadows* then does not document the processes that lead the protagonist to master her craft. Instead, Penny's artistic expression highlights the irresolvable tensions between political action and artistic expression, particularly since, for Penny, true political action can only come from a place of purity.

atmosphere differs from that elaborated in Hage's *Cockroach* because it is not manifested in visions, but generated through conversations and plot, intertextuality, dreams, the metaphors of "cancer" and "shadows," and intersections with the genres of dystopic and speculative fiction. In *Rewriting Apocalypse*, Goldman notes that writers such as Margaret Atwood and Thomas King use apocalyptic features to represent "the disastrous clash between the settler-invader society and Native American people" (104).[304] *Whispering in Shadows* fits well with Goldman's study, in that Armstrong is more concerned with the non-elect than with the elect, and because her text contains, albeit ambivalently so, traces of hope (Goldman 17). The novel also functions through fragmentation, deploys the "wounded body" literally and metaphorically (20), and refuses to ignore the "gendered and racialized violence at the heart of apocalypse" (26). *Whispering in Shadows* however differs in that Goldman mentions that there is a "prohibition against bearing witness in most Native cultures" (102). In contrast, the act of witnessing, coupled with that of attempting to prevent catastrophes from occurring, is central to Armstrong's project. The novel's apocalyptic visions then act as warnings because they seek to foreshadow the seemingly inevitable consequences of the Western way of life. They also rearticulate these consequences through an indigenous perspective in which this inevitability contains the potential to restore balance.

On the back cover of *Whispering in Shadows*, Hartwig Isernhagen argues that the novel is "driven by apocalyptic fear," a fear which the novel makes explicit in its plot development. For instance, while Julie and Penny are considering the impact of mass production, Julie argues that the economy, and the individual desire to accumulate wealth, is

[304] In a talk sponsored by ACQL and CACLALS in 2012, M. NourbeSe Philip suggested, in reference to current apocalyptic anxieties, that for some peoples throughout the world, 2012 has already happened. This idea of articulating colonial encounters through apocalyptic language is then one that resonates with a number of people affected by the legacy of European imperialism.

directly responsible for the fact that "resources are getting plundered and everything polluted" (*WiS* 81). For Julie, this economic drive is "effecting (sic) the environment and it's getting worse. It's got to effect (sic) people in the end" (81). While this passage constitutes a prime example of what Sorflaten calls "Armstrong's own political agenda" (387), it is interwoven with Penny's growth, since she had "never thought of those connections" before (Armstrong, *WiS* 81). It also foreshadows her upcoming illness, which is itself connected to her exposure to pesticides while picking apples (20). Foreshadowing plays a crucial role in developing the novel's sense of inevitable doom, just like the failure of activist actions to, for instance, prevent a logging company from destroying a forest (110-120), comes to represent the same sense of futility that characterizes Penny's dreams.[305] When Penny reflects that "Oh, Margaret, your *Handmaiden's Tale* may not be a fantasy. It comes, the long deep shadow just before dawn's first light" (201), Penny envisions Atwood's apocalyptic and dystopic narrative as a potential reality.[306] Like Atwood does in her "speculative fictions," Armstrong operates on a "slippery slope" basis that seeks to anticipate what will happen if "we continue down the road we're already on" (Atwood, *WWI* 286).[307] Armstrong's novel focuses on inevitability, where resistance is often perceived as futile. Penny's dream featuring ancestors who, once awoken by science, begin to shoot everyone in sight (Armstrong, *WiS* 234) strengthens her sense of upcoming doom, as she and her activist friends fail to prevent the reawakening. For Penny, this dream demonstrates that "something awful is going to happen. Like doomsday or

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[305] The futility of acts of resistance establishes connection with Atwood's *The Year of the Flood*, where the God's Gardeners resist while being convinced that they cannot halt the inevitable.

[306] While Atwood's narrative is concerned with anti-feminist backlash, it also comments on environmental damage following a conflict. This concern with environmental devastation strengthens the link between Armstrong and Atwood's novels.

[307] Atwood expands on this definition in *In Other Worlds: SF and the Human Imagination*, where she asserts that speculative fictions describe "things that really could happen but just hadn't completely happened when the authors wrote the book" (6). In other words, speculative fictions intersect more with dystopic literature than with works of science fiction.

something" (238), and David comments that "I don't think we can stop it now" (238). While David's interpretation of Penny's dream enables his recommitment to resistance (239), Penny feels "defeated" (238). This passage marks her withdrawal from further activist ventures, as well as her diagnosis with cancer, two plot developments which reinforce the inevitability under which *Whispering in Shadows* functions.

Unlike Thomas King, whose *Green Grass, Running Water* explores apocalyptic visions through humour (Goldman 101), Armstrong's *Whispering in Shadows* uses metaphors which, while mostly negative, contain traces of hope. Armstrong uses the comic once to explore the effects of globalization, in a fragment where Fox runs away from "a bunch of stinking turds" (*WiS* 241). When Coyote vows revenge on those who are "stirring up shit" (241), he betrays, despite the comic tone, the anger which resonates throughout *Whispering in Shadows* as Penny becomes aware of the varied "plots" (151) which contain and condemn marginalized peoples. Penny then reconceptualises the forms of oppression she witnesses through her indigenous perspective, where people are understood as "natural environment" (84), upcoming doom is figured in the anger of ancestral spirits (234), while cancer becomes flesh-eating monsters who were once "banished but only if we kept the balance which was established" (247).

Metaphorically, Penny's cancer can be associated with the apocalyptic atmosphere in the book because, like environmental degradation, this cancer is unstoppable and connected to the human need to control nature through pesticides (Haladay 40-43). For Härting, cancer constitutes a "physical manifestation of the disintegration and displacement of indigenous life" (276), a statement which is corroborated when Penny's sister claims that the cancer arose because Penny rejected her communal role as an artist (Armstrong, *WiS* 265). As a metaphor,

cancer then embodies the repercussions of a lack of balance and of environmental devastation.[308] On the other hand, Penny also understands cancer positively as the body's attempt to restore the balance which humans have disturbed (247-248). Since cancer is figured as transforming humans into "dinosaurs" (248) and the ending of the novel is strongly suggestive of Penny's death, the novel hints that this new balance may not sustain human life. This upcoming extinction functions as an apocalyptic premonition, but the poem which concludes the novel does not configure death as an apocalyptic event:

> …my flesh
> will offer me up
> and feed the earth
> and she will
> love me (296).

In this poem, death is represented as an act of communion and love with the earth. The metaphor of consumption, through which the speaker is being fed to the earth, implies that she will become one with the land. In this way, the speaker can be interpreted as becoming part of the environment, which opens up a space of hope for humans to survive as re-incorporated within nature.[309] The apocalyptic undertones of cancer, as a literal disease with metaphorical implications, then oscillate between destruction and renewal.

Similarly, the metaphor of the shadows is ambivalently articulated as signifying both ending and beginning. At the beginning of the novel, Tupa tells Penny that shadows and light

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[308] Haladay notes that the cancer also functions as a metaphor for colonization, where the cancer cells "are ultimately unstoppable once lodged in the terrain of her flesh" (42).

[309] While Haladay does not examine this specific poem as evidence that Armstrong's novel rejects separation (35; 39), this metaphor illustrates most explicitly that Armstrong views humans as intertwined with and inseparable from the natural world.

are not mutually exclusive: "The world is new. Today we are here, but the shadows follow us in the bright of day. Take care to wrap the light around you" (18). In this passage, the shadows are constructed negatively, as the source of potential sorrows and challenges. This configuration is maintained in various scenes, namely in the one which follows Penny's destruction of her art works (206), and in Penny's despair following Tupa's death (230-231). The shadows are explicitly constructed as negative in that last scene, where Penny's grandmother asserts that she will "wash the shadows away" (231). This figuration of the shadows as signalling devastating emotions and destruction is confirmed when Penny, as an adult, reflects that following Tupa's death, "the shadows moved inside. It was Tupa who made the world right. She left a hole inside of me that I could find no way to fill. I let the shadows in. They whispered to me about all the things which shadows bring and I listened" (285). For Haladay, Penny's reflections on the shadows indicates that she now understands "what the shadows have been whispering to her for so many years," which is why she "returns to the source of convergence among the land and Tupa's speaking" (43). Yet, this passage indicates that listening to the shadows is what led Penny to leave her community, an act she now regrets. As she mentions, "too many shadows walk the earth and they took me away" (285), which is why she decides to wait for the morning sun to rise so that she can "wrap [the sun] around me and carry it home to warm me in days to come" (285). The shadows then seem to stand for the challenges and anxieties which kept Penny away from her community throughout most of her adult life.

The atmosphere of impending doom and catastrophe which the shadows produce then connect *Whispering in Shadows*' apocalyptic undertones with the novel's homing plot, where Penny's return functions as a means to dispel the threats the shadows represent. In the title, the

shadows are *not* the ones whispering; someone is rather whispering whilst in the shadows. Penny's experiences, while important to the act of bearing witness, are configured as negative because they severed the protagonist from her community. The act of whispering in the text is usually positive, as it is the colours which whisper to Penny in what Tupa has identified as Penny's gift (46). It is when coupled with the shadows that the act of whispering becomes ambivalently situated between communal empowerment and disruption. However, the shadows are not always understood negatively, since they are necessary for renewal: "The night will reach its darkest soon and it will be long. But it is always darkest just before first dawn's light. And then the bright shaft of light will break … and the world will be new" (287). Just like the cancer metaphor, the shadows oscillate between their overtones of devastation and ending and hopeful undertones that signal new beginnings. These metaphors then differ from the ones I examined in the previous chapters, because they do not function through substitutions[310] that have ambivalent referents. Instead they signal the limits of the conceptual hybridity my dissertation has elaborated until now. *Whispering in Shadows* does maintain the terms through which hybridity operates, notably the notions of ambivalence, oscillation, and destabilization, but these terms no longer operate as strategies which prevent the solidification of meaning. Instead, these metaphors and their oscillation between positive and negative potential suggest the unity of Armstrong's vision, where shadows and daylight, cancer and balance, become interconnected rather than opposing forces.

[310] Härting notes that the metaphors in *Whispering in Shadows* do not "act in conventional ways through substitution" (275) but "enact different experiences of globalization while generating a critique and a counter-narrative of neo-ecological imperialism" (275). My interpretation differs in that I view Armstrong's metaphors as having a referent (cancer as the pollution of the human body) which simultaneously contains its opposite (cancer as a new form of balance).

Because the novel deploys apocalyptic tones in such varied ways, as they are manifested within the plot, intertextual references, and metaphors, they constitute the generic feature which solidifies the notion that Armstrong's text constitutes a complex web in which varied narratives are intertwined. The genres of the *bildungsroman*, *künstlersroman*, homing, and recovery seem to relate solely to Penny's character development, but the apocalyptic characteristics of the text reinforce the idea that narratives of globalization are inextricable from Penny's subject formation. This form of generic hybridity does not generate tensions in the way of Ruffo's long poem, but rather insists that varied components which seem separate, such as the growth of a subject, globalization, art and its critical reception, ancestral knowledge, as well as gendered and racialized violence, are overlapped to create multiple, non-hegemonic narratives. Hybridity is definitely present in the manner in which the form and genre of the novel unfold, but *Whispering in Shadows*' generic interplay and use of metaphor emphasize that hybridity is not the operating concept of this novel.

3.1: En'owkin: Juxtaposing Competing Narratives of Globalization

Instead of mobilizing hybridity, *Whispering in Shadows* relies on Okanagan concepts such as the spider's web and En'owkin in order to resist hegemonic narratives. The spider's web describes not only the generic hybridity of the novel, whose unity works against its fragmented form, but also includes the various narratives of globalization the novel develops. Most theories of globalization strive to elaborate an all-encompassing narrative to examine, criticize, or even celebrate it (Brennan 125), but *Whispering in Shadows* differs because it refuses to foreground a single version of globalization. Instead, the different experiences of globalization which the novel evokes overlap, and resist attempts to theorize globalization under a single conceptual paradigm. In this sense, *Whispering in Shadows* continues the

project of *Slash* in that it privileges the Okanagan concept of En'owkin. Defined as the process of "building consensus" (Armstrong and Ng 31), En'owkin does not entail that everyone must agree, but that "everybody recognizes the common ground upon which our differences rest" (31).[311] En'owkin is illustrated in *Slash* when Tommy explains that First Nations in Canada do not need to strike a single agreement with the Canadian government. Instead, he suggests that each nation should "deal separately according to each nation's preference" (*Slash* 235) because "there isn't any strength to any one position" (234). Similarly, *Whispering in Shadows* refuses to argue in favour of a single narrative of globalization. Armstrong has a political agenda in this text (Sorflaten 387), but she nonetheless allows contradictory discourses of globalization as a continuation of colonialism, as an "evil" force that will doom the earth, as simultaneously enabling grassroots activism, homogenization, and heterogeneity, as a force that can be modified through education, or as one to which there may be an alternative, to coexist.[312] This juxtaposition resists theories of hybridity, because it does not aim to destabilize dominant modes, but to reject them in order to stress that all arguments must coexist. While the varied literary strategies through which Armstrong explores all of these options are troubled by her handling of complicity, the novel nonetheless rearticulates globalization through an indigenous worldview.

The debates over globalization have often approached the topic in a competitive fashion, where theorists and critics attempt to elaborate a comprehensive analysis of globalization. As Timothy Brennan notes, "the debates over globalization are discursive. That

[311] Similarly, Maracle advocates for the multiplicity of viewpoints in "Oratory on Oratory," as each argument is but "one aspect of the whole" (57-58).

[312] While this emphasis on juxtaposition and overlap echoes Tomlinson's "complex connectivity" (2), Armstrong's novel differs in that it does not embrace the notion of "unicity" Tomlinson develops to describe how the world is becoming "a single social and cultural setting" (10). *Whispering in Shadows* also struggles with the issue of complicity that is inherent to Tomlinson's work.

is, they are debates over theory: over which explanatory mechanism makes the most sense" (125). According to him, the distinction between contemporary globalization and prior imperialisms is that globalization operates on a larger scale (137). For Gikandi, the main theoretical debate lies in identifying whether globalization should be celebrated, or if it constitutes a crisis (629). As I mentioned in chapter four, critics such as Sassen and Iyer view globalization positively, as it enables new movements of resistance among those who are marginalized on the national scale (Sassen, *Globalization* 22). Dirlik also interprets globalization as creating a space for resistance, since he interprets the local as enabling critiques of the global.[313] In contrast, Appadurai conceptualizes resistance as emerging from within the "disjunctive flows" of globalization, as they are challenged by "grassroots globalization" (3) performed "on behalf of the poor" (3). Without necessarily celebrating globalization, these critics recognize the potential for resistance that globalization allows despite its unequal and coercive components.

Other critics foreground the coercive potential of globalization through a focus on its national and local implications. For instance, Canadian critics who resist globalization studies worry that globalization is synonymous with homogenization and Americanization (Sugars 45; Wyile 59). The tensions between globalization as homogenization, and globalization as fostering hybridity and heterogeneity is a common debate in the Humanities, where globalization is examined for its focus on culture.[314] However, it is interpreted as a false dichotomy in *After Globalization*, where Cadzyn and Szeman mention that hybridity and

[313] Dirlik however warns that the local should be a "critical localism" (38), one that is without nostalgia for prior modes of social organization and which challenges the local's coercive potential as much as the global's.
[314] See for instance Jameson's "Notes on Globalization as a Philosophical Issue," Cynthia Sugars' "Worlding the Postcolonial Nation," and Herb Wyile's "Hemispheric Studies or Scholarly NAFTA: The Case for Canadian Literary Studies."

mixing are features "of culture per se" (9).[315] Like Sugars and Wyile, Naomi Klein and Arundhati Roy view globalization as a marginalizing and disastrous force at the local and national level. Both also share, along with Jeannette Armstrong,[316] a desire to inform their readers of how capitalism maximizes profits while disempowering the masses. Their projects are thereby didactic and have a revolutionary aim because they believe that education will lead to either increased grassroots resistance (Roy 86), or modifications in consumer and voter behaviour (Klein 22; 24). Critics such as Sugars, Wyile, Klein, and Roy thus see globalization as a coercive force that must be challenged and resisted.

In contrast to these debates, Cadzyn and Szeman offer new insights into globalization as an ideology that can end, and, potentially, already has.[317] This interpretation varies significantly from that of Hardt and Negri, who view Empire as a system that has no outside, and that can only be resisted from within (*Empire* 46). Cadzyn and Szeman's argument opens up possibilities of resistance in *Whispering in Shadows*, as the novel interacts within the different narratives of globalization listed above, but is simultaneously outside them. As Linda Tuhiwai Smith argues, indigenous peoples are able to detect the operations of the Western cultural archive because they do not view it as "natural" (44). Cadzyn and Szeman's critique of the common sense logic of globalization, as a force which "limits imagination" (8) and disguises the manner in which globalization "delivers benefits for the few at the expense of the

[315] In other words, Cadzyn and Szeman argue that the idea that cultures are now changing and mixing under the forces of globalization creates a false myth of origin in which cultures were previously rooted and unchanging (9).

[316] Armstrong concluded her 1989 interview with Harmut Lutz with her concerns on "the state of humanity right now" and a warning that "the sickness of us as human beings has become evident in the destruction of the world" (31).

[317] Cadzyn and Szeman argue that the 2008 economic crisis marked the end of globalization, because it confronted capitalism with "its mortality" (1), and exposed globalization as a fiction (1). This exposure of globalization marks its end because globalization was meant to conceal and naturalize capitalism so that no one could imagine an "after" to this time period (1-2). Nonetheless, they assert that even though "globalization is finished," it "lives on" in the U.S.'s hegemonic role and in the endurance of capitalism (41).

many" (8), then functions well within the context of Armstrong's novel. This is not to say that Armstrong's novel should be examined through the methodology *After Globalization* develops, since Cadzyn and Sezman's assertion that "nothing can save us" contradicts Armstrong's project. Rather, it entails that Armstrong's text marks a shift in the manner in which literary texts[318] apprehend globalization not as something to be accommodated or even resisted at all cost, but as an ideology which can be dismissed and discarded through critique. In that way, *Whispering in Shadows* entertains all competing narratives of globalization, while always allowing indigenous worldviews to question how these discourses operate.

Because *Whispering in Shadows* is structured as a network through the metaphor of the spider's web, the competing versions of globalization it describes function as interdependent segments of the same concept which are then modified through Penny's indigenous worldview. For instance, while I supplemented Sassen's theorization of the local, national, and global scales in chapter four with the temporal dimension of colonialism, Armstrong takes this scaling further in her novel in that she theorizes the smallest unit upon which globalization operates; that is, the human body. The links that exist between Penny's cancer and globalization lie at the intersection of local and global economies and the patriarchal and colonial management of indigenous peoples.[319] Penny suffers from a specific form of cancer caused by exposure to pesticides (*WiS* 254). Her former work as an apple-picker, where the pesticides "[coat] her hands and [stick] to her face, filling her nose and mouth with its bitter, bitter taste" (20), is responsible for it. This job draws links between the global economy,

[318] For instance, texts such as *The Almanac of the Dead*, *The Hungry Tide*, and *The Devil on the Cross* are set in a context of global oppression, and attempt to elaborate, with varying degrees of success, modes of resistance within this system. In contrast, *Whispering in Shadows* proposes that there is an outside to this system.

[319] Armstrong then aligns herself with eco-feminist texts such *Ana Historic*, where the colonization of indigenous peoples and the operations of imperialism through the logging industry in British Columbia coincide with the patriarchal organization of the settlement.

colonialism, and patriarchal power. Statistically, racialized communities are most commonly exposed to toxic substances (Andrea Smith 57). In *Whispering in Shadows*, it is mostly members of indigenous communities who work during apple-picking season. In addition, it is Penny's work, rather than her husband's, which leads to greater exposure to pesticides. This connection between patriarchal and colonial management is reinforced through a rape metaphor, where the garbage which washes up on the beach becomes one "huge bloody rape scene" (Armstrong, *WiS* 84). This language evokes Andrea Smith's comments on the expression "the rape of the land," which eco-feminists developed to point out the "connection between patriarchy's disregard for nature, women, and indigenous peoples" (55). While rape metaphors are problematic because they conflate a physical crime that has strong traumatic consequences with natural devastation,[320] it makes an important point in the context of Armstrong's novel where the human body is "natural environment, too" (*WiS* 84). In this way, Armstrong supplements the spatial and temporal scalings of globalization I discussed in chapter four, since her novel blurs them entirely.

Whispering in Shadows also adopts the pedagogical narrative that characterizes the work of Naomi Klein and Arundhati Roy, since this novel aims to expose the harms of globalization. According to Sorflaten, the novel addresses "national and international oppression within our current phase of globalization" (284), a project which "continues the process of decolonization" that Armstrong's first novel initiated (384). In *Slash*, Tommy learns about colonization as an ongoing project through his participation in awareness-raising activism such as "The Trail of Broken Treaties Caravan." He mentions that he "hadn't even heard of [the Trail of Tears], but then I guess that was the point of this whole trip: to educate"

[320] Andrea Smith justifies her metaphor by arguing that environmental racism constitutes "another form of sexual violence, as it violates the bodies of Native and other marginalized peoples" (66).

(95). When Slash also asserts that another goal of the Caravan is “to bring those things to the attention of the public” (96), he presents a second educational project, one in which it is Americans and Canadians who need to learn what colonialism and imperialism entail. *Whispering in Shadows* continues this project, though it is more global in scope. The moments which Sorflaten identifies as “didactic” (387) certainly convey Armstrong’s desire to use art to “shock some sense into people” (*WiS* 203). In order to fulfill this project, *Whispering in Shadows* adopts a perspective that is different than that which is deployed by Klein, Roy, Silko, and Menchú, as these four authors denounce, often by name, those who are responsible for oppression.[321] In *The Almanac of the Dead* for example, the wealthy characters[322] are portrayed as being “in a state of moral and physical devolution” (Thom 220), which allows Silko to criticize the institutions they represent (221-222).

Instead of focusing on individuals, *Whispering in Shadows* rather continues the project of *Slash* in that the novel criticizes the system rather than the people who are currently in charge of it.[323] This critique corresponds to the methodology favoured by Cadzyn and Szeman, as it relies on “an analytic understanding of how capitalism works” (140). When Penny and Julie count Penny’s shirts in order to figure out how mass production functions (Armstrong, *WiS* 80-81), they are developing an understanding of capitalism which will ultimately allow Penny to grasp its human and environmental cost. Similarly, when Penny and David visit the Chiapas, they describe the events which have taken place in the region before their arrival (164-165), but the goal of this conversation is not to expose the actions of the people behind

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[321] Cadzyn and Szeman criticize this project of exposure in Klein’s work because they view it as “moralizing” (140). They agree that the corrupt should be held accountable, but do not think that focusing on them is an adequate way to alter the operations of capitalism (140).
[322] Thom uses Serlo, Beaufrey, Blue, Menardo, and Arne as examples of depraved characters.
[323] The refusal to blame individuals for oppression is stated clearly when Penny goes to a bar with other students and their professor. At the end of this scene, Penny decides to leave “before I say things none of you deserve” (Armstrong *WiS* 68).

NAFTA. Rather, it is to expose the harms of capitalism and globalization as systems, which push marginalized peoples into extreme conditions of dispossession: “grown people forced by poverty to sell blood, kidneys, skin and corneas” (165). While Sorflaten believes that these moments “read more like political tract and sociological analysis than prose” (387), they allow Armstrong to elaborate a critique of globalization as a system, while also demonstrating the inherent narrative difficulties this project posits in a fictional form.

If these didactic passages appear too “political” and too “sociological” (Sorflaten 387), they become interesting inasmuch as *Whispering in Shadows* points to the failings of its own pedagogical project. Just like Penny’s nervous breakdown points to the failure of art to make a political statement, her daughter Shanna showcases the failure of education as a tool through which globalization can be resisted. Critiques of globalization which take the form of educational projects function under the “assumption that knowing about something … will necessarily change how one behaves… [and] that changing one’s behavior will necessarily lead to systemic social change” (Cadzyn and Szeman 136). Penny shares this assumption in *Whispering in Shadows*, as a note “found in her diary” asks “If we have shared perceptions of what is wrong, why do we not have shared perceptions of what is right?” (123). Since this note precedes Penny’s commitment to global justice, it suggests that Penny’s journey, actions, and art seek to develop this shared perception of what is right. Meanwhile, *Whispering in Shadows* acts as a vehicle for its dissemination.

However, when Shanna visits her mother in the hospital, Penny comments on the irony of their relationship: “How could I have spent so much time speaking to people and not have been able to get my own daughter to see it” (259). Despite Penny’s commitment to health awareness and political action, her daughter’s conception of healthy eating is “canned green

giant beans” beside a “special” hotdog stuffed “with extra cheese right in the pork and beans” (257). When Penny criticizes Shanna’s husband’s work, which involves burying products from oil refineries, Shanna “decides to ignore what her mother just said” (258) because she disagrees with her mother’s apocalyptic vision that sees globalization as devastation. For her, “the world is getting a lot better with more and more new medicines, pretty soon there won’t be any more sickness” (259). While her position is not privileged within the novel, it is allowed to stand in the text alongside Penny’s, a narrative decision which forces the vision of globalization as “crisis” to coexist with that of globalization as “celebration” (Gikandi 629). This overlapping undermines the impression that *Whispering in Shadows* presents a hegemonic narrative of globalization, because dissenting visions are presented in the spirit of En’owkin. The didactic moments which Sorflaten sees as weakening the poetic nature of Armstrong’s novel can then be understood as serving another purpose, one in which the novel foregrounds the limitations of its own didacticism.

The project of exposure in *Whispering in Shadows* goes beyond the novel’s didactic tone, as many scenes address the unevenness of globalization. In *Slash* and *Whispering in Shadows*, indigenous peoples occupy a position that is parallel to[324] but separate from that of dominant Canadians. This configuration contradicts the notion of equality upon which liberal democracies rest. In *Slash*, debates regarding the place of indigenous peoples within the narratives of nation, citizenship, and progress demonstrate this disparity. During Tommy’s childhood, political issues such as Trudeau’s “White Paper” and access to alcohol are articulated through the rhetoric of equal rights, which aims to assimilate indigenous peoples into Canadian society. The tension between the “assimilate or get lost” (Armstrong, *Slash* 70)

[324] Richard Desjardins’ *Le peuple invisible* (NFB 2008) describes the Algonquin nation in Canada as a parallel society, one which exists alongside dominant Canadians yet remains unknowable to the rest of Canada.

options which Canada offers indigenous peoples drives the novel, because it enables the development of “a third choice” (70), where the characters search for alternative modes of living. The discrepancy between what people on the reservation can afford, and the televisions, “shiny bikes and brand new clothes” (23) the white children have, emphasizes that indigenous communities are not fully integrated within what is considered to be the “Canadian” way of life.[325]

Armstrong continues this project but expands it on the global scale in *Whispering in Shadows*. For instance, Penny calls attending a student party “research” (46), and notes that “this must be how Margaret Mead felt” (46) upon her arrival. The reference to this anthropologist emphasizes the distinctions Penny draws between herself and dominant Canadians, and also reverses the relations of power which marked Mead’s venture. The relations of power are however restored when Penny goes to a bar with her professor and other students, where the professor’s condescending sexism, and Julie’s desire to cast Penny as a “radical,” an “Indian,” a “legend,” and an “anarchist” (67), reaffirm Penny’s status as the “other.” As Härting mentions, those labels point to a form of colonial desire that instrumentalizes indigenous peoples to Julie’s “‘radical’ feminist politics” (267).[326] This critique is expanded within the global sphere during her visit to the Chiapas, where the horrors she witnesses are juxtaposed with a comment that foregrounds the hypocrisy of

[325] This discrepancy does not entail that assimilation would be preferable. Instead, I argue that *Slash* and *Whispering in Shadows* expose those differences to contradict the idea of the nation as one in which all are equal. The rhetoric of equality in *Slash* in fact seeks to marginalize indigenous peoples further, since it is a form of assimilation that does not foster anti-racism, and refuses to account for the validity of indigenous cultural and communal values.
[326] This form of instrumentalization can also be seen in the manner in which the feminist movement sought to appropriate *Slash* as a feminist text, even though Armstrong is committed to ideas of balance between male and female and wished to make Tommy a role model for men in her community (qtd in Lutz 8; Williamson 15; 19)

humanitarianism: “The year of Indigenous Peoples. Declared so by the United Nations. What a damn farce” (Armstrong, *WiS* 184).[327]

Not only does the visit to the Chiapas expose the lack of international commitment to the welfare of indigenous peoples, but it also reminds Penny and David that colonialism and globalization are processes that unfold differentially throughout the world. While thinking of a solution for the community they visit, the Native American characters are forced to acknowledge that “our members are also faced with poverty and hardship in the USA, though not as severe as yours here” (183). While this passage relativizes the suffering of indigenous peoples in Canada and the United States and creates a hierarchy of the horrors of globalization, a subsequent scene in Los Angeles shows that third world poverty exists in the first world too: “I didn’t know it was like this, right here in America. It’s a living death. These poor people. It’s no different than what we seen (sic) in Mexico” (198). While Sassen views the U.N. as a positive aspect of globalization, one through which indigenous peoples can contest their marginalization (“Many” 89), *Whispering in Shadows* underlines that such institutions do not prevent or remedy the abuses of globalization. The novel also points out the discrepant forms of privilege globalization creates, where the international division of labour ensures that, as marginalized as indigenous communities might be in Canada and the U.S., their situation remains preferable to that of the communities in the Chiapas. Through the overlapping and often contradictory narratives of globalization the novel introduces, *Whispering in Shadows* emphasizes that globalization is a complex and deeply interconnected web in which it is difficult to pinpoint absolute victims or villains.

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[327] While in Los Angeles, Penny also notes that “America, the land of the free” is a “joke” (198). These statements reinforce Armstrong’s project of exposure in that they discredit the positive narratives attributed to the U.N. and the U.S.

However, it is precisely on this point that the novel collapses, since the text is unable to reckon with the issue of complicity which Penny's relative privilege generates. If the novel is to be read as a spider's web, then complicity marks the moment where the novel gets entangled in it. Complicity is difficult to negotiate, inasmuch as the refusal to acknowledge its existence can undermine movements of resistance, as it does in Hage's *Cockroach*. In *Whispering in Shadows*, Penny's realization that she is complicit with the oppression globalization generates because she sells her paintings to the wealthy leads her not only to destroy her paintings, but to stop painting altogether. Had Penny chosen to sell those paintings, her works would have acted as Appadurai's grassroots globalization; that is, as "globalization on behalf of the poor" (3). This form of activism is not without its challenges, as speaking for others risks marginalizing the community that is being spoken for (Alcoff 7). The problem of complicity in *Whispering in Shadows* remains unsolvable, because Penny's actions, and *Whispering in Shadows* itself, remain implicated within the systems that marginalize and oppress. Cadzyn and Szeman identify this problem as "the trap of purity" (153), which exists because some believe that "the only clean acts (charitable or critical) are those performed by individuals who are themselves clean" (153). For them, this "insistence on purity operates either to affirm common sense or to disable critique" (153). The cost of Penny's dedication to purity is that she refuses further cancer treatment: "I can't do that. Not when the source might be dead fetus marrow or brain stem cells or some such thing" (Armstrong, *WiS* 293). This scene then denies that resistance can come from a space of contradiction, where an individual or a community can benefit from globalization while still opposing its project. It is this troubling handling of complicity that leads critics to assume that Armstrong constructs the local as a space of resistance to globalization, when in fact, through

the connections between apple-picking and Penny's cancer, the novel demonstrates that the local is inevitably interconnected with the global. This dilemma between purity and complicity recalls early criticism on *Slash*, where critics such as Margery Fee and Helen Hoy were concerned that their interpretations of the text would contribute to colonialism (Fee 177; Hoy 45). Hoy resolved this issue by asserting "I can't teach it, I can't not teach it" (45). This double negative indicates that even though criticism might make the critic complicit with colonialism, one still bears a responsibility to teach and read *Slash*. This is a gesture *Whispering in Shadows* refuses to make, and while this refusal troubles the novel's complex interweaving of diverse forms and interpretations of globalization, it opens up the narrative to what might lie outside those discourses.

3.2 Towards an Indigenous Re-Interpretation of Globalization: The Limits of Hybridity

It is not only complicity which troubles *Whispering in Shadows*' overlapping theorization of globalization, but also the novel's resistance to globalization's tangled and entangling web through indigenous responses. The novel's homing and recovery plot and its pan-indigenous connections appear to be in tension with each other, yet their juxtaposition provides a counter-narrative to the processes of globalization that lie outside Western theorizations of the concept. Alongside the novel's incorporation of Coyote within its critique of globalization, *Whispering in Shadows* demonstrates the limits of hybridity as a viable option for indigenous peoples. Armstrong's second novel then continues the project of *Slash* in that it advocates for a form of transnational alliances in which the integrity of each local and communal sphere is respected. While Pulitano suggests that indigenous peoples should acknowledge their hybridity, caused by intermarriage, contact, conquest, and (partial)

assimilation (14),[328] some indigenous critics insist that these transformations are *indigenous* rather than a sign of complicity and assimilation (Weaver et al., 168). In other words, they reject the concept of hybridity because it connotes assimilation (van Styvendale 78) and dictates the manner in which indigenous peoples can speak (Weaver et al., 168). *Whispering in Shadows*' transnationalism, homing plot, and trickster narratives then propose new ways to examine globalization *from the outside*, where the narrative indigenizes the dominant instead of being hybridized by the dominant. This is not to say that the novel manages to develop an alternative to globalization, or that it imagines an "after" to globalization. Rather, the novel's indigenizing gesture exposes globalization as an ideology, where alternatives are possible because there are forms of organization that precede and exceed it.

Hybridity is indeed a complex issue in relation to Armstrong's work. The popularity of postcolonial theory as a method through which indigenous literatures can be examined has led some critics to adopt this approach when studying *Slash*.[329] While I agree that the term "hybrid" is well-suited to a discussion of generic instability in Armstrong's novel and other texts by indigenous peoples,[330] applying the term hybrid to the processes of identity she describes (Horne 106) or to the language she employs (106)[331] erases her novels' refusal to align themselves with narratives of partial assimilation. For instance, Horne adapts hybridity

[328] Pulitano asserts that she does not employ hybridity in the sense of assimilation (8), but as "paralleling more closely the ideological interventions of the Caribbean critics' notion of identity" (8). However, because she states that indigenous critics are hybrid because they are inextricably tied to the dominant discourse (4), her argument entails that she conceives indigenous criticism as participating in the dominant instead of indigenizing it. This hybridity as complicity then becomes hegemonic since it dictates the manner in which crosscultural exchanges can flow.

[329] See for instance articles by Currie, Lundgren, Horne, Knopf, and Jones. In contrast, Emma Larocque criticizes "postcolonial buzz labels such as 'essentialist,' 'subaltern,' 'hybridity,' or 'mimicry'" (32) because they are universalizing and demand that indigenous peoples become "carbon [copies] of other colonized persons" (32).

[330] For instance, works by Armand Garnet Ruffo, Thomas King, Tomson Highway, Eden Robinson, along with Lee Maracle's *I am Woman*, and Monique Mojica's *Princess Pocahontas and the Blue Spots* blend different genres and forms that could be analyzed as hybrid literary strategies.

[331] Horne calls the vernacular English deployed in *Slash* a "hybridized language" (90). In contrast, Armstrong identifies it as "Rez English" and thus, as an indigenous way to speak English ("Land" 193).

to Armstrong's project, but still conceptualizes hybridity as "a creative process in which writers draw on diverse cultural traditions in their writing to reconfigure them" (155). Yet, Armstrong stresses that the adoption of a Western lifestyle, such as watching television or wearing jeans, does not entail that the culture has changed (Isernhagen 155-156).[332] For Dobson, *Slash*'s pan-indigenous and nationally specific identities are not conceptualised as mutually exclusive – which would make the case for a hybrid understanding of *Slash*'s resistance movement – but as complementary (130). Because Armstrong's novel appropriates in order to indigenize, the novel's crosscultural encounters can be interpreted as transnational rather than hybrid.

This transnationalism differs from that elaborated in Dobson's *Transnational Canadas* and Kamboureli and Miki's *Trans.Can.Lit*,[333] where it describes the relations within and across a country. Instead, it is indigenized to encapsulate the alliances *Whispering in Shadows* forms between indigenous peoples. These alliances could be described as pan-indigenous, pan-Native, or pan-tribal, but Renya Ramirez criticizes these terms because they erase national specificity in order to identify indigeneity as an "ethnic" identity (13).[334] For that reason, she favours indigenous transnationalism because the term can be used to describe a form of indigenous diaspora, where indigenous peoples who move away from their home reservation maintain their connection to their national community (11) and work to develop "intertribal networks within and across nation-states" (12-13). Transnationalism in an indigenous context

[332] In other words, assuming that all indigenous peoples are hybrid because they no longer live in pre-contact conditions constitutes a disempowering form of essentialism, where change becomes immediately associated with assimilation instead of being interpreted as an inherent characteristic of culture. As Armstrong notes, "culture is about process; it is not a finished product" (Isernhagen 156).
[333] Transnationalism also describes the experience of crossing the borders of the nation-state, and those of immigrant and diasporic identities (Ramirez 13-14).
[334] Similarly, Linda Tuhiwai Smith warns that the term indigenous erodes important distinctions between various groups (6), but I consider it useful to examine connections between status and non-status peoples.

can then foreground the connections between various communities (trans), as well as each group's cultural specificity (nationalism), without reducing encounters to hybrid cultural belongings.

In *Whispering in Shadows*, indigenous transnationalism posits a direct challenge to hybridity and globalization as they are commonly theorized. For instance, the agreement between indigenous peoples in North America and the communities of the Chiapas could be read as a form of grassroots globalization. It stipulates that the North Americans will "raise money to buy green coffee at your full cost. Once we recover our full costs for transport, roasting, and packaging from the sales, we share equally the profit" (*WiS* 183). This deal constitutes a form of "globalization on behalf of the poor" (Appadurai 3), but the concept of indigenous transnationalism suggests that it can be interpreted as falling outside of capitalism. For Armstrong, communal gathering and sharing, two actions which are inherent to Penny and David's visit to the Chiapas, are indigenous alternatives to capitalism and individualism: "this is a cooperative communal lifestyle that isn't based on a market wage economy, in which people are required to be competitors, and which requires individualism rather than communalism" (Isernhagen 156). Since the agreement benefits all parties equally, and emphasizes communal bonds amongst various indigenous communities, it is a form of trade that stresses sustainability rather than capitalist expansion. While the organization is definitely grassroots, it challenges the ideology of late-capitalist mass production (Jameson, "Notes" 54) and disjunctive flows (Appadurai 3) on which globalization relies because it aims to benefit all parties equally. Transnational interconnections also question notions of hybridity because they stress the unity that lies at the heart of difference, as En'owkin suggests. When Penny attends a meeting at the friendship centre where Manual, an indigenous man from Bolivia, gives a

lecture on spirituality, the concepts which unite indigenous peoples are continuously foregrounded. For Manual, despite the differences between individual nations, indigenous peoples share a concern for the land and spirituality that "binds us all" (33), because "we have one agenda, no? Pache Mama" (33).[335] This common ground amongst indigenous peoples also exists because they have been living for five hundred years "under the calendar of great turmoil" (32), a statement which identifies contact, conquest, and colonization as uniting them. These similarities do not automatically entail that Armstrong is creating a hybrid, pan-indigenous sense of identity, but that common concerns and values unite indigenous peoples despite differences.

More specifically, indigenous transnationalism is distinct from grassroots activism and globalization narratives because activism in *Whispering in Shadows* proves unable to resist both globalization as environmental devastation and globalization as a new expression of colonial and imperial power. In *Slash*, alliances between indigenous peoples and activists emerge towards the end of the novel, and are perceived with optimism. Slash indeed comments that some activists "were beginning to become real North Americans" (Armstrong, *Slash* 216),[336] while an activist actually states that "your people could show us a lot if only we had the sense to listen" (217). In contrast, *Whispering in Shadows* presents the complications and limitations of those alliances,[337] because racism and sexism prevent a full identification between indigenous and Canadian communities. As Andrea Smith notes, it would be

[335] Pache Mama is the goddess of the earth, or mother earth. It is a concept which unites environmental concerns with spirituality.

[336] This statement echoes Russell Means, a prominent member of A.I.M, who stated that Euro-Americans need to become true North Americans rather than simply remaining "transplanted Europeans" (Freeman 38).

[337] For Matthew Greene, *Slash* advocates, through the conversation with the activist mentioned above, for increased communication between Natives and non-Natives, so that "we… can learn how to see ourselves as connected with those around us" (66). While it is true that the novel leans towards alliances, Greene's interpretation relies, like the activist in the novel, on *Slash* and Slash the character as native informants in order to achieve this connection, instead of addressing the asymmetrical relations which endanger these alliances.

reasonable to expect environmental groups to ally themselves with indigenous nations for the preservation of the environment, but environmentalists rarely support indigenous rights to the land (59-60).[338] Armstrong makes a similar comment in *Whispering in Shadows* when Penny explains to an environmentalist that indigenous peoples do not get involved in the environmental movement because "most non-natives are unwilling to back them all the way" on their land claims (*WiS* 108). Racism also seeps into the activist movement when a chief, whose nation's land is threatened by a logging company, is only allowed to speak for ten minutes at a gathering (88).[339]

These problems are crucial not only because they demonstrate the limitations of alliances that operate within the discourse of globalization,[340] but also because they demonstrate the limits of hybrid forms of belonging. During the activist gathering, Penny encounters a classmate, Clarisse, who attempts to understand the connection Penny feels to the land. However, Clarisse is incapable of reaching beyond her Western conception of the world. She suggests that "maybe we need mysticism like Joseph Campbell says," but then rejects this idea because she does not know how to "accept it with the way modern science is?" (101). For Penny, Clarisse is "dispossessed without knowing of what" (100), a statement which insists that Euro-Canadians cannot feel the spiritual connection with the land that she experiences. While this statement can be interpreted as an essentialist stereotype (Casteel 107), it squarely

[338] Smith also discusses the "greening of hate," in which the global South and racialized communities in the global North are blamed for environmental devastation through overpopulation (69). In other words, environmentalism is not automatically aligned with anti-racism.
[339] It is not merely racism that complicates Penny's activist circles, but also sexism, as the female organizer is labeled "hysterical" because she argues that the participants need to be warned about the risk of physical violence their actions pose (Armstrong, *WiS* 103).
[340] In Appadurai's terminology, grassroots movements constitute a form of globalization, albeit globalization from below (3). While he interprets them as more "democratic" than hegemonic forms of economic globalization (3), *Whispering in Shadows* demonstrates the extent to which this seemingly increased level of equality remains embedded within colonial and patriarchal organization.

resists the concept of hybridity as one through which dominant Canadians could appropriate indigenous spirituality in order to feel more "connected" to the land. Similarly, Penny corrects the assumptions of the activist who believes that she should be able to convince other Native peoples to participate in the protest because she is indigenous too. This scene forces Penny to explain the numerous differences that exist between indigenous nations, but she does so without becoming a native informant. She suggests different reasons for this lack of participation, yet interrupts herself several times by saying "I don't know," "but," and "maybe" (108). In this way, she signals the distinctions between indigenous groups, the mistaken assumptions of activists, and the limitations of hybridity as an adequate concept through which the relations between and across various communities can be understood.

Whispering in Shadows' homing plot also opens up a space for a different, indigenous response to the processes of globalization. The novel might appear to be advocating a "return to Aboriginal localism" (Sorflaten 384), but its resistance to globalization cannot be so easily identified within the local sphere, since the local remains embedded within the work of globalization. More importantly, the local as depicted in *Whispering in Shadows* is profoundly marked by the apparatus of colonial power, whether it is through domestic violence and substance abuse, or through its new tools of intervention, such as the welfare system that removes children from their communities. In other words, Penny returns to a local sphere that is deeply troubled rather than a nostalgic remnant of a simpler time. Sorflaten acknowledges that Penny's return to her community resembles Dirlik's "critical localism" (Dirlik 38; Sorflaten 386), but according to her, Armstrong's critical localism allows her to acknowledge colonialism and "offer alternative means of governance" (386). In contrast, I argue that *Whispering in Shadows* presents the local not as a site of liberation from these modes of

oppression, but as a contradictory “site of promise and predicament” (Dirlik 22). The local is, for Penny, a site of healing, where her family is “being embraced by something so strong and yet so gentle” (Armstrong, *WiS* 135). This idea of healing and recovery recurs throughout the final sections of the novel, but remains a fragile notion. As Penny’s older sister, Lena, demonstrates, the local cannot heal unless one is willing to heal, since Lena brings her addiction problem and abusive partner with her. Her son is also terrified of welfare services (263-265), which emphasizes the power of the colonial state to intervene within the reservation. Lena’s behaviour then signals the challenges the local contains, as well as the ruptures the colonial apparatus generates within the community. Penny and Lena “grew up in the same house” (271), but Lena’s experiences are such that Penny cannot initially understand “what happened” (271) to her sister. Lena’s desire to change following an occurrence of domestic violence and the camping trip to the mountains however serves to establish the local as a site of hope, where traditions and communal relationship can counteract global and colonial interventions.

The local also acts as a site of “promise and predicament” through Penny’s theorization of her “cell memory,” but it is a predicament that can be addressed through indigenous conceptions of community and tradition rather than global forms of resistance. The concept of cell memory recurs twice in *Whispering in Shadows* and Penny articulates it as a form of biological, cultural, and communal memory. The novel first mentions cell memory in a brief passage (190-191) where both Penny and Coyote are trying to reach Aztlan, a “place now hidden… filled with warmth under the sun” (188). In order to reach this place, they must follow a “ghost light” that is “not to be trusted, but my cell memory is strong and Coyote knows this path too” (191). Towards the end of the novel, the concept of cell memory recurs

in a prose poem that reiterates transnational connections between "the South and the North… the North and the South, between the eagle and the condor" (288), while also repeating the idea that the blood of indigenous peoples "mixes and blurs the hard lines" (289). The mixing of blood is stated four times, which entails that the concept of cell memory relates to nineteenth century conceptions of hybridity. For Härting, cell memory constitutes a form of hybridity that stresses the connections between hybridity as a racial category and hybridity as a contemporary cultural discourse (278), especially since Penny borrows the connection between the eagle and the condor Manual had made earlier in the novel (Armstrong, *WiS* 33). Aztlan is also a borrowed concept which Penny intermingles with her own cultural conception of Coyote. Härting therefore argues that cell memory connects memory and community on the local and global spheres (277).

However, because these alliances are constructed as *cell* memory, the latter becomes a troubled metaphor because of the connections that arise between this memory and Penny's cancer. Represented as a form of natural transformation that seeks to restore balance, cancer threatens Penny's life and hints at a radical change that will lead to human extinction (*WiS* 248). Because cancer is metaphorically connected to cell memory, the novel suggests that while cell memory is "strong" (190-191), it remains at risk and will inevitably need to be transformed to remain in balance. This question of balance through transformation connects *Whispering in Shadows* to *Slash*, where critics such as Greene and Sorflaten, who comment on Armstrong's first and second novels respectively, see the tension between tradition and modernity[341] as problematizing Armstrong's figuration of the local (Greene 58-59; Sorflaten

[341] While these critics articulate this tension through the language of modernity and progress, I would argue that it is not so much technology that is the problem in Armstrong's novels, but colonialism. Incorporating guns,

386). However, these arguments omit examinations of how Armstrong constantly reformulates these questions through indigenous concepts, such as that of cell memory. In *Whispering in Shadows*, cell memory hints at upcoming change, but simultaneously remains grounded within an indigenous communal and transnational vision that allows Penny to state that "all land becomes ours" because "our spirit relatives are joined" (289). This union subsequently allows all indigenous peoples to "move toward the sun rising" (289). Put differently, cell memory envisions an indigenous connection to ancestry, memory, and land that is transnational in character, since indigenous communities are connected, but remain nationally and culturally distinct.

Armstrong also uses an indigenous worldview to contest the understanding of globalization as a system that can only be resisted from within (Hardt and Negri, *Empire* 46), because *Whispering in Shadows*' numerous references to Coyote enable her to expose globalization as a narrative to which there is an outside. For Haladay, the recurrence of the trickster figure represents Penny's connection to her "traditional knowledge" (39), but Coyote is also inserted in scenes that comment on *contemporary* situations. Coyote has a traditional function, as he conventionally learns lessons "the hard way" during his journeys (Archibald 197). For instance, one fragment has Raven telling Coyote the story of where coyotes come from. According to Raven, Coyote tried to reach the stars by climbing on "invisible strings" (Armstrong *WiS* 143), but these strings were cut so that "he fell and his bones were ground up by his only relative. An old grandmother. And … all the coyotes come from that one coyote's bone dust" (143). Coyote refuses to believe this story, because he argues that his grandmother "would have called Fox. Fox would fix things" (143). Other passages featuring Coyote, such

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television, or tractors need not threaten indigenous social organizations. However, Western education and arguments for assimilation interpreted through the rhetoric of "equal rights" do.

as the one on cell memory (190-191) and the dream Penny has during the camping trip (287) continue this story, as Coyote is always ready to climb for the stars and does not heed warnings that "they'll cut the strings" (287). These passages are connected to the poem where coyote "pisses around" on the various forms of "globe plotting" globalization generates (151-152) and the fragment in which Coyote vows to make those who "start stirring up shit" eat it (241), as the novel's final reference to Coyote also threatens to "piss on them" and "take care of them bastards" (287).

Coyote's behaviour then links Armstrong's novel to the representation of the trickster in Thomas King's works, where Coyote allows for a redistribution of agency and for an active involvement in redressing the harms of colonization.[342] Coyote's complicity with the state of the world is pointed out when Penny pleads "Oh, Coyote, stop fooling around" (192) in a poem that addresses "the demons" that populate "the politics of information" (192). Simultaneously, Coyote's vengeful tone in many fragments emphasizes that he aims to right the harms caused by globe-plotting, but his "pissing around" (152) also exposes that the progressive course of globe-plotting, from

> plot-izing the globe
>
> …as in story plots
>
> as in house plots
>
> as in evil plots

[342] In *Green Grass, Running Water*, Coyote is responsible for a number of coercive myths, which marks him as partially responsible for the colonization of indigenous peoples. His culpability allows for the reconfiguration of indigenous peoples, usually understood as victims, into agents capable of righting the wrongs of colonialism. Similarly, Nanabush in Taylor's *Motorcycle and Sweetgrass* attempts to salvage land for an Ojibway community, but his success has unintended consequences. In *Ceremony*, Silko constructs white people and colonization as the invention of a witch. Lee Maracle resists this configuration, as she asserts that "that we assist in our oppression does not make it right" (*IAW* 122), though it should be noted that King acknowledges that his Coyote is not "a full-blown Coyote … what I needed … was a sacred clown … my Coyote wants to see the world in a slight state of turmoil" ("Coyote" 96).

as in grave plots (152)

is not inevitable. This poem presents Coyote as "standing on a marble pedestal/… trying to see how far/ his piss will arc into space" (152). Coyote then stands apart from globe-plotting, since the poem offers "choices" between "plot-izing the globe" and "Coyote pissing around" (152). In this configuration, globalization becomes a choice, a narrative that can be adopted or rejected.

Coyote's role is then always ambivalent, which allows for a better theorization of the politics of complicity than Penny is capable of elaborating. In an earlier fragment, a note addresses Coyote's role within technology:

> I take the things in the world and reduce them into symbols revealing what they actually are. Television as teacher. Replacing storyteller. As custodian of brain. Of free-will. Computer as guardian of information. Coyote how will you transform these monsters? Pretending to be real and sucking kids and adults alike deeper and deeper into the trap. (*WiS* 92).

In this passage, Penny's incorporation of Coyote within a contemporary setting can function in two contradictory ways. She could be asking Coyote, as the person in charge of these technological advances, what his next step will be. After all, the technological tools she lists, the television and the computer, are figured as having taken over roles once assigned to members of the community. At the same time, she could be asking Coyote how these tools will be indigenized now that they have usurped ancestral positions.[343] Indeed, if cancer can be interpreted through an indigenous worldview as flesh-eating monsters (247), then Penny might be asking how other products of globalization can be reinterpreted. For Sorflaten, "Penny's

[343] In "Sharing one Skin," Armstrong undermines my interpretation since she argues that technology depersonalizes modes of communication (468), which suggests that she views these advances negatively.

journey demonstrates that globalization has many meanings, and that not all of them are negative as [the] increased possibilities of communication, global solidarity, and global cultural exchange demonstrate" (394). However, the references to Coyote emphasize that Penny's journey is about indigenizing the many narratives of globalization and to assert that indigenous modes of connection and organization lie outside of and in opposition to these narratives.

Conclusion: Towards a Unity of Vision

Armstrong's references to Coyote, and the connections that exist between her representation of the trickster and Thomas King's work, not only question globalization's tangled and entangling web, but also return *Whispering in Shadows* to the canon debates on indigenous literatures. Many critics seek to categorize this text within an indigenous tradition, and within a traditionalist vision of indigenous literature. However, Armstrong's novel exposes the artificiality of these distinctions, just as she exposes the constructed and ideological nature of globalization. Her novel might seem more traditionalist than the work of Thomas King, Tomson Highway, Drew Hayden Taylor, and Eden Robinson, but it nonetheless destabilizes hegemonic narratives. Similarly, her concern with the local reasserts the importance of the novel's Canadian context within global and pan-indigenous understandings of indigenous literatures, because her construction of the text as a complexly woven web precludes separation. This structural decision opens up a space for *Slash* to comment on *Whispering in Shadows*' textual politics, form, and genre, as the two novels remain united in a vision that uses fragmentation to resist hybridity's hegemonic potential. Similarly, if *Slash*'s textual limitations and failings have led to a number of debates regarding the narrative

possibilities and literary merit of indigenous texts,[344] *Whispering in Shadows*' fractures and interruptions continue and expand this discussion to include the complexities that lie in exploring and reinterpreting globalization through an indigenous perspective. Penny's inability to cope with her own complicity, and the novel's subsequent refusal to situate itself as a text that is also complicit with the narratives it denounces, certainly undermines the novel's literary possibilities. However, the failure to address this issue, as well as the presence of Shanna as a character which contradicts the alternative discourses Penny develops, enable the novel to occupy a non-hegemonic position.

Much like *Venous Hum* subverts itself in order to prevent its solidification as a master narrative of Canadian multiculturalism, *Whispering in Shadows*' textual limitations create the sense of En'owkin crucial to a non-coercive reinterpretation of globalization. In other words, while the novel's failings might not have been intended to subvert its coercive potential, they nonetheless contribute to *Whispering in Shadows*' complex web in that they refuse to neatly resolve debates. Critics who read the novel as providing such solutions, whether it be that the novel advocates a return to localism and an indigenous way of life (Sorflaten 384; Halday 43) or that it resolves the ethical/artistic challenge once Penny becomes a speaker (Eingenbrod, "Indigenizing" 80), then neglect to address how the novel, because it operates under En'owkin, complicates each of these locations through its metaphors, spatial and temporal scalings, and competing narratives of globalization. While Hodne asserts that reading Armstrong's *Slash* allowed her to separate her shortcomings as a Western critic from those of

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[344] For instance, numerous critics have responded to Godard's assertion that Slash constitutes "a 'flat' book" ("Politics" 218) in order to point out that the fault lies not with the text, but with its Western readers (Jones, "Slash" ¶2; Hoy 46; Helms 110). The debate over the literary merits of many indigenous texts remains relevant, as Laurie Kruk has admitted that "angry writers – the activist first, writers second (or the community-builders)" are less likely to be integrated in her First Nations literatures courses (311). As Ruffo notes, "say the wrong thing … and your work becomes too political, too strident, and it is quietly dismissed and shelved" ("Introduction" 14). Armstrong demonstrates these dangers during Penny's second art show.

the text (Hoy and Hodne 85), I would argue that *Whispering in Shadows*' textual limitations are an integral part of what makes this novel complex rather than a "political tract and sociological analysis" (Sorflaten 387). Its politics might be explicit and its didacticism might be overbearing, but the novel's seeming incapacity to resolve its fractures opens up a space to question the novel's project. In that way, *Whispering in Shadows* ensures that it cannot be established as a master discourse.

Conclusion

In revisiting the relationship between indigenous and multicultural literatures, this dissertation indirectly addressed what happens when these literatures inform each other, as well as what happens when they refuse to do so. My adaptable critical framework, which relied on situating each text within a specific Canadian literary category to then examine what hybrid literary strategy each text deploys allowed me to detect similar techniques in all four texts: they engage in dialogues with other Canadian texts, they rethink categories by first undoing them, and they use form and metaphors to undo the fixity of meaning and of interpretations. Identifying hybridity as a term whose definition and possible application changes depending on the context in which it is used emphasizes that the term's coercive legacy as well as its empowering reformulations upset categorizations and all-encompassing narratives. Literary categories retain their usefulness, but my dissertation stresses that they contain a homogenizing potential, as well as a certain fragility. When interpreted as fixed, genres such as the Canadian long poem, prairie literature, city writing, and indigenous literatures can be exclusive in that they prescribe the content of the literary text, or the effects the form of the text should create. Yet, when critics insist on these categories' hegemonic potential, they are faced with their inherent fragility, since accounting for exclusions risks dismantling them. What a hybrid literary framework can then enable is a way to revisit literary categories and the Canadian canon through the literary texts, in order to prevent the texts' critical edges to be dulled by the categories on which critical analyses rely.

Examining the relationship between indigenous and multicultural texts also enables a reconsideration of the role postcolonial theory plays in Canadian literary studies. Using

postcolonialism as a national narrative, as it has been done in the past, inevitably requires that critics perform a number of exclusions. Atwood's essentialist definition of Canadian literature not only contributed to defining the field as requiring Canadian content, but also excluded, for instance, texts that approached their Canadian content with humour instead of focusing on survival.[345] Sugars' national narrative uses postcolonialism to stress the importance of the settler legacy in Canada ("National" 26), an emphasis which cannot account for the manner in which racialized texts from indigenous or multicultural positions might wish to avoid, or radically reformulate, this legacy. This narrative is also characterized by a reluctance to engage with globalization, but as the multiple trajectories of subject formations featured in Hage and Armstrong's novels demonstrate, ignoring the global context which informs the Canadian literary market as well as Canada's literary production is no longer possible.

By rethinking the relationship between indigenous and multicultural writing, even indirectly, through the literary strategies these texts employ to construct the centre or the discourse they wish to address, this dissertation revisits prior applications of the postcolonial in Canadian studies. To insist that postcolonial terms such as hybridity, ambivalence, resistance, vacillation and oscillation can be manipulated in different ways in different contexts does not mean that I am arguing, as Moss and Brydon do, that postcolonial theory is always provisional (Moss 8; Brydon, "Time" 14). Rather, situating and contextualizing these categories of analysis is necessary to undo the homogenizing potential of postcolonial theory and therefore, to open up a space for discrepant experiences. This space entails that hybridity

[345] Atwood's *Survival* was looking for the patterns that make Canadian literature essentially Canadian (13). A text written by someone from Canada yet not about Canada could then not be considered Canadian. Her focus on the notion of survival also led her to omit works that are, in tone, more lighthearted than others. The most obvious example of this exclusion is Stephen Leacock's *Sunshine Sketches of a Little Town*, a book that is undeniably Canadian, but altogether unconcerned with Atwood's victim positions. Thomas Chandler Haliburton's *The Clockmaker* is also absent, as well as the satirical writings of Robertson Davies.

can function through genre and form in Ruffo's *Grey Owl*, operate as literary contamination in Mayr's *Venous Hum*, and manifest itself in abject literary strategies in Hage's *Cockroach*. More importantly, it allows me to stress the limitations of hybridity, as its history and contemporary applications cannot necessarily be recuperated in all literary contexts. *Whispering in Shadows* indeed expands my reading strategy to include concepts that may resemble some articulations of hybridity, but which differ because they have been theorized to address a specifically indigenous context. In other words, the concepts of En'owkin, the spider's web, as well as indigenous transnationalism, do not possess the theoretical flexibility that characterizes the concept of hybridity. It is through this final chapter that I hope that my dissertation can occupy its own ambivalent space, as I strove, in all four chapters, to develop non-hegemonic readings that could account for the texts' varied trajectories and contradictory metaphorical referents without occluding one position in favour of another. The nature of literary criticism requires that I develop arguments in relation to the works I study, but the use of postcolonial theoretical concepts did enable me to do so while foregrounding the tensions which the literary texts inevitably create. Ultimately, I would argue that it is impossible to develop non-hegemonic forms of hybridity without acknowledging that hybridity can be an inadequate concept in some contexts.

In short, my dissertation opens up a space to question its own methodology in the hope that future works of criticism working on the relationship between indigenous and multicultural writing will also demonstrate how fraught this relationship remains. Yet, I also acknowledge that both indigenous and multicultural literatures are undergoing constant transformations, which may, in the near future, modify the context in which their relationship can be examined. For instance, indigenous novels were, at first, always written from the point

of view of an indigenous character, even when the texts also deal with or engage with the dominant society. Yet, two indigenous writers, Eden Robinson and Richard Wagamese, have written texts that, at least partially, assume the subject position of Euro-Canadians.[346] This new development demonstrates that indigenous writing must not necessarily explore colonial relations or an indigenous way of life in order to be considered indigenous. Put differently, the fact that indigenous writers have been, with few exceptions, reluctant to engage with multiculturalism in their literary texts so far does not mean that they never will. The indigenous texts I examined in the dissertation did not, for instance, engage with multiculturalism at all, while both *Venous Hum* and *Cockroach* contained indigenous characters. If indigenous literary production comes to match the interest which multicultural and diasporic writings have accorded to it, then the terms on which the relationship between these two literatures operate will have to be reconsidered to account for this transformation. It may then be more appropriate to discuss commonalities and strategic alliances, but doing so today remains complicated because of the unequal attention the two literatures pay to these potential connections.

[346] See Robinson's "Contact Sports," "Dogs in Winter," and *Blood Sports*, as well as Richard Wagamese's *Ragged Company*.

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