“Think of me as your conscience”:
Spectres in recent English-Canadian historical fiction

by

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Abstract

In this dissertation I will discuss how English-Canadian writers of recent historical fiction incorporate ghosts for the purposes of recuperation: to suggest both the persistence of historical injustices and to signal the possibility of healing. Recognizing that views of Canada's alleged ghostlessness perpetuate a colonial overwriting of the varied histories that preceded Confederation, many writers prominently feature history and hauntings to represent that Canada does, in fact, have a storied past. Recent historical fiction by English-Canadian writers has frequently demonstrated less interest in postmodern practices and more interest considering the past as ontologically stable, though not completely accessible. This is often, I argue, in the service of a postcolonial project to revise history to acknowledge the injustices and traumas that colonial historiography has suppressed. Spectres can negotiate a desire for retaining skepticism of the inherent biases of historiography and the need to maintain some level of historical certainty in order to advocate for a particular cause. Using Jacques Derrida's concept of Hauntology and close readings of five novels, I contend that spectres are essential in postcolonial projects of illuminating the past for the purposes of recuperation in recent historical fiction. The goal of many novels of haunting and history is not only to note historical wrongs – to highlight the sense of unease and illegitimacy that ghosts signal – but also to suggest possible avenues of recovery. The presence of

ghosts is central to this type of haunting, but the context of the historical novel is equally critical: these novels demonstrate a desire not simply to highlight the persistence of knowledge but to actually revise our understanding of the past. When novels of historical haunting seek to revisit historical wrongs it is for more than emphasizing their ongoing effects. They seek, sometimes paradoxically and sometimes dubiously, to present the past as a site of revision and as a site that can be recuperated. Underlying this project – often unspoken, but sometimes made explicit – is the hope that telling the story of an injustice is part of the project of reconciling that wrong without foreclosing its ongoing effects.

In the first chapter, I will examine how spectres can signal the foreclosure of historical wrongs even as they can also suggest the persistence of those wrongs. Exploring Margaret Sweatman's novel *When Alice Lay Down With Peter*, I will consider how ghosts can provide reassurance about Canada's history of settlement and invasion even as they highlight the injustices of that practice.

In the second chapter, I will examine how spectres can illuminate events and experiences lost to history. Through Jacqueline Baker's *The Horseman's Graves* and Jane Urquhart's *Away*, I will consider how spectres are well suited to trouble our assurances in the foundations of the present. I will also consider how these same spectres can occlude the losses that they illuminate.

In the third chapter, I will examine how the unsettling presence of spectres can demonstrate the ways in which historical fiction itself can be a vessel for recuperation. Ann-Marie MacDonald's *Fall On Your Knees*, enables me to consider how spectres manifest the advantages (and some of the risks) that historical fiction has for reclaiming lost history.

In the fourth and final chapter, I will examine how spectres can offer a model for recuperating the past without foreclosing the traumas that perpetuate its hauntings. Reading Joseph Boyden's *Three Day Road*, I will consider how spectres can prevent the conservative approach of much recent historical fiction from becoming totalizing and how the liminal nature of ghosts can signal strategies for healing.

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Introduction:

Hauntings of the Living and the Dead

It's the living that haunt the homes
of the dead, wanting something
from them we can't articulate,
something we can only gesture dumbly towards
– Michael Crummey, "Finnish Cemetery Revisited"

Haunting and history have been paired for some time in critical discourses about Canadian fiction. Many critics, including most notably Margaret Atwood in *Survival* (1972), have suggested that Canada is a country with a long-standing anxiety about how its lack of ghosts reflects a lack of history. As Stuart McLean argues, "It is not enough for the modern nation-state simply to assert the antiquity of its ancestral pedigree; for its claims to be culturally persuasive, it is necessary that these imputed primordial beginnings be reiteratively summoned and deployed in the present" (29). Indeed, as Atwood observes, the perception that Canada has no ghosts has an old grip on the imagination of writers in this country: as long ago as 1836, Catherine Parr Traill proclaimed that Canada was "too matter-of-fact a country for such supernaturals to visit" (75). Many writers considered Canada, in other words, to lack the history that ghosts manifest.

Perhaps because of claims such as Traill's, or the anxiety that these claims signal, English-Canadian writers consistently demonstrate a persistent preoccupation with spectres and haunting. Critics such as Jonathan Kertzer, Justin Edwards, Marlene Goldman, and Cynthia Sugars have argued that writing about ghosts in Canada is often part of the desire of a settler/invader nation to create a national sense of identity and provide a sense of tradition. As Marlene Goldman explains, "An underlying fear is that without ghosts, the settlers and their descendents risk remaining ciphers to themselves and never fully establishing a

sense that they have fully arrived and are at home in Canada" (5). These discussions revolve around what Eva Darias-Beautell calls a "metaphor of *lack*" (2) which "provided the nation, somehow paradoxically, with the distinctive elements it was looking for" (2). This anxiety has certainly spurred valuable and clever insights in some of English Canada's notable writers, defining Canada by the absence of its history and ghosts. Robertson Davies once contended that "Canada needs ghosts, as a dietary supplement, a vitamin taken to stave off that most dreadful of modern ailments, the Rational Rickets" (2). As Earle Birney famously wrote in his poem "Can.Lit," "it's only by our lack of ghosts / we're haunted" (15-16). The underlying fear that ghosts so often signal for English-Canadian writers is the fear of a lack of history: Canada only matters, only exists, as a nation if it can be considered haunted.

There is a second fear, however, that these ghosts reveal: the fear that a lack of ghosts portends a lack of legitimacy. This second fear is the creeping and unsettling certainty that the past has been overwritten in the quest for a Canadian tradition. To create "Canada" and its history, in other words, it has been necessary to deny other histories. Hauntings represent unease at the ironic awareness of what has been sacrificed in order to create the very nation that worries about its lack of history. Indeed, the summoning of ghosts to assuage the anxiety of illegitimacy is often accompanied by the suppression of other forms of knowledge, including other forms of haunting. As McLean also suggests, "historical knowledge, at least in the modern west, is founded on the silencing and sublimation of other ways of knowing, including communion with spirits and the dead" (17). The fear that Goldman diagnoses isn't merely a fear that a lack of history means that one does not belong on one's land: it is also the fear that there might be someone who has a prior claim to, who has a longer history on, that land. The ghosts that haunt English-Canadian writing also manifest this anxiety of illegitimacy and an unease over how suppressed histories continue to trouble the stability of the present. Thus, many hauntings in English-Canadian writing explicitly manifest the unease inherent in the present's relationship to the past: what has been inherited, what is missing, what has been denied, what has been hidden or suppressed. This is a fertile site for

criticism: the physical, temporal, thematic, and methodological spaces between, as Darias-Beautell puts it, "the *here* and the *there*, the *then* and the *now*" (3).

Because of this longstanding interest in ghosts and history, spectral figures and historical novels are both particularly prevalent in fiction by English-Canadian writers. Margaret Atwood defines historical novels in *In Search of* Alias Grace as "anything before the time at which the novel-writer came to consciousness" (1510). There is, appropriately enough, a long tradition of such historical fiction in Canada. Indeed, there have been novels outlining Canada's history longer than there has even been Canada: perhaps most famously, John Richardson's *Wacousta* (1832) and *The Canadian Brothers* (1840) rely upon the stuff of the past to advocate for the nation that would become Canada. Richardson's use of fictionalized history indicates how many writers approach the past through the concerns of the present. In fact, novels that revisit history (in Canada as elsewhere) generally do so in order to comment upon the present. Benedetto Croce describes how

> the practical requirements which underlie every historical judgment give to all history the character of 'contemporary history' because, however remote in time events there recounted may seem to be, the history in reality refers to present needs and present situations wherein those events vibrate. (19)

Herb Wyile argues further that much historical fiction by English-Canadian writers is "revisionist" in that its focus is "previously neglected or marginalized histories, underlining that what is historically significant had been narrowly defined and ideologically overdetermined, and that there's much more to Canadian history than meets the European male eye" (*SF* 6). This indicates how historical novels foreground concerns with how the present understands its own formation, particularly as our understanding of history becomes more nuanced and less exclusionary. This "rereading and rewriting of the European historical and fictional record, according to Helen Tiffin, is a "vital and inescapable" postcolonial task (1). Similarly, there have been many novels that feature ghosts and hauntings to highlight the indestructible traces of knowledge that have been lost or suppressed by the European male eye that Wyile describes. Avery Gordon suggests in *Ghostly*

Matters (1997) that the postcolonial nation is inevitably haunted by ghost stories and that "the ghost is a crucible for political meditation and historical memory" (18). These hauntings, like novels of revisionist history, permit writers to explore marginalized histories and undermine exclusionary narratives. To confront and acknowledge troubling aspects of Canada's past is to have the present moment revised. Goldman contends that such hauntings express "the legacy of the settler-invader's long-standing desire to lay claim to a Canadian genius loci or spirit of the nation and to come to terms with Canada's past" (5).

Recognizing that views of Canada's alleged ghostlessness perpetuate a colonial overwriting of the varied histories outside the narrative of Confederation, many writers prominently feature history and hauntings to represent that Canada does, in fact, have a storied past. The problem, to quote Rudy Wiebe, "is to make the story" (78). A host of contemporary English-Canadian novelists – including Gail Anderson-Dargatz, Margaret Atwood, Jacqueline Baker, Joseph Boyden, Dionne Brand, Douglas Coupland, Thomas King, Joy Kogawa, Ann-Marie MacDonald, Daphne Marlatt, Michael Ondaatje, Eden Robinson, Kerri Sakamoto, Margaret Sweatman, Jane Urquhart, Guy Vanderhaeghe, and Thomas Wharton – have highlighted the ways that this storied past haunts the present. As Wyile writes in *Speculative Fictions*, "The question posed by Northrop Frye and echoed by Margaret Atwood in *Survival*, 'where is here?' has been extended to 'what is now and where did it come from?'" (xi). Many writers have turned to history, in one form or another, to dismantle and rebuild understandings of Canada's past.

A host of critics have studied this archive with great care and attention. There is a considerable body of scholarship on the writing and rewriting of the past in fiction. The most famous and influential of this work is about the historical novel, including notable studies such as Dennis Duffy's *Sounding the Iceberg* (1986), Linda Hutcheon's *The Canadian Postmodern* (1992), Martin Kuester's *Framing Truths* (1992), Frank Davey's *Post-National Arguments* (1993), Marlene Goldman's *Paths of Desire* (1997), Marie Vautier's *New World Myth* (1998), and Herb Wyile's *Speculative Fictions* (2002). These studies, among others, provide nuanced insights into how historical fiction is often, as Wyile says, a "purposeful, subjective, and rhetorical

extrapolation from present circumstances" (xii). There is a concurrent, and often overlapping and more recent, group of scholarship examining how writers use ghosts to disrupt and destabilize colonial readings of Canada's historical narratives, including Justin Edwards's *Gothic Canada* (2005), Cynthia Sugars's *Unsettled Remains* (edited with Gerry Turcotte) (2009) and *Canadian Gothic* (2014), *Unruly Penelopes and the Ghosts* edited by Eva Darias-Beautell (2012), and Marlene Goldman's *DisPossession* (2012). These critics offer insight into the ways that haunting can be studied with less emphasis on "the idea of the internally haunted self" (Brogan 5) and more on the cultural, political, and historical context of deployments of the past in fiction. Much of the excellent work on haunting in Canadian fiction, including Edwards's *Gothic Canada* and Sugar's *Canadian Gothic*, is focused on the generic features of hauntings. Critics often focus their attention on the genre of the Gothic and how, as Cynthia Sugars and Gerry Turcotte argue, ghosts and spectres manifest "an interiorized psychological experience of gothic 'uncanniness' and illegitimacy" (ix). These studies highlight how ghosts and spectral apparitions signal secrets, repressions, and marginalizations that need reevaluation.

As these critics make plain, then, both the historical novel and literary hauntings are a vital means of representing the past for present political ends. In fact, both Wyile's and Goldman's particular studies – Wyile's *Speculative Fictions* and Goldman's *DisPossession* – include considerable overlap in texts. Wyile considers several historical novels that feature spectres: Thomas Wharton's *Icefields*, John Steffler's *The Afterlife of George Cartwright*, Margaret Atwood's *Alias Grace*, and Jane Urquhart's *Away*. For her part, Goldman considers several historical novels in her study of spectres: *The Afterlife of George Cartwright*, *Away*, *Alias Grace*, Gail Anderson-Dargatz's *The Cure for Death by Lightning,* and Dionne Brand's *At the Full and Change of the Moon*. Many other critics have written about Steffler, Atwood, and Urquhart's novels, suggesting that that these novels are doing something that is particularly worthy of attention. That attention has focused on either their historical or their spectral aspects while neglecting to consider the ways that those features function in combination. When Goldman considers "the politics and poetics of haunting and (dis)possession in Canadian literature" (Goldman 4), she moves

toward the relationship between hauntings and history: of the seven novels she considers, *DisPossession* only discusses one novel that is not set substantially in the past of its creation. Despite the fact that she argues that hauntings highlight how fraught the process of "narrating a collective past" can be (6), Goldman does not focus her attention on the role of the historical novel in her study. Many of the novels she has chosen do, indeed, rely upon that form.

This suggests a clear need to take the form of the historical novel into account when considering hauntings set in the past. The intersection of ghosts and the historical novel has not been considered on its own terms, and there has been no significant work done on an engaged discussion of their particular connection. Many of the novels by the writers listed above, among others, deploy *both* some form of the historical novel as a direct engagement with historiography and the construction of the narratives that inform our present understanding *and* some form of a spectre to signal the return of repressed histories and the extent of our unacknowledged debts. Wyile observes that English-Canadian historical fiction published over the last two decades "seems less radical and more ambivalent in its challenging of the underpinnings of empiricist historiography and the form of the traditional historical novel" (*SF* xiii). In this current context of historical fiction in Canada – where there is an emphasis on revising exclusionary historical narratives, but where there is also less sustained emphasis on subverting historiography and more attention to revealing untold or suppressed histories – the historical novel often exhibits a tension between the desire to challenge historical narratives and the desire to replace them with more inclusive narratives, rather than undermine the process of historiography itself. In other words, the goal is one of historiographic revision, rather than less ambiguous resistance or subversion. Similarly, the critical emphasis on haunting in Canada tends toward what Alan Lawson describes as narratives through which "our ambiguously postcolonial cultures characterize themselves and their tendentious histories" (20). That recent historical novels and spectres both signal a desire to revise our understanding of history should not inevitably result in the conclusion that they are interchangeable rhetorical devices.

Rather, it should signal the need to investigate how writers engage formally and thematically with this combination and what it means.

Though it is part of the "purposeful" writing that Wyile describes, this common goal is distinct from the effects achieved by either the historical novel or the trope of spectres alone. That writers do, frequently and consistently, feature spectres in novels of history suggests that this combination offers something to their writing that cannot be achieved without both. Given the context that Wyile describes, of a less radical challenging of historiography, the presence of spectres might seem odd. Why approach history from a more conservative perspective and then include unsettling figures of haunting? In fact, I believe that there is a resolutely common focus to many haunted novels of history. The presence of spectres affects the work that historical novels do and often signals a particular engagement with history. The archive of historical novels that includes spectres consistently revisits the past as a matter of justice: to revise our limited historical perspectives, to consider the relationship between the present and the past. But what, particularly, is the benefit of featuring spectres in historical novels?

As Wyile and Goldman each argue, a persistent preoccupation of English-Canadian writers with history and ghosts, respectively, is one of coming to terms with Canada's troubled past. As Wyile argues about the "ethical turn" in Canadian literary criticism, this kind of

> negotiation with diversity, and the sustained challenge to the monocultural, colonial view of Canadian society and Canadian literature it has entailed, is certainly one of the principal ways in which contemporary Canadian literature and literary criticism can be viewed as ethically engaged, explicitly or implicitly addressing questions such as 'how should we live?' and 'what are the right choices?' and 'how can we construct a better society?'. ("Making" 823)

This coming to terms is, in this context, a matter of recuperation: a way of revising outmoded, inaccurate, or discriminatory narratives to create the space for healing.

In a country with a history of invasion and settlement, of cultural repressions[1] and deliberate forgetting, it is not surprising that many writers directly contest the narratives that inform and perform these powerful obfuscations. When writers present spectres as traces of the past that signal unspoken or repressed histories, and the goal of many historical novels is to similarly reconstruct unspoken or repressed histories, then the presence of spectres in historical fiction signals a particular iteration of that rhetorical strategy. In this context, the spectre permits a representation of the experience and legacy of trauma that signals the often-invisible transgenerational transmission of that trauma, as well as a means of resisting conservative or neo-colonial tendencies in historiography. These spectres foreground questions of justice, of a conception of justice, and the inheritances that the past bequeaths the present.

It is in matters of justice that the particular effects of the haunting of historical novels can be best understood. A common goal of novels of haunted history is the project of recuperation, in the dual denotations of that word: it is not merely to rediscover what has been lost but to recover from an injury. These novels seek to do more than "insisting on the presence of elided and alternative histories" (Goldman 7) or comment upon how the act of historiography is inevitably ideologically compromised and the secrets these histories reveal require more than acknowledgement. By presenting them as sites of suppressed narratives that need reckoning, haunted histories instigate a confrontation that will undoubtedly trouble our conception of the present. These are stories that must alter how we see both the past and the present, and this alteration is unsettling. However, the goal of many novels of haunting and history is not only to note unsettling historical wrongs – to highlight the sense of unease and illegitimacy that ghosts signal – but also to suggest possible avenues of recovery. The context of the historical novel is central to this particular type of haunting: these novels demonstrate a desire not simply to highlight the persistence of suppressed knowledges but to actually use them to

[1] Cultural repression at best, one might argue: the Truth and Reconciliation's final report from June 2015 suggests it is more accurate in some cases to say "cultural genocide."

revise our understanding of the past for positive ends. When novels of historical haunting seek to revisit historical wrongs it is to present the past as an unsettling site that requires revision *and* as a site that can be recuperated. Spectres manifest the paradox of unsettling history and believing that it retains a certain solidity that can facilitate healing. Underlying this project – often unspoken, but sometimes made explicit – is the hope that telling the story of an injustice is part of the project of reconciling that wrong without foreclosing its ongoing effects.

In light of this common project, particular questions arrive that deserve consideration on their own terms. How and what do ghosts contribute to historical narratives? How do ghosts aid in an interrogation of Canada's vexed history and how can they help illuminate its obfuscations? To what extent do historical ghosts helpfully reveal the persistence of colonial injustices, and to what degree can they obscure them? How can ghosts enable historical novels to recuperate the past while not dismissing historical traumas as foreclosed?

To answer these questions, this study will investigate ghosts in particular historical novels and examine how they contribute to a project of recuperation. Rather than consider the ghost story as a genre, this study will consider the ways that the trope of spectres and spectral hauntings inflect and complicate the work that historical novels do. Unlike Sugars, Edwards, or Goldman, I place less emphasis on "how gothic tropes reveal the instabilities in the discursive construction of the Canadian national identity" (Goldman 5) and more attention on how specific historical novels use ghosts to frame the possibility of recuperating history. In building upon the work of scholars of historical novels, Herb Wyile in particular, I argue that the use of ghosts in contemporary historical fiction by English-Canadian writers is part of a shared postcolonial project of recuperation. I argue that these novels seek to revise history in order to present a better history as a means of moving forward rather than, as writers of historiographic metafiction have so effectively accomplished, subverting the very enterprise of historiography itself. Rather than focusing on the Gothic, I argue that these novels are engaged in a project of contacting the dead, of speaking to the dead, in a way that strongly evokes Jacques Derrida's concept of Hauntology. This study will use Derridean Hauntology

as a lens to help frame how and why we speak to ghosts when we revisit history, and examine how this is done in ways that avoid the ghost becoming a figure of occlusion. Each chapter will do a close reading of a particular novel or novels that highlights a different aspect of the shared postcolonial project of recuperating history. Each novel – Margaret Sweatman's *When Alice Lay Down With Peter*, Jacqueline Baker's *The Horseman's Graves*, Jane Urquhart's *Away*, Ann-Marie MacDonald's *Fall On Your Knees*, and Joseph Boyden's *Three Day Road* – will contribute to a reading of the spectre in contemporary English-Canadian historical fiction that suggests that these ghosts serve a complex purpose: to highlight persistent injustices, to unsettle the foundations on which historical narratives are built, to permit the revisioning of history without foreclosing it, and to point to the possibility of recuperation and healing.

History as Haunting

The historical novel is a space of haunting. Writing about the past is inevitably an act of summoning the past and what materializes can never be whole, can never be the past itself. Even the most scrupulously researched historical novel can only ever hope to present a portion of the peoples, places, events, conflicts, grudges, longings, and secrets that once were. That those details are beyond our grasp, that the past we can access is at best partial, means that the history with which we interact is only a trace of the thing it represents. There is always an absence shadowing any presence. The past we meet is always spectral. To imagine the past as it was while inhabiting it imaginatively is to invite the haunting of those people and places, those grudges and longings and secrets that we can never fully know.

The past haunts the present through fiction in other ways, as well. Ghosts and spectral figures are a common trope, notably in recent literature, to dramatize the effect of a past that cannot be repressed. Often postcolonial, these ghosts can represent ex-centric narratives suppressed by colonial historiography, the voices of lost peoples or events, and the tenacious consequences of old injustices. David

Punter argues that a colonial past inevitably and inescapably haunts the postcolonial experience. Michael O'Riley describes haunting as "an ethics of recognition of occluded historical events and unrecognized histories of violence" (6). The ghost in postcolonial writing is, then, the trace of a legacy of silence or dispossession that reappears in ambiguous, spectral form (Punter vi), recalling Nicolas Abraham and Maria Torok's suggestion that the phantom is a figure of transgenerational trauma. To encounter such ghosts is to realize the instability of the present moment, to face the fraudulence of its ontological certainty. The ghost stands in for the inaccessible past, for the voices that cannot speak for themselves any longer and the voices that were ignored. The ghost represents the desire to address the persistence of historical wrongs by highlighting the ongoing costs.

There is a considerable archive of writing, then, that can be called doubly haunted: historical fiction that also features ghosts. These texts feature two layers of haunting in that ghosts of the past are summoned within the haunted form of the historical novel. In other words, these novels feature the spectral traces of the past within stories built from already spectral traces of the past: the form of the historical novel itself summons the ghosts of the past, and these novels also infuse that haunting with additional, (im)materialized spectres. In the last few decades, novels such as John Steffler's *The Afterlife of George Cartwright* (1992), Jane Urquhart's *Away* (1993), Thomas Wharton's *Icefields* (1995), Margaret Atwood's *Alias Grace* (1997), Ann-Marie MacDonald's *Fall On Your Knees* (1996), Gail Anderson-Dargatz's *The Cure for Death by Lightning* (1996), Dionne Brand's *At the Full and Change of the Moon* (1999), Thomas King's *Truth and Bright Water* (1999), Eden Robinson's *Monkey Beach* (2000), Margaret Sweatman's *When Alice Lay Down With Peter* (2001), Douglas Glover's *Elle* (2003), Joseph Boyden's *Three Day Road* (2005), and Jacqueline Baker's *The Horseman's Graves* (2007) are historical novels by Canadian writers that also contain ghosts representing buried pasts.

These double hauntings highlight and speak to the historical novel's fundamentally partial relationship to the past. By embodying a real moment – a historically verifiable moment, a documented and shared moment – many writers hope to enliven the chronicle of historiography with some of the greater liberties of

fiction. Even in its most conservative formulation, the historical novel is not generally understood to be a passive receptacle of the untainted record of the past as it occurred. György Lukács argues that the goal of the historical novel is not rigid adherence to the facts as they were but is a dramatization of the social forces that shaped an epoch, a condensation of the chronicle of history to better define the present as a product of the past, particularly "the radical sharpening of social trends in an historical crisis" (46). In *Sounding the Iceberg*, Dennis Duffy similarly contends that the historical novel deploys the past strategically. He argues that, as the historical novel developed in Canada, writers put the crucial criterion of the past's "remoteness" (iv) to various uses:

> they offered a distant yet highly constructed space in which to put forward a utopian ideal, often having to do with the forging of the nation; to delineate with quotidian detail an ostensibly "neutral" background for moral testing, especially as such testing relates to questions of social reform or entrenchment; or, to initiate an inquiry into our ideologically complicated relationship to the established historical record. (Duffy 119)

The relationship that Duffy illustrates might describe a novel that seeks to, as best as as possible, restore a lost historical moment or perspective. Yet, as Duffy suggests, these novels are also "highly constructed," often with specific aims. They build the illusion of presenting the past 'as it was' only insofar as that past relates to today.

Lukács and Duffy both highlight the locatedness and cultural dimensions of historiography as well as of memory, neither of which are "neutral." Critical discourses on history and the historical novel have only deepened our understanding of the effects of summoning the past. More recent novels than the ones Lukács considers often take a more critical approach to the work of history. These are novels, in other words, that emphasize the "ostensibly" in Duffy's formulation. Linda Hutcheon particularly locates in historical novels beginning in the latter half of the twentieth century a desire to undermine the relationship that Lukács envisions. She identifies many novels of history that are overtly concerned with the acts and consequences of reading and writing history, rather than with deploying that history uncritically – an archive she names historiographic

metafiction. More recently, Herb Wyile has noted an increasing postcolonial desire in historical novels to deconstruct historical narratives with less suspicion about the underpinnings of historiography. Such novels seek to educate, to fill in gaps from the historical record and to foster empathy about the persistence of historical injustices. Like the novel Lukács saw embodied by writers such as Sir Walter Scott, the work of many recent writers of historical fiction demonstrates that the present moment is built upon the consequences of past decisions. Many of these writers seek to summon narratives of and about the past for political ends unlike those Lukács imagines: instead of attempting to define the nature of an epoch as if that can be done without bias, these novels show desire for redress, reclamation, education, and justice.

Wyile's observation about the decreasing desire to undermine history and a correlated increasing postcolonial emphasis marks these historical novels as distinct within the genre of historical fiction. At a basic level, novels that display both desires are dealing with the complications of using the past for political ends. Wyile has more generally described the diminished suspicion of historiography as reflecting

> the difficulties of negotiating a more postcolonial presentation of Canadian history within the context of a postmodern culture characterized on the one hand by scepticism of official history and on the other by strong pressures to render history in a commodified and dehistoricized form. (*SF* xiii)

Part of the difficulties that Wyile observes involves precisely how fraught it is to deploy the past in fiction. Another part, as Wyile notes, is in the particular challenge of writing *postcolonial* historical fiction. Part of the reason for this difficulty, as Wyile explains in *Speculative Fictions*, is a prevalent tendency to recast accepted history. Such novels are part of a "revisionist turn away from an established, public history" and, instead, are "more inclined to deconstruct those myths, revealing their excluding effects" (6). He locates a "general resistance" in "contemporary historical novels to monologic and Eurocentric versions of Canadian history" to "undermine the neat colonial trajectory of exploration, settlement, and nation-building and

suggest how the birth of a nation is, from a less Eurocentric perspective, the death of others"(xiv). Novels that use the past to highlight an injustice and to suggest that this injustice must be acknowledged find themselves in a paradoxical position: they resist monologic versions of history, but cannot undermine the notion of historical knowledge generally or risk losing the ability to demand attention to the neglected histories that they champion. Therefore, the haunting in historical fiction foregrounds one of the great challenges of postcolonial historical writing: how does one replace one history with another and avoid reifying the historical certainties that led to the marginalization in the first place?

All historical writing is, indeed, a matter of ideologically informed narratives and exclusions. As historian Hayden White explains, events that are seen as historical

> are made into a story by the suppression or subordination of certain of them and the highlighting of others, by characterization, motific repetition, variation of tone and point of view, alternative descriptive strategies, and the like – in short, all of the techniques that we would normally expect to find in the emplotment of a novel or a play. (84)

Historiography is, like fiction, an emplotted and inherently constructed narrative form. It is not a simple, empirical, and unbiased reflection of the past as it occurred. As historians have been increasingly cognizant of the limitations of historical research, the idea of mimetic reconstruction of the past is no longer an absolute good for which all must strive. Selection of source material (sorting "good" data and material from "bad" data and material), access to material, gaps in the record, and even the narrative form inevitably and inescapably occur within the context of ideology. Even those scholars most supportive of a conservative and unified depiction of history (JL Granatstein[2] and Rudyard Griffiths,[3] to borrow two of Wyile's examples) pursue their lines of inquiry with the understanding that the

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[2] *Who Killed Canadian History*. Toronto: HarperCollins, 1998.
[3] Director of the Dominion Institute and writer of, among others, the article "Mistakes of the past" (*The Globe & Mail*, 23 September 2000, A16).

significant men and women of Canadian history are complex and often contradictory figures.

As such, highlighting the ideologically informed practice of historiography is one strategy to enable a postcolonial revision of the historical record. Drawing attention to and subverting the practice of historiography is a powerful means to comment upon how the past is presented, and to what uses it is put. White's emphasis on "the shared figurative qualities of history and literature" provides a basis for this mode of writing: Hutcheon describes historiographic metafiction as literature characterized by self-consciously fictional constructs that thematize their own discursive process, including strategies such as a lack of authorial effacement, multiple authors, or heteroglossia. It is a mode of writing that

> demands of the reader not only the recognition of textualized traces of the literary and historical past but also the awareness of what has been done – through irony – to those traces. The reader is forced to acknowledge not only the inevitable textuality of our knowledge of the past, but also both the value and the limitation of that inescapably discursive form of knowledge. ("Historiographic Metafiction" 8)

The term describes texts that are, as she explains in *The Canadian Postmodern*, "both self-consciously fictional but also overtly concerned with the acts (and consequences) of the reading and writing of history as well as fiction. In other words, the aesthetic and the social, the present and the past, are not separable discourses" (14). The work of novelists such as Rudy Wiebe, Robert Kroestch, Timothy Findley, and Daphne Marlatt demonstrates this type of historical writing. Characterized by a fragmentation of perspective and narrative, and intertextual subversions, these texts resist the authoritative voice of traditional historiography and foreground the illusory nature of any possible authentic access to the past: it may have existed, but we only have access to it semiotically. Such novels highlight discursive heterogeneity, employing different narrative registers, frame stories, and narrative self-reflexiveness or interdiscursivity, rather than the cohesive, authoritative voice of traditional historical fiction. Many of them, according to Wyile,

"are characterized by fragmentation (as opposed to a unity) of perspective, mirrored in a fragmentation of the narrative itself" (*SF* 139).

Marie Vautier's concept of New World Myth is similarly a form of resisting implacable historical narratives. As Vautier describes them, official histories can take on the power of myth and can become "immutable, universal stories" that "are frequently recuperated in epigonic, fictional renditions of the original myths" and sometimes "employed as teleological and transhistorical assumptions" (ix). Her explanation of New World Myth is that of a mode of history that "exchanges its traditional function as transhistorical master narrative […] for a function characterized by postmodern indeterminacy, complex postcolonial attitudes, a questioning of history, and a developing self-consciousness that creates provisional and relative identities" (xi). Such indeterminacy, such subversive and parodic preoccupation with the content of the form of history, can very effectively break the traditionally unitary voice of historical accounts. The effect of such subversion is often a carnivalization, even a cannibalization, of history and a displacing of the ground upon which political contestations might take place.

This emphasis on discursivity, while political in its own right, leaves the sense that history is ultimately inaccessible. The tension that Wyile identifies, however, is inherent to texts that want to use history even as they subvert it. It becomes not *history itself* that these novels seek to revise, but particularly exclusionary *versions* of history. The revisionist turn Wyile notes is also often accompanied by pressures to render history in a commodified form.[4] The difficult negotiation Wyile describes marks this archive as distinct from the body of work Linda Hutcheon identifies as historiographic metafiction. The carnivalization Vautier describes can prevent the ontological stability necessary to make claims for redress or to provide a shared

[4] There is also, as Wyile notes, an economic factor at play here. Historical fiction is a popular genre and a critically acclaimed one as well. In the last twenty years alone, the lists of Giller Prize (*Alias Grace* – 1996, *Clara Callan* – 2001, *The Polished Hoe* – 2002, *Half-Blood Blues* – 2011) and Governor General's Award (*A Discovery of Strangers* – 1994, *The Englishman's Boy* – 1996, *Elle* – 2003, *The Law of Dreams* – 2006, *The Mistress of Nothing* – 2009, *The Sisters Brothers* – 2011) winners are replete with historical fiction.

acknowledgement of a trauma. Wyile's observation suggests that there is an archive of recent historical fiction that strives to capture at least some essential sense of historical cohesion. Though critics such as Linda Hutcheon, Brian McHale, and Patricia Waugh all see greater potential for political and social critique in postmodern cultural production, David Harvey says that it "is difficult to maintain any sense of historical continuity in the face of all the flux and ephemerality of flexible accumulation" (303). Given what Wyile calls the "anti-foundational tendencies of postmodernism" (*SF* 216), the historical novel that seeks to establish the past's continuity with the present in order to recuperate that past may seek a different form than New World Myth or historiographic metafiction.

There is, indeed, a considerable body of work about historical fiction by Canadian writers that engages with questions of the enduring legacies of the past in ways that a more postmodern approach might foreclose. Wyile describes novels of the last two decades as seeming "less radical and more ambivalent in" their "challenging of the underpinnings of empiricist historiography and the form of the historical novel" (xiii). Martin Kuester, in *Framing Truths: Parodic Structures in Contemporary English-Canadian Historical Novels*, argued a decade before Wyile that much recent historical fiction is, in fact, largely historiographic – drawing attention to the process of historical research and (re)construction and underlining the biases that shape the history produced by that process – without being metafictive. Kuester argues, like Wyile, that contemporary historical novels in Canada tend toward a largely revisionist and postcolonial parodic "repetition" (31). Whereas a notable strategy for such revisionism, as Kuester highlights, is the foregrounding of research and historical writing itself (as in Timothy Findley's *The Wars*, Daphne Marlatt's *Ana Historic*, Heather Robinson's *Igor*, for example), there are many novels that gesture more obliquely to the writing of history. In fact, Kuester's suggestion that Canadian historical novels at once "legitimize and subvert that which [they] parody" (4), points to a considerable body of work that is not notably postmodern or overtly deconstructionist.

The novels that embody this less direct gesture to the writing of history while maintaining the engagement with the inheritance and legacy that gives shape to the

present (the dual legitimization/subversion to which Kuester refers) share features with both conservative models of historical fiction as well as the postmodern critiques of historiographic metafiction. Novels such as Guy Vanderhaeghe's *The Englishman's Boy*, Thomas Wharton's *Icefields*, and Michael Ondaatje's *In the Skin of a Lion* demonstrate a similar ambivalence about the possibility of accurate historiography as more postmodern novels, but also rely on the possibility that we can have some reliable access to the past that precedes us, even if we can only unearth it in fragments and tenuously reliable accounts. What Wyile calls a revisionist turn – a project of reclaiming a voice lost to history or suppressed by colonial historiography, a didactic impulse toward history, and a political desire to address historical wrongs that are persistent and incompletely acknowledged – sits uneasily with the postmodern approach to history. The complex negotiation that Wyile describes involves wedding this awareness of historiography's inevitable biases and colonizing exclusions with the ontological certainty necessary to educate or incite political change. These novels employ some of the same devices as historiographic metafiction – frames, unreliable narrators, irrecuperable gaps in the historical record – but without a sense of the past as irrecoverable. Jane Urquhart's *Away* provides a helpful metaphor for the distinction, with its persistent motif of excavation. Unlike the archeological metaphor that grounds Robert Kroetsch's *Badlands*, where the excavations of paleontologist William Dawe are themselves the cause of emotional trauma,[5] the excavations in *Away* are valuable acts. What emerges from a dig is not a complete image of history, but it relies on a sense that there *is* a history beneath us that we can responsibly apprehend. The archive of historical fiction that Kuester and Wyile identify is notably postcolonial, but not notably postmodern; it is interested in how history is written but believes that there

[5] Kroetsch opens *Badlands* with the following:

> *God help us we are a people raised not on love letters or lyric poems or even cries of rebellion or ecstasy or pain or regret, but rather old hoars of field notes. Those cryptic notations made by men who held the words themselves in contempt but who needed them nevertheless in order to carry home, or back if not home, the only memories they would ever cherish: the recollections of their male courage and their male solitude.* (2)

are some truthful ways to access it. It is a body of work that I will call fictional historiography.

Fictional historiography is, distinct from historiographic metafiction, a body of writing that seeks to present a history critical of colonial historiography but without undermining the possibility of historical knowledge. There is a greater emphasis on realism, as the deconstructive techniques of postmodernism preclude some of the didactic work these novels often set out to accomplish. When discussing the importance of the past in his writing in an interview with Wyile, George Elliott Clarke articulates the postcolonial resistance to postmodern theories of history:

> Well, I think we can't understand where we are until we know where we've been. I know that's such a simple, straightforward, even clichéd notion, but I do think that we have to locate ourselves in time, to look at what's happened before, what we hope might happen in the future, what we hope won't happen in the future, and that means having some kind of knowledge of history. One has to know one's particular cultural history, familial history, but also general social history, national history and world history. (*Speaking* 134)

It is difficult to help educate about the injustices of the past if one presents the past as merely textualized traces, if one presents historical knowledge as partial.[6] To call for change, one must argue that an injustice occurred and that we can *know* it occurred.

Fictional historiography is most often deployed in the service of drawing attention to neglected histories – cultural, familial, social, national – and the ways they are valued. They are novels that do not wish to problematize the very possibility of historical knowledge for they wish to use history to acknowledge and address past wrongs. Examples abound in Canadian writing: *When Alice Lay Down With Peter* addresses issues of Métis dispossession in the settlement of Manitoba, *The Horseman's Graves* and *Away* highlight the costs of colonial settlement, *Fall On*

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[6] In an interview with Herb Wyile, Michael Crummey describes his relationship to the historical record in *River Thieves* as "a spine through the book that I did not fuck with, if I can put it that elegantly" (*Speaking* 302).

Your Knees engages with narratives of Canadian multiculturalism and cultural exclusion, and *Three Day Road* signals the hope that revisiting the past can affect healing. All these texts, like many other examples of fictional historiography, negotiate the difficult ground of, as Wyile quotes Homi Bhabha in "DissemiNation," providing "[c]ounter-narratives of the nation that continually evoke and erase its totalizing boundaries – both actual and conceptual – disturb those ideological manoeuvres through which 'imagined communities' are given essentialist identities" ("DissemiNation" 300) while imbuing those counter-narratives with sufficient ontological weight for political incitement.

Haunting as History

The intersection of spectres and fictional historiography can seem like a contradiction: the insertion of the fantastic into a generally realist setting. In an interview with Margaret Sweatman, Wyile notes a trend: "Quite a few Canadian novels set in the past likewise introduce elements of the fantastic or the mythological or the supernatural into otherwise historically real or credibly historicist settings" (*Speaking* 178). This is a trend that he sees as including Jane Urquhart's *Away*, Thomas Wharton's *Icefields*, and Jack Hodgins's *The Invention of the World*. Sweatman is dismissive of the trend beyond writerly strategies: she suggests that Urquhart uses supernatural elements "to translate a dreamlike sensibility from one continent to another, so physically they got her there" (178). For Sweatman herself, and writers such as Hodgins, she suggests that ghosts permit writers "to cover an enormous amount of time. So it was a way of galloping around, keeping characters in play" (178). However, there is much more at work, as Wyile intimates, than merely permitting dead characters to show up after their expiry. Sweatman herself even highlights the liminal position that spectres occupy, which speaks to their thematic as well as the plot-driven exigencies.

Wyile and Sweatman's discussion signals the need to consider this trend and what spectres permit writers to do with their fictional historiography. Within the framework of fictional historiography that educates and imagines the past in a more

realistic and less distinctly postmodern mode, the spectre provides the trace of what has been lost or suppressed. A ghost in fictional historiography – a double haunting – is a powerful trope that writers employ, akin to the deconstructive work of historiographic metafiction, to subvert the ideological assumptions and biases of a more realist mode of fiction, as well as to undermine colonial metanarratives of history. In the context of a relatively more conservative version of the historical novel, spectres in fictional historiography can offer an unsettling element which prevents the ideological framework of historiography itself from rewriting the very past that these novels are tasked to open up. Despite the desire of many writers to present the past as something that we can access, to present the past as something about which we can have knowledge, there is still a desire to resist overwriting one monologic history with another. As such, spectres in fictional historiography often serve a common purpose: to challenge the ideological essentialism of historiography while enabling the identification of an historical injustice without foreclosing its persistence. Hauntings in fictional historiography can display a sustained engagement with the cultural work of history by asking questions of historiography, inheritance, political power, and the possibility of healing. They can present an ongoing engagement with the circulation of anxiety about history as we struggle with the political realities of acknowledgement and redress.

Recuperation and redress is complicated when there is an element of historical remoteness to the pertinent injuries. The transgenerational nature of this concern with redress highlights fictional historiography's engagement with the past beyond the lived experiences of its writers or audience: its engagement with the past beyond merely personal recollection. In fact, the relationship between the project of recuperation of much fictional historiography and the work of memory must be understood in the context of cultural knowledge. The historical novel is, as E.H. Carr argues, a form of writing that is always about the present: "we can view the past, and achieve our understanding of the past, only through the eyes of the present" (28). As Michel de Certau more boldly articulates the relationship, "history endlessly finds the present in its object and the past in its practice. Inhabited by the uncanniness that it seeks, history imposes its law upon the faraway places that it

conquers when it fosters the illusion that it is bringing them back to life" (36). For the postcolonial project of much fictional historiography, this means that the original injuries being addressed are not necessarily personally accessible. Rather, they are wounds that have been transmitted, often invisibly, into the present. When a writer such as George Elliot Clarke argues that one has to know one's social history, he is not merely speaking of remembering but of a kind of anti-forgetting: retrieving as best as one can parts of the past that have been lost or suppressed.

As such, the work of summoning the ghosts of history, the work of bringing to light suppressed or unknown dimensions of Canada's past, requires a nuanced and ethical engagement. As Marlene Goldman makes clear, simply summoning ghosts is not in itself an act of postcolonial resistance. In fact, haunting can function as an act of colonial appropriation. The ghost hunting of Earle Birney's famous lines from his poem "Can.Lit" or Susanna Moodie's treatment of the settler experience in *Roughing it in the Bush* (1852) – where Mr. D____ suggests that Canada "was too new for ghosts" (267) – suggests an historical anxiety that Goldman calls "the colonial cringe" (7): a desire to unearth and legitimize a settler past by the imperial state to better mitigate the tension of inhabiting a populated land. Margot Northey suggests in *The Haunted Wilderness* (1976) that the Canadian Gothic is "at the base of cultural revitalization" because "those works studied which appear so death-ridden and frequently disintegrative may indeed be considered catalysts of regeneration" (110). Though Northey's argument is insightful about the ways that confronting death is not merely morbid, she does not fully consider who or what is being disintegrated. Even Stuart McLean's understanding of historical knowledge being founded on the silencing of other ways of knowing could be describing the work of writers such as John Richardson, whose *Wacousta* and *The Canadian Brothers*[7] serve to fill up a supposed emptiness by exhuming ghosts and providing

[7] These novels, particularly, help provide the central metaphor for Northrop Frye's famous observation that Canadian literature displays a recurring fear of the uncanny emptiness of a hostile landscape and turns inward to find security against the hostile outside world (including other nations, particularly the United States):

> Small and isolated communities surrounded with a physical or psychological "frontier," separated from one another and from their

evidence of a past and, thus, a culture. As Margaret Atwood explains in "Canadian Monsters" (1977), "The digging up of ancestors, calling up of ghosts, exposure of skeletons in the closet which are so evident in many cultural areas have numerous motivations, but one of them is surely a search for reassurance" (100). Any engagement with historical spectres must be wary of this colonizing impulse, and the sustained commitments of fictional historiography require careful consideration in the context of any postcolonial project.

One must also consider the ways in which ghosts signal guilt over that colonizing impulse. The spectre is often a gesture of atonement. Michael Crummey makes clear in an interview with Wyile that "loss in all its forms is really what I'm interested in – personal loss, cultural loss" (*Speaking* 297). In this observation, he could be speaking for a whole body of writers of fictional historiography. Crummey's self-reflective sense of his own interests suggest the appeal of spectres as a trope for writers of fictional historiography:

> I think there are pivotal events in a country's history or a people's history that they never escape. In the States, for example, slavery is the story that they will never escape, and they will constantly have to be saying, "What was it about us that allowed that to happen? What does it say about us as a country if that's where we started?" In Newfoundland, it's the Beothuk story we're haunted by. There is a very real collective sense of guilt in Newfoundland around what happened to the Beothuk. (299)

This begs a question, however: Wyile asks about whether this kind of historical writing is "some sort of consolation or compensation for colonial guilt" (299) – the conclusion to which Goldman comes. Crummey deflects the broader application of the question, but admits that "It is something I am haunted by, and I think there is

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> American and British cultural sources: communities that provide all that their members have in the way of distinctively human values, and that are compelled to feel a great respect for the law and order that holds them together, yet confronted with a huge, unthinking, menacing, and formidable physical setting -- such communities are bound to develop what we may provisionally call a garrison mentality. (224)

definitely an element in it of trying to provide some sort of atonement or to ease some sort of collective guilt, just by acknowledging 'this is what happened'" (299).

There is a significant difference between providing atonement and easing collective guilt, and Crummey's observation highlights the possibility that some writers summon ghosts to summon their forgiveness. Though the novel that Crummey and Wyile discuss, *River Thieves*, does not feature any materialized spectres, it does signal the complexities of the postcolonial project common to much fictional historiography, particularly in the context of double hauntings. Many novels featuring ghosts in the context of fictional historiography indicate clear alignment with Crummey's laudable instincts toward a deeper understanding of historical wrongs, but some also gesture toward the easing of guilt rather than considering questions of atonement. This gesture to atonement or to guilt is not a simple matter: there is the danger of summoning ghosts for the purpose of exorcising them or in order to ventriloquize their forgiveness. The tricky negotiation of fictional historiography is made far more challenging by the introduction of decidedly anti-mimetic figures of ontological instability. This highlights some of the ways that spectres can spin against the drive of fictional historiography: they can undermine a novel's postcolonial enterprise by reducing the knowability of the past wrongs, by recolonizing through the use of conservative historiographic approaches, or by revising the past to foreclose its pernicious effects and assuage collective guilt. This suggests that examining literary spectres – particularly in fictional historiography, where they complicate the work of writing history – must be done with care.

There have been many productive approaches to studying the ways that ghosts mean in English-Canadian writing. Certainly, the spectre has long been a means by which writers probe the invisible transmission of history and injury. Atwood and Northey's arguments, as does similar critical work, attempt to articulate a unifying thematic for Canadian literature and mythology. More recent critical work – such as Justin Edwards's *Gothic Canada*, Marlene Goldman's *DisPossession*, and Cynthia Sugars's *Canadian Gothic* – is less interested in that unifying thematic than in the all-consuming nature of the desire for one and what that suggests about

how English-Canadian writers process our inheritances. As Jonathan Kertzer explains, "the nation is inescapable and continues to haunt us" (26). Edwards, Goldman, and Sugars all vitally emphasize this shift in focus as they discuss this haunting, this unsettling, in a postcolonial context. They particularly highlight the uncanny and disturbing nature of the Gothic, rather than its scenes of romance and horror, and how this often represents the anxiety of a colonial society of the injustices in its history. Indeed, Sugars and Gerry Turcotte explain in the opening words of their introduction to *Unsettled Remains* that "Postcolonial and gothic discourses have for some time been paired in critical invocations of the 'unhomely' or 'spectral' legacies of imperialism and globalization" (vii). Sugars tracks the anxiety of settlers about living on a land that feels both vast and empty, but is evidently also peopled and lived in. Edwards takes on the Gothic somewhat more directly, as he inquires into the construction and destabilization of a Gothic tradition in English-Canadian fiction and how Canada as a nation provided fertile ground for the terrors and excesses associated with the Gothic. *DisPossession*, Goldman's invaluable study, considers seven contemporary novels to explore how, in Canada, the presence of ghosts is a sublimated form of recognizing the unsettled and unsettling parts of "the complex territory of home" (320). Powerfully, in a conclusion entitled "Toward an Ethics of Haunting," Goldman suggests that "Canadian literature that invokes haunting and possession is 'good for us' precisely because it emphasizes the elided histories and resistance of the other" (306).

The lens of the Gothic alone, however, is not sufficient for a broader engagement with the ways that spectres can signal the exclusion and transmissions of historical narratives, the elided histories that Goldman identifies. Though their work is invaluable, Edwards, Sugars, and Goldman emphasize the spectre as a figure of terror, and that the horror it engenders is primarily that of the precarious imaginary construct of the nation. The uncanniness of the spectre, in a Gothic mode, signals the settlers' anxiety about "being deracinated, living in a new country where there are none of their ancestors' bones, where the land appears to them alien and dangerous" (Nolan). Gothic literature becomes, according to Yvette Nolan in her book review of Sugars's *Canadian Gothic,* "the artistic manifestation of the act of

colonization" (Nolan). The focus on spectres is more squarely directed at the ways that Canadian writers have tried to define a national identity by what we are not, the metaphor of *lack,* through imagery of sinister, paranoia inducing, nightmarish landscapes and figures. Spectres, indeed, manifest terror but their unsettling is not limited to this anxiety of illegitimacy in a psychological mode where "uncanniness" is "integrally linked to the paradox of home" and is a "largely psychological experience" (Sugars and Turcotte ix). Goldman moves from this toward how the Gothic enables us to read the uncanny return of elided histories, where the figure of the spectre is less distinctly one of terror than one that challenges ontological assumptions. Spectres can be figures of complex kinship. King Hamlet fills those who see him with horror, but is also a figure who demands action and who revises his son's understanding of the past; the ghost of Ambrose Piper in *Fall On Your Knees* is terrifying, but is also a form of guardian and warning. The drowned sailor in Jane Urquhart's *Away* is hardly terrifying at all: he is, rather, seductive and represents submerged forms of cultural knowledge and tradition. To understand spectres, particularly in their relationship to history, we must follow Goldman's lead and move further from the Gothic toward other, equally productive critical theories.

Jacques Derrida's injunction to speak to ghosts is of incredible value for this enterprise. Indeed, critics engaging with postcolonial spectres frequently cite Derrida's work on Hauntology. Sugars and Turcotte, in the introduction to *Unsettled Remains,* cite Jacques Derrida's insistence in *Specters of Marx* that "Haunting belongs to the structure of every hegemony" (*SM* 37). They suggest that "the recognition of the always already phantom that haunts the literary, the political, the social, and the corporate has compelled writers to seek out appropriate metaphors to represent such phenomena" (vii). Moreover, to avoid calling on ghosts for a sense of reassurance of colonial legitimacy, one must approach spectral figures with awareness of their essential difference: Hauntology relies upon Derrida's deconstructive work and an engagement with his ideas about *différance*. Moreover, Derrida's conception of spectres permits an engagement with the unsettling that comes from revising our knowledge of the past as well as an emphasis on historical inheritance. In the shared project of much haunted fictional historiography, writers

seek to summon the past for the purposes of healing while being cognizant of the fact that this maneuver can potentially foreclose the past and mark its persistent injustices as resolved.

Haunting, as Jacques Derrida explains, is not solely about ghosts. Derrida's reflections in *Spectres of Marx* mobilize "the spectre haunting Europe" from the first sentence of *The Communist Manifesto* together with the ghost of King Hamlet from the opening scene of Shakespeare's play to embody the unresolved problems that continue to inform the present. King Hamlet signals that time is out of joint; for Derrida, the spectre is an instance of perceptual dislocation, a moment when an idea or belief system is unsettled: revelations of traces that must be acknowledged, ghosts that demand being received and addressed. The spectre, paradoxically, "begins by coming back" (11) and is unfixed in historical processes. The spectre's presence – also paradoxical, the shape of its absence helping to create awareness of its existence – does not produce comfort. Rather, it generates angst and apprehension in its untimeliness and a "disadjustment of the contemporary" (99).

The primary issue is one of indebtedness. As Colin Davis explains in "État Present: Hauntology, Specters, and Phantoms," "attending to the ghost is an ethical injunction insofar as it occupies the place of the Levinisian other: a wholly irrecuperable intrusion in our world, which is not comprehensible within our available intellectual frameworks, but whose otherness we are responsible for preserving" (373). At stake is the possibility of transgenerational communication, particularly the ways in which undisclosed traumas of the previous generations might disturb the lives of their descendants, especially if they know little or nothing about the distant causes. A deconstructive figure, the spectre stands in the liminal space between life and death, presence and absence, causing the unsettling of established certainties. Hauntology is a part of an endeavour to interrogate our relation to our predecessors, antecedents, and ancestors, to explore the boundaries of difference. Speaking to ghosts is an injunction:

> It is necessary to speak *of the* ghost, indeed *to the* ghost and *with* it, from the moment that no ethics, no politics, whether revolutionary or not, seems possible and thinkable and *just* that does not recognize in its

> principle the respect for those others who are no longer or for those others who are not yet *there*, presently living, whether they are already dead or not yet born. (xiii)

Derrida explains that "Without this *non-contemporaneity with itself of the living present*, without that which secretly unhinges it, without this responsibility and this respect for justice concerning those who *are not there*, of those who are no longer or who are not yet *present and living*," there would be no sense in even asking fundamental questions of justice (xiii).

The nuanced conversation with spectres that Derrida proposes helps clarify how we might understand the consistent and persistent desire by so many English-Canadian writers to attend to the need for historical knowledge more attuned to losses and injuries, the "elided histories" excluded by colonial narratives. Indeed, to do the work of social history that George Elliott Clarke describes, one must consider the injunction to speak to ghosts in the context of fictional historiography's postcolonial project of recuperation. The presence of spectres in fictional historiography is similarly motivated by questions of justice. As Herb Wyile contends in *Speculative Fictions*, historical fictions are marked "by current political, social, cultural, and critical developments" (256) and are shaped by the concerns of the present moment. If historical knowledge is founded on the silencing and sublimation of other ways of knowing, as Stuart McLean suggests, then ghosts serve the purpose of challenging ontological and epistemological frameworks, doing the work that Bhabha suggests in *The Location of Culture* of opening up the indeterminate temporal moment of the in-between. The critic, Bhabha argues, must after all "attempt to fully realize, and take responsibility for, the unspoken, unrepresented pasts that haunt the historical present" (18). Writers of fictional historiography can be said, as Bhabha notes about writers such as Toni Morrison and Nadine Gordimer, to have an ethical project to "demonstrate the contemporary compulsion to move beyond; to turn the present into the 'post'" (26). Part of the role of fictional historiography, through a Derridean lens, is to prevent any hasty desire to imagine that we *have moved* beyond the ills of the present or that we have sufficiently settled the injuries of the past while refusing to ignore the need *to move*

beyond. As Bhabha notes about the close of Morrison's *Beloved* – "this is not a story to pass on" – the insistent repetition occurs "in order to engrave the event in the deepest resources of our amnesia, of our unconsciousness. When historical visibility has faded, when the present tense of testimony loses its power to arrest, then the displacements of memory and the indirections of art offer us the image of our psychic survival" (26).

The powerful combination of the spectre and fictional historiography suggests how we might productively confront the countless degradations of historical visibility and the need to summon the past to right persistent wrongs. The liminal figure of the ghost demands engagement with the world "beyond," with the intervening space – the borderlands in which Bhabha identifies conditions of cultural displacement and social discrimination as potential grounds for an agency of empowerment – that asserts the importance of retrieving repressed histories while subverting the possible neo-colonial appropriation of that retrieval. Hauntology demonstrates not only that ghosts signal an unsettling of official narratives and traditional power structures, but also that they indicate an ethical project to negotiate a potential ground for recuperation without foreclosure. For Derrida, the spectres of the past and future intermingle but are never present simultaneously: haunting is not only a deconstruction of the past, but also a destabilization of teleology and ontologies. Thus, Hauntology can give us insight into the preoccupation of the project of spectres in fictional historiography: the recuperation of loss and the hope of healing that breach. In the context that Wyile describes, in which many English-Canadian writers of fictional historiography are not mainly concerned with resisting historical knowledge, Derrida's evocation of the spectre is a helpful means to negotiate the recuperation of the past without foreclosing it. An examination of the spectre in Canadian fictional historiography provides a productive means of interrogating the ethics of haunting and historical representation. Such an interrogation – ranging from resistances to historical metanarratives, to creative engagement with historical absences and silences, to addressing historical injustices – is a vital area of study. Hauntology enables an exploration of that loss and, as importantly, of the anxiety over that loss.

Hauntings in Fictional Historiography

There is a significant archive of haunted fictional historiography. For the purposes of this project, certain parameters were necessary, as was a clear organizing structure. The five novels in this study – Margaret Sweatman's *When Alice Lay Down With Peter*, Jacqueline Baker's *The Horseman's Graves*, Jane Urquhart's *Away*, Ann-Marie MacDonald's *Fall On Your Knees*, and Joseph Boyden's *Three Day Road* – all feature, in one form or another, a materialized spectre. Hauntings such as the painful and present absence of the Beothuk in Michael Crummey's *River Thieves*, Aminata Diallo's missing daughter in *The Book of Negroes*, or Sheilagh Fielding's mysterious guardian in Wayne Johnston's *The Custodian of Paradise*, for example, would broaden the study to unstable proportions. Further, novels such as Eden Robinson's *Monkey Beach*, Thomas King's *Truth and Bright Water*, and Dionne Brand's *At The Full and Change of the Moon*, which are set in the past and feature materialized spectres of some kind were excluded for not being strictly fictional historiography, in that they do not fully take place in a past beyond the writer's memory and lifetime. These novels are certainly engaged in a similar project, one that Dionne Brand describes in an interview with Abbas Nuzhat: "You find yourself in a world of forgetting. And your project – well, mine at any rate – is remembering" (18). Though a closely affiliated archive and project, these novels do not offer the same sustained engagement with the act of writing history as part of the project of recuperation, and so were not included in this study.

The number of examples of hauntings in fictional historiography required an additional organizing principle, in order to prevent the study from providing a survey of the trope rather than a study of some of its various effects. The novels under consideration had to be intimately focused on historiography and inheritance, on the presence of phantomic spectres to illustrate the possibility of recuperating the past and to signal the possibility of healing. There are many novels that chart the transmission of cultural memory in historical and spectral form, but this study is particularly interested in those novels of fictional historiography that include

spectres for a project of recuperation. They had to be interested in how the writing of history can be articulated in the metaphor of summoning ghosts that exceed and trouble ontologies even as they, paradoxically, offer reassurance that history's injustices can be addressed. They also had to demonstrate a unique aspect of how writers use haunting in fictional historiography.

By looking at five novels, I will demonstrate how spectres in fictional historiography signal an attempt to use history for postcolonial and didactic ends while preventing that history from becoming totalizing. It is a strategy to negotiate the relationship between presenting a postcolonial revision of history while not undermining the possibility of historical knowledge. It is also, vitally, a strategy to suggest the possibility for healing historical traumas. The texts under consideration all share a project of revealing histories forgotten and suppressed by colonial historiography. They all suggest that Canada's history is built on a foundation of such suppressions. These novels all give a central place to the supplementing of the gaps in Canadian history. I have chosen them for the polyvalence of the trope of haunting in English-Canadian fiction that they embody and, further, how these spectres signal no one monolithic history but, rather, a collection of divergent experiences of trauma, injustice, and loss. This study is not an attempt to cover the wide range of representations of ghosts in Canadian historical fiction. It is, rather, a series of close readings that will enable me to emphasize how the trope of haunting manifests, aids, and obscures the recuperation of history.

Using Derrida's concept of Hauntology, I will examine the ways that this common trope aids the work of recuperating historical narratives. I will also demonstrate how this strategy can undermine its own purpose. I have organized each of my chapters around a novel that demonstrates a different aspect of how haunting inflects the work of fictional historiography: Margaret Sweatman's *When Alice Lay Down With Peter* deploys a variety of spectres to destabilize settler narratives of belonging. Jacqueline Baker's *The Horseman's Graves* and Jane Urquhart's *Away* both invoke the spectres of cultural history to portray the burdens carried by immigrants. Ann-Marie MacDonald's *Fall On Your Knees* manifests its spectral elements in an attempt to reclaim the histories of people marginalized in

the pursuit of a coherent national identity, notably those whose gender, culture, and sexual orientation left them suppressed. Joseph Boyden's *Three Day Road* uses its ghosts to comment upon the healing impulse of fictional historiography itself. These novels share the project of deploying ghosts to negotiate the challenges of presenting history, without recolonizing it, in order to address historical injustices. In other words, the common desire of these texts is to inform their readership of histories that are not well enough known or understood, while acknowledging that such knowledge cannot be complete, in order to accomplish some form of recuperation.

I have organized my consideration of these novels' unique facets of haunting in fictional historiography by the degree to which that haunting is a force of recuperation or occlusion. The distinction between atonement and assuaging guilt that Herb Wyile raised with Michael Crummey is a central distinction in the work that spectres do in fictional historiography and, as Marlene Goldman demonstrates, not all ghosts are immediately and inevitably figures that productively unsettle colonial foundations. Though each novel that I discuss here features some form of haunting that is part of the common project of historical recuperation, not every novel manages the complex negotiation of hauntings and fictional historiography in the same way. It is productive to consider the hauntings that, though powerfully deployed and productively unsettling, work at odds with a novel's thematic and formal considerations.

In the first chapter, I will examine how spectres can signal the foreclosure of historical wrongs even as they can also suggest the persistence of those wrongs. Using Margaret Sweatman's novel *When Alice Lay Down With Peter*, I will consider how ghosts can provide reassurance about Canada's history of settlement and invasion even as they highlight the injustices of that practice. In *Alice*, Sweatman strives to highlight the effects of Aboriginal displacement and to summon spectres for atonement of that injustice, but the novel's spectres also signal how the unearthing of ghosts can legitimize colonial settlement and assuage guilt.

In the second chapter, I will examine how spectres can illuminate events and experiences lost to history. Using Jacqueline Baker's *The Horseman's Graves* and Jane

Urquhart's *Away*, I will consider how spectres are well suited to trouble our assurances in the foundations of the present. I will also consider how these same spectres can occlude the losses that they illuminate. *Graves* and *Away* suggest how spectres can embody the ways in which colonial power circumscribes the lives of settlers, and how the baggage of cultural continuity is both a refuge and a danger. The novels also indicate, however, that the liminal nature of ghosts and the desire to trouble the ontological foundations of a conservative historiography can have the effect of obscuring the very lives that those writers want to illuminate.

In the third chapter, I will examine how the unsettling presence of spectres is a powerful means for recuperating elided histories. Using Ann-Marie MacDonald's *Fall On Your Knees*, I will consider how the spectre manifests the advantages (and some of the risks) that fictional historiography faces when recuperating lost history. *Fall On Your Knees* points to the ways that the postcolonial project of revising history is one of healing, but also demonstrates the ways in which the attempts to escape the liminality and ontological instability of spectres can impede that project.

In the fourth and final chapter, I will examine how spectres can offer fictional historiography an avenue for recuperating the past without foreclosing the traumas that perpetuate its hauntings. Using Joseph Boyden's *Three Day Road*, I will consider how the spectre prevents the conservative approach of fictional historiography from becoming totalizing and how the liminal nature of spectres can signal strategies for healing. *Three Day Road* demonstrates a model for how these various effects of haunting can cohere into a powerful narrative of recuperation. Boyden's novel provides many insights into how spectres can reveal the legacies of the past, can revise historical narratives without replacing them with something equally restrictive, and can signal the possibility of healing without exorcising the trauma of the original injustice. Boyden also highlights the limits of hauntology, even as it continues to be a valuable mechanism for exploring the effects of haunting.

In studying the ways in which texts struggle and succeed to offer both postcolonial revision and a sense of the contingency of historical knowledge, I will demonstrate that hauntings in fictional historiography open (and can foreclose) our knowledge of the past. Fictional historiography's hauntings are a potent strategy for

engaging with Canada's cultural indebtedness, our postcolonial inheritance, and our ethical projects. There is much at stake in this work: a popular genre that strives to negotiate the paradoxical position of asserting the importance of history and unsettling specific versions of history. Fictional historiography, by dint of being a more conservative form than historiographic metafiction, uses the past in ways that often reify colonial modes of knowledge. The imperative of reckoning with spectres is one of returning to occluded history while acknowledging the nation's colonial heritage. This is, as Marlene Goldman suggests, "an injunction tied to a politics of memory and a conception of justice" (3). The liminal space of fictional historiography's hauntings can enable a site of recovery without participating in the imperialist gesture of appropriation and effacement. It is not merely occluded and absent narratives that must be dramatized: part of the power of deploying spectres is their ability to address the difficult negotiation in the reinscription of colonial history. The persistence of traces of the past, of spectres of history, signals the possibility of recuperating the past for subsequent reformulations of the future.

Chapter One

"These are my beginnings": The Haunting Anxiety of Illegitimacy in Margaret Sweatman's *When Alice Day Down With Peter*

"You could not step twice into the same river." – Heraclitus

"I'm dipping my pen into the Red River, always at the same spot, and like they say, all the time into a different river. I have hauled this story out of the fish-smelling muck of the Red." – Margaret Sweatman, *When Alice Lay Down With Peter*

Ghosts persistently signal the two-fold anxieties of Canadian settlers: the fear of the hostile and occupied landscape into which they've come and the fear that their belonging on that land is not fundamental. Margaret Sweatman's *When Alice Lay Down With Peter* is a novel that confronts these apprehensions: it uses the trope of spectres in fictional historiography to confront the colonial narrative of settlement with the costs of Aboriginal dispossession. Like many recent postcolonial novels, *Alice* wants to explore the ongoing effects of colonial power even after the demise of the principal agents and victims. And like many novels of fictional historiography that deploy ghosts, *Alice* demonstrates a complex reliance on and skepticism of the practice of historiography. Sweatman's novel, mostly through its depiction of the ghost of Thomas Scott, reveals the persistence of colonial power structures. However, what *Alice* also demonstrates is how the ghosts of suppressed and repressed voices in the context of fictional historiography can become figures that assuage guilt.

When Alice Lay Down With Peter is a story of origins. As a work of fictional historiography, it foregrounds the inevitably compromised nature of the origin story of Manitoba but relies on the ontological stability and accessibility of that history. Using actual events and historical figures with considerable effort to fidelity, Sweatman's novel is a family saga that spans more than a century. Narrated by 109

year old, and recently dead, Blondie McCormack, Sweatman's novel traces the McCormack family's arrival and settlement in the St. Norbert region of southern Manitoba. The novel opens on the meeting of landscape and people that will figuratively and literally lead to Blondie's birth, in the heat of a Manitoba summer night, "on the night of August's showering meteors in a warm wind sweet with sage. They were alone under cowboy stars beside the embers of a campfire, laughing in their lovemaking" (5). The novel swiftly recounts how Blondie's mother Alice falls in love with Peter McCormack in the Orkney Islands in Scotland just as he is about to sail for the New World. Alice disguises herself as a man to follow him and joins the Métis buffalo hunt in southern Manitoba. It is a "revisionist" novel in that it highlights the injustices present in the settlement of Manitoba and the expansion of Canada, resisting a glorifying narrative of Canada's triumphant birth. The rapid expansion of the Canadian territories in the late 1860s decimates the buffalo population and the culture of the Métis, who have their land taken from them. The ironic juxtaposition of Alice and Peter's new life together with the destruction of the Métis' way of life – and Blondie's birth not coincidentally aligning with Manitoba's – lingers insistently throughout the novel.

When Alice Lay Down With Peter is preoccupied with leavening myths of origin with truths about colonial injustices. Sweatman's determination to challenge the notion of a coherent national origin aligning with Canadian settlement means that she refuses to allow the novel an unalloyed moment of beginning. Rather, *Alice* begins five times: when Chapter One has Blondie McCormack intone "These are my beginnings" (5) from beyond the grave, she does not use the plural accidentally. Before Blondie speaks, the novel has already offered an epigraph, an Author's Note, a map, and a prologue. Concerned with the act of writing history, these multiple and heteroglossic beginnings highlight the constructed nature of historical writing. Sweatman does not sustain this cacophonous overture and the novel quickly becomes much more conservative: told chronologically, with a frame sequence, the novel charts Manitoba's birth and development by following the McCormack clan as they set down roots by the Red River. Without deploying a consistently heteroglossic approach to historiography, Sweatman's primary means of resisting

the conservative tendencies of the historical novel while preserving its ability to imagine an ontologically stable past is the presence of ghosts.

Alice is, in fact, infused with spectres. Some of the spectres are living, such as the younger of the two McCormack descendants named Helen whom Sweatman characterizes as a ghostlike figure in her similarities to the unchecked undergrowth of the landscape: "It is Dianna's ideal environment, at the cusp between the dead and the living" (454). Dianna's grandmother, the older of the novels' two Helens, disappears when fighting in the Spanish Civil War and returns to her family as a moth. There are, however, three vitally important spectres who drive Sweatman's novel. The ghost of Blondie McCormack, daughter of the eponymous Alice and Peter, narrates the novel from beyond the grave. Her mother-in-law, a Métis woman named Marie, haunts Blondie's living days as does the ghost of the infamous Orangeman Thomas Scott. One "fictional" and one extrapolated from a "real" historical person, these two ghosts provide Sweatman with her most sustained resistance to the totalizing effects of the conservative tendencies of fictional historiography. Though Blondie's narration emphasizes a Derridean desire to commune with the dead, *When Alice Lay Down With Peter* is inconsistent in its project of providing an alternative and politically focused history. Blondie's ghost provides clear resistance to a colonial and Eurocentric narrative of history, but it also signals the kind of erasure to which fictional historiography can fall victim. Marie's ghost is a more powerful means of revising the colonial narrative of settlement, but she is also compromised in her deployment as a legitimating figure for the McCormack clan. The spectre of Thomas Scott is Sweatman's most powerful haunting and the one who manages to highlight the persistent effects of the colonial narrative of settlement and the widespread complicity in the ongoing effects of displacement upon Aboriginal peoples.

Blondie

It is illuminating to examine a ghost such as Blondie McCormack's to see how it functions as a force of both historical unsettling and erasure. Blondie's presence

signals Sweatman's focus on history and its telling: Blondie is the novel's main character, but also its narrator, whose perspective determines how we access Manitoba's settlement. Blondie is also dead[8] and she ends her prologue with the admission that "today, which happens to be a Tuesday, I am dead as a stick" (2). Not unlike the injunction King Hamlet directs at his son, a controlling metaphor for hauntology that Derrida returns to time and again, the mere fact that it is Blondie telling this story unsettles our relationship with the text and the past. Haunting by its very nature disturbs the complacency of normal human interaction. The decision to have a ghost narrate the events of the novel is a signal that the novel wants to resist a simpler and more unambiguously didactic accounting of the injustices that mar Manitoba's becoming.

It is significant that the novel's narrator is a ghost. Herb Wyile characterizes the presence of ghosts in *When Alice Lay Down With Peter* as disruptive to the teleological, linear model of history-as-progress and as challenging to colonial accounts of the past. Blondie is, after all, dead when the novel begins and narrates from a point beyond living.[9] She sits outside both the ontological order of the living and the epistemological order of historical processes. The work of talking to ghosts in the novel is doubled by the work of the novel itself – it embodies a ghost with whom we commune. As Wyile observes, this is a textual strategy for resisting the legacies of colonialism and critical discourse built into the form of the novel. Additionally, "By instituting a dialogue between a mythic and/or supernatural order and a more empirical, rationalist view of time," *Alice* and other texts (such as Rushdie's *Midnight's Children*, Gabriel Garcia Marquez's *One Hundred Years of*

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[8] Blondie is a ghost of a different order than Marie or Thomas Scott, who actually appear as ghosts in the narrative itself. Blondie is a deceased narrator – a device that has been used famously in film (*Sunset Boulevard*, most notably) and by, among others, John Steffler in *The Afterlife of George Cartwright,* Vladimir Nabokov in *Transparent Things*, Orhan Pamuk in *My Name is Red*, Alice Sebold in *The Lovely Bones*, and a growing sub-genre of Young Adult supernatural romance – but not a ghost in her own story.

[9] In this, Blondie recalls Pierre Falcon, the spectral narrator of Rudy Wiebe's *The Scorched-Wood People*, a story which occupies a similar location and temporal moment. The novel itself asks questions of appropriation and voice: "'how long must one live before he can speak for the dead?'" (36).

Solitude, Jane Urquhart's *Away*, and Thomas Wharton's *Icefields*) "destabilize imperial assumptions about historical progress and interrogate the legacy of imperial practices" ("Takes" 738). The sprawl of the novel – beyond even Blondie's 109-year lifespan – as well as its cyclical framing device and multiple beginnings both appropriate and subvert the practices of traditional historiography. Even Blondie's opening narration in the Prologue – "I'm dipping my Pen into the Red River, always at the same spot, and like they say, all the time into a different river. I have hauled this story out of the fish-smelling much of the Red" (1) – subverts the historiographic impulse while demonstrating the novel's preoccupation with Manitoba's past. Her reworking of Heraclitus –"You could not step twice into the same river" – also underlines the tension between a cyclical view of history and a linear, teleological one. Wyile identifies this as an instance of the eternal return as characterized by Mircea Eliade as being central to a disruption of ontology (739).

Blondie's ghostly narration also provides a Derridean perspective on the spectres of the past. Sweatman's statement in an interview with Herb Wyile configures the novel's approach to ghosts in Derridean terms: "I think we all have ghosts, and if we let them go, if we stop speaking of them, obviously they're dead" (*Speaking* 177). The cyclical nature of the novel – the repetition of lightning strikes and electricity at the conception of each McCormack daughter, the McCormacks' impossibilism and doomed idealist dream – permits the spectral retrospective of Blondie's tale to embody conversations with the enduring legacies of colonialism. Time is, as Derrida suggests following Shakespeare, out of joint. Alice, Peter, and Eli's attachment to the causes of the Métis in Canada parallel their involvement in other doomed rebellions, signaling the persistent nature of history's marginalizations. In 1914, Alice has her immigrant pupils in Winnipeg dramatically stage the rebellions of 1837 to protest the Anglocentric prejudice they face. Peter and Eli become agitators in the Winnipeg General Strike, opposed both by the RCMP and the embodiment of Old Money in Richard Anderson; another violent confrontation with the Mounties in Regina stymies the elder Helen's trek to Ottawa during the Depression, and her commitment to fight fascism leads her to the Spanish Civil War (where, like Thomas Scott, she is executed by firing squad). Dianna

becomes an ardent critic of American neo-imperialism in the 1960s, and is similarly met with violence. Blondie's telling of her family's story materializes the past as one of repeating cycles and persistent hauntings.

However, Blondie's spectral presence also suggests some of the decidedly less postcolonial effects of using ghosts in fictional historiography. *When Alice Lay Down With Peter* is part of a considerable archive of historical fiction concerned with narrating Canada's settlement – including Alexander Begg's *Dot it Down* (1871), Ralph Connor's *The Sky Pilot* (1899) and *The Foreigner* (1909), F.P. Groves's essays *Over Prairie Trails* (1922) and novel *Settlers of the Marsh* (1925), Martha Ostenso's *Wild Geese* (1925), Robert Stead's *Grain* (1926), Sinclair Ross's *As For Me and My House* (1941) and *The Lamp at Noon and Other Stories* (1968). Much of the social and emotional complexity of settlement was interpolated and transformed by historical fiction into an encounter with the uncanny nothingness of a new and hostile landscape. The constructed encounter with such emptiness, Northrop Frye suggests in his Conclusion to *A Literary History of Canada*, is predicated on an "east-to-west thrust which historians regard as the axis of Canadian development" (216). In other words, it is a part of colonial historiography and myth making. The frontier functions on a different symbolic register in Canada than in the U.S.: the Canadian frontier was not part of the national imaginary that could be approached or retreated from. It "was all around one, a part and a condition of one's whole imaginative being," it was "the immediate datum of his imagination, the thing that had to be dealt with first" (219). The vast empty spaces of the prairies epitomize the landscape that permits the terror that Frye identifies in so much Canadian writing, "not a terror of the dangers of discomforts or even the mysteries of nature, but a terror of the soul at something that these things manifest" (224).[10]

Other theorists have considered the encounter with unsettling landscape in terms of ghosts. Margaret Atwood tried to further articulate the unease Frye

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[10] Frye himself was by no means ignorant of the colonial dimensions of his cultural criticism: he wrote that Canada was "practically the only country left in the world which is a pure colony, colonial in psychology as well as in mercantile economics" (*Bush Garden* iii) and that Canada had gone from "a pre-national to a post-national phase without ever having become a nation" (*Divisions* 15).

identifies as that of a sense of inauthenticity, though she located such sentiments in terms of lacking a national identity rather than an inauthenticity borne of invasion and displacement. Atwood claims that "The digging up of ancestors, calling up of ghosts, exposure of skeletons in the closet which are so evident in many cultural areas" are made up of "numerous motivations, but one of them surely is a search for reassurance. We want to be sure that the ancestors, ghosts, and skeletons really are there, that as a culture we are not as flat and lacking in resonance as we were once led to believe" ("Monsters" 100). Margot Northey argues along these lines in *The Haunted Wilderness* (1976) that "those works studied which appear so death-ridden and frequently disintegrative may indeed be considered catalysts of regeneration. With good reason we may suppose that in culture, as in the natural world, death and decay are compost for new growth" (110). The land Frye, Atwood, and Northey describe is empty, silent, and, most importantly, unpeopled. This urge to fill up the past with ghosts is a practice of equating ghosts with history and history with culture.

Blondie functions with and against this anxious register. Her spectral perspective, along with the novel's multiple beginnings, underlines the compromised work of any historiography. She embodies what Robert Kroetsch calls a common prairie desire:

> This is a new country. Here on the plains we confront the hopeless and necessary hope of originality: constantly we experience the need to begin. And we do – by initiating beginnings. We contrive authentic origins […] From the diaries and reminiscences and the travel accounts. From our displaced ancestors. (82)

However, though her version of Manitoba isn't unpeopled, she also provides the authenticating ghost that Atwood describes. Though Alice and Peter encounter figures that unsettle them in their colonial attitudes – subverting the Frygian encounter with an uncanny landscape – Blondie is also the spectre of colonial history. Reminiscent of that of Salman Rushdie's Saleem Sinai, Blondie's birth in 1870 corresponds with Manitoba's entrance into Confederation. Her birth aligns her development with Manitoba's, as does her family's direct involvement in the most

significant events in the progress of that province. This suggests that she fills the role Atwood describes of the ghost as cultural supplement: she is proof of that province's history, the ghost that proves that the culture is not flat or lacking in resonance. The familial saga establishes her family's role in the creation of the province and, thus, their authenticity and justification.

Further, Blondie's narration is not a disruptive historiography of Manitoba's past: Blondie's story is a highlight reel of the most well known incidents of Manitoba's history. *Alice* is not a novel that seeks to trouble either our understanding of Manitoba's history or a sense of belonging for those who continue to benefit from the displacement of Aboriginal peoples. The presence of a ghost narrator is a powerful signal of narrative unsettling, yet Blondie is presented as a reliable narrator, perhaps supernaturally reliable, as her status as no-longer-living removes her from the complications of mortal existence and memory. Blondie materializes the potential bind of hauntings in fictional historiography: she is a figure who gestures toward ontological unease but who ultimately provides comfort and authenticity. *Alice* is not an especially revisionist novel: it uses the details of Manitoba's history without subversion, without contesting perspectives or carnivalesque pastiche. The novel is a rather conservative history: Avrom Fleishman's description of historical fiction as novels in which "the plot must include a number of 'historical' events, particularly those in the public sphere (war, politics, economic change, etc.), mingled with and affecting the personal fortunes of the characters" (3) aptly describes *When Alice Lay Down With Peter*. It is, as Gyorgy Lukács suggests about the historical novel, a consideration of how the present moment came to be. Rather than being a ghost that disrupts ontological certainty, *Alice* deploys Blondie's spectre in service of an history in which the facts of the past are not in much doubt.

This is not to say that the novel endorses a colonial worldview. As a work of postcolonial fictional historiography Sweatman's novel charts the history of a place with care and attention to the stories of those, like Marie and Eli, who were dispossessed and it demonstrates how the 'historical' events Fleishman describes – "(war, politics, economic change, etc.)" – are controlled by those with little concern

for people like Marie; controlled, in fact, by those who explicitly wish to silence and marginalize those who present impediments to their (neo-)colonial desires. However, Sweatman never questions that these events are the most historically significant, and Blondie's narration isn't subject to textually substantial gaps or contradictions, like those of George Vancouver in *Burning Water*, for instance. Her ghostly narration is not an absence in the narrative, nor does it offer any sustained critique of conservative and colonial historiography; rather, it provides a supplemental history to better nuance the colonial version of events. The magical realism in the novel, the common lightning strike that affects each woman in the McCormack clan when she becomes pregnant or the ghosts that haunt the novel's characters, do not alter the solidity of the novel's portrayal of historical events. Sweatman does not present Blondie's recollections as suspect nor does the novel demonstrate any hidden aspects heretofore unrevealed that cast major events in a new light. Her narration isn't a signal of horror or terror but of hopefulness. She addresses her unseen audience, the novel's readership, in a welcoming and lighthearted fashion. As a spectral narrator, she provides little by way of actual ontological disruption; instead she offers both a supplement to the incomplete historical record and a history full of cultural significance in the style Atwood imagines.

Blondie functions as evidence that, despite the unfortunate events in Manitoba's history, the province's destiny is ultimately one of great hope. This is a ghost that reassures rather than unsettles, that serves to mark the gradual erasure of persistent toxic legacies: these old ideas, Blondie's narration and narrative suggest, will disappear with time. The idyllic scene in the closing frame seems designed ultimately as reassurance that the ills of the past can be transcended. Blondie remarks that "We live there in peace for many years […] We plant an orchard where the pines once grew. In their fourth summer, they blossom" (456). Blondie watches the younger Helen run

> across my garden, the sun soaking into her long hair. We're overrun with wild cucumber. She has become a high and mighty young woman, and she's absolutely no help at all with the weeding. I'm tempted to chase her

> out of here before she tramples my delicate nest of meadowlarks hidden, there, doesn't she see it? Among the blue-eyed grass. (457)

Blondie and her descendants do not suffer Alice and Peter's perpetual sense of fraudulence. As Reinhold Kramer contends, Blondie demonstrates that "one need only be the right sort of white person to be instantly comfortable among the Métis" (172). In part, she is inoculated against colonialism's sins by joining Marie's family, which grants her a legitimacy that her parents never feel. This enables the novel to present an optimistic vision of possibility: the younger Helen, with "the blackest hair, the reddest lips" (457) running across the landscape of southern Manitoba, great-great-granddaughter of Marie. Indeed, Sweatman's novel is highly invested in a hopeful resolution. The idyllic scene Blondie recounts at the novel's end serves to settle and reassure. It is the scene of the birth of Dianna's daughter – Blondie's great-granddaughter – who Blondie describes as "infinitely familiar. And infinitely new. We light the candles. The mice play, and rain runs down the glass and the ghosts sit in the shadows. Alice and Peter are there, and Marie, and even the damp Orangeman, Thomas Scott, his clothes ill-fitting, his shoes wet" (455). They make a family, seemingly, in this moment of tranquility.

Sweatman signals the novel's project of reconciliation early, in an epigraph that suggests that the ravages of colonization can be erased over time. Isaiah 11 is a chapter about the character of the King of the Jews, the Messiah prophesized to save his people. The passage from Chapter 11 that Sweatman cites describes what the reign of this king will look like:

> The wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a child shall lead them.
>
> And the cow and the bear shall feed; their young ones shall lie down together; and the lion shall eat straw like an ox.
>
> They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain; for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea. (Isaiah 11:6-7,9)

This passage shows how nature will be transformed: carnivores will become herbivores and the hierarchy of the food chain will be broken down. Of greater importance, perhaps, is the new relationship between nature and humanity. A child will be safe from predators and will be able to commune with animals in a new way. The peace of this messianic vision will cover the entire world. It is an idyll that seems at odds with a revision of the history of Manitoba that *Alice* seems designed to suggest: a province born of the colonial violence that led to the Riel Rebellion, the dispossession of Aboriginal peoples, the suppression of political outsiders, the General Strike of 1919. Furthermore, it seems a problematic Christian imposition and an evocation of the missionary spread of a religious doctrine that was used to significantly harm the Aboriginal peoples of Manitoba through Residential Schools and policies of discrimination.

It makes sense, however, as a gesture to the possibility of overcoming colonialism's harmful legacies and Blondie's spectral narration provides a sense of colonialism's defeat. Sweatman's deployment of Blondie's ghostly narration signals a desire to unsettle historical narratives, but Blondie is a deeply compromised narrator. She does not substantially revise the colonial narrative, and often serves to be the means of its concealment. There are, certainly, still signs of a lingering colonial inheritance, such as when Blondie comments that "Some of my father's old fencing still stands, marking nowhere from elsewhere" (455). However, the logic of homesteading and proving up, of marking the land as somewhere rather than nowhere, remains only in tattered and disintegrating form. Blondie observes that "There's not much left of our houses at all. The land has changed shape. The river comes close" (454). Fungus, mushrooms, wild cucumber, "grass, arrow grass, thistle, and slowly, poplar, birch, willow sprout up from underground roots" (454). Blondie's ghost signals a sense of triumph here, of a defeat of the harsh legacies of colonialism through natural bounty. There is a sadness in this new life – Eli is dead, and Blondie, who has lived her whole life surrounded by ghosts, remarks that "Death never does become less shocking" (456) – but this sadness does not mitigate a triumphalism in the making of this return to paradise. The ruins of the old McCormack home, and the disappearing graves of Alice and Peter, point toward an

overwriting of the settler narrative and the eventual erasure of people most keenly aware of the cost of acquiring the land their descendants enjoy.

Marie

If Blondie is a deeply compromised spectre, *Alice* finds a more unsettling haunting in the form of Blondie's mother-in-law Marie. The ghost of Marie most powerfully embodies narratives of inheritance and debt as she unsettles myths of settlement. The Métis mother of Blondie's partner Eli,[11] Marie presents both a challenge to ontological certainty and an ethical injunction. However, Sweatman's use of Marie, like her use of Blondie, often provides a narrative of assuaging guilt.

The most powerful role Marie plays in the novel is one of reminder. The McCormacks force her from her land and her ghostly presence will not let them forget. Newly arrived on the banks of the Red River, pregnant Alice finds a wood shack and two young Aboriginal people whom the McCormacks take to be Cree. Before they can speak, and after the young Cree man inspects Peter and Alice from afar "as if they were insectivores, maybe a couple of plovers eating spiders" (20), Alice vomits profusely. Her impossible vomiting signals the McCormacks' colonial affiliations: "It was a miracle because she hadn't had any food in four days. Copious amounts. Things she'd never eaten, food not available in the Red River valley in 1869. Oranges and mango, artichokes and lichee nuts. The future cuisine of the Dominion" (20-21). Afterward, Alice can only mutter "I need a home" (21). Peter estimates the parcel at 160 acres and offers a dollar an acre, and the young Cree produces a title as if by magic. In an event that ironically duplicates this on a larger scale, "Rupert's Land, the Hudson's Bay Company freehold, was 40 per cent of what would eventually become Canada. And in 1869, all that land was sold to an Eastern, Protestant, Anglo-Saxon powerhouse for £300,000. Cash" (29). Peter, also ironically, finds the whole process deeply unsettling as Blondie remarks that "It's always off-putting to be sold" (29). The "land without landlords" (8) was what had drawn Peter

[11] The novel is not unambiguous on the precise biological relationship between Marie and Eli, though she is very much a maternal figure to him in life and in death.

to Manitoba and was the impetus for him joining the Riel rebellion to resist this very type of imperial encroachment.

Peter is deeply ambivalent about his settler subject position: he has been colonized and has now colonized in return. He is aware that he has become a usurper, and yet he feels a fierce desire to retain ownership. He wonders "Is there an original owner of such land? This is what comes from settling down, my dad thought sadly, guiltily, his left eye twitching. You become simultaneously self-righteous and hypocritical" (30). First, the wood shack is washed away. Then, "when Prime Minister Sir John A. Macdonald realized that the 'impulsive Half-breeds' would need to be 'kept down by a strong hand until they are swamped by the influx of settlers'" (45), Peter begins to worry that he, himself, will be forced out by a new wave of settlers. He desperately tries to occupy the land, building "sheds and fences and a stable" (45) to prove up.[12] What he fears most – Protestant English settlers staking claims on vacant land wherever they find it – is precisely what he performed. The title he had purchased "was not, of course, a deed, a scrip of a title. He already knew. What Dad unfolded was a charcoal drawing of a buffalo" (49). Later, Alice patrols the perimeter of the land "the way a well-trained German shepherd will piss on its own frontiers" (80). Her gesture is both a parodic subversion of national borders and the land grabbing of the homestead rush, and an ironic duplication of the natural world that she and Peter seek to master.

Marie enters their lives as Alice encounters a band of drunken soldiers, after they misrecognize Peter for being part of the firing squad that killed Thomas Scott. In fact, it was Alice, dressed as a man, who was in that squad and the soldiers' misrecognition signals the willful blindness that infects most of the characters with Euro-centric attitudes. Alice escapes rape, but soon discovers that another woman was not able to do so. Marie, a Métis woman, not only survives her rape but also is

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[12] According to the *Dominion Lands Act* of 1872, settlers had to meet certain obligations before the patent or ownership of the land was transferred from the Crown to the homesteader. The process of fulfilling these duties was referred to as "proving up" the homestead. Some of the required duties included cultivating and residing on the land for three years, building a habitable house, and breaking and preparing for crop at least five acres within the first year of entry.

able to nurse Alice back to health after her assault. Sweatman presents Marie as a figure of immense strength and compassion: in addition to assisting Alice while Peter is indisposed, she adopts Eli, a boy left behind after the summer hunt. Marie calmly explains that the McCormacks are on her people's land, but uses the plural pronoun "ours" in a gesture of communal ownership and inclusion that Alice promptly betrays: "I'm not leaving," she insists, "something that she would not have done before shooting Thomas Scott" (63). Marie looks at Alice with "sardonic pity," when she suggests that they "could share" (63).

This prompts Marie to depart, a rebuke that Alice can never fully escape. Marie's presence quantifies the metaphor of immigrant as guest, one that has, as Mireille Rosello argues, a commercial logic that reduces hospitality to a binary exchange (34). What Marie proposes is a more complex communal use, a concept that Alice and Peter dismiss. It is much simpler to consider their deed to the land as proof of ownership and the commercial logic of the housing metaphor permits them to simplify and refute Marie's more nuanced claim. This claim reasserts itself on Alice and Peter, however, no matter how seductive the logic of ownership: Marie returns in a form that they cannot so easily dismiss. When Eli returns to the homestead in 1885, he explains that Marie "'got the TB. A year ago now she's died'" (91). Despite her death, Eli believes "'Marie followed me home and took up residence in the old cabin. She's on the premises, I'm sure she is'" (91). Marie materializes the existential claim to the land that Peter's proving up might have mitigated legally. Marie, who continues to appear and visit with the McCormacks, manifests their awareness of their own culpability in the displacement and betrayal of the Métis.

Marie's ghostly presence troubles Alice and Peter. Marie's house, "A squat construction of mudded logs" (66), is on the land the McCormacks call their own but, tellingly, had remained invisible to their eyes. Though it becomes Blondie and Eli's home, it continues to be another sign of previous habitation and of the willful blindness of the new settlers. Peter and Alice pass their ambivalent position to their descendants: Blondie goes so far as to consistently refer to the land as "our property" – in quotation marks – making explicit her parents' unease about their

sense of ownership. The novel's focus on the McCormacks' anxiety over land claims foregrounds what Alan Lawson calls the "double teleology" of settler narratives, "the suppression or effacement of the Indegene, and the concomitant indigenization of the settler" (28). Marie's ghostly presence forestalls the effacement of the McCormacks' culpability and prevents any ease in the issue of ownership.

Marie's spectral nature thus signals Sweatman's postcolonial project. After the character's death, Sweatman characterizes Marie as appearing "to be quite real, though it seemed to be evening where she was, or raining, or June" (174-75). With Marie, Sweatman intervenes in an old story about settlers in Canada encountering an empty landscape, an old story that avoids considering colonial relations and the lives of the people they impact. Common amongst the many novels of triumphant settlement that *Alice* uses Marie to implicitly critique is the absence of the histories of the peoples who were already present – the "lost histories" to which Goldman refers and to which Sweatman is sensitive. She continues to live on the land that the McCormacks have taken from her and her family. The vocabulary of haunting that Marie embodies – her insistent presence, the McCormacks's inability to banish her – is pervasive among postcolonial theorists as a means of tracing "lost histories in their understandings of colonial relations" (Goldman 15). Marie embodies Sweatman's attempts, as Herb Wyile argues generally of contemporary historical novels, to resist "monologic and Eurocentric versions of Canadian history" in order to "undermine the neat colonial trajectory of exploration, settlement, and nation-building and suggest how the birth of a nation is, from a less Eurocentric perspective, the death of others" (*SF* xiv). In her analysis of ghosts and ethnicity in American literature, Kathleen Brogan argues that ghosts "signal an attempt to recover and make social use of a poorly documented, partially erased cultural history" (2). *Alice* deploys cultural haunting in this manner "to re-create ethnic identity through an imaginative recuperation of the past and to press this new version of the past into service of the present" (4). The anxiety that the McCormacks feel has little to do with the absence of culture and more to do with the very real sense of illegitimacy that Marie prevents them from ignoring.

Sweatman's novel is concerned with the pernicious and pervasive negative consequences of settlement, and uses history to present the building of the Canadian west (and of Canada more generally) as a benighted enterprise. As Cynthia Sugars argues about a different novel in "Haunted by (a Lack of) Postcolonial Ghosts: Settler Nationalism in Jane Urquhart's *Away*", "in the context of a settler-invader history it may also be true that ghosts have an ethical dimension as reminders of a settler nation's accountability – an allegorical projection of an internalized, insufficiently resolved, past" (26). Wyile describes Marie's prickly presence as a persistent reminder of the means by which settlers in Canada acquired land. Through Marie's present absence, he argues that Sweatman "allegorically reinscribes an effaced Aboriginal history, resisting the urge to deploy ghosts to symbolically indigenize the settler" ("Takes" 744).

As Peter and Alice's consistently uneasy reaction to Marie illustrates, this attempt at symbolic indigenization is not a comfortable fit for the settlers themselves either. Marie helps make clear just how binding is this "imposition of an imported world-view onto a new, and in many ways, alien physical space" (S. Baker 84). Marie makes evident how hypocritical Alice and Peter must become to remain within their own colonial system. It is this bind that Peter McCormack highlights in his paranoid attempts to satisfy both official requirements of land ownership and his own sense of illegitimacy. The anxiety with which Peter struggles is that of settlement and of the imagined nation: his vain attempts to prove his ownership of the land only underline the deliberate break with the lived history of the place he wishes to occupy and, to some degree, possess. The ghosts that haunt him are not those of his ancestors – the cultural authenticity that Blondie signals – but of those who he and Alice had a hand in displacing.

Marie also presents a counterpoint to the novel's living Métis character, Eli, who becomes a spectral presence himself in the novel. Eli is a buffalo hunter in a time when the buffalo are all but extinct. In later life, he turns to rodeo and country music; though he is able to make a career in these fields that is at times quite lucrative, they characterize him as nostalgic for a history he missed. In his youth, he "acted for Riel, worked like a missionary to make the Northwest Rebellion a real

Indian-Métis movement" (119). His work for Riel defines Eli's nostalgia early, "singing the praises of the future, which was a return to the past" (119). His eventual electoral popularity is predicated on his popularity following the end of the 1885 rebellion as "People mistook Eli's regret for idealism, and voted for him in elections he never ran in" (120). Eli's own liminal nature – a man out of time and a sort of living ghost – shapes nostalgia as a refusal to talk to ghosts. He, himself, believes that the past is gone: his reaction to his campaign slogan is one of befuddlement: "it always made him wonder why people insisted on voting for what was missing, expurgated, extinct" (120). Peter even describes Eli as such when he remarks that "'He's the last one,'" insisting that "'We've got to preserve him'" because he's "'The last of an extinct species'" (141). Eli serves to many as the reminder of something that has been lost, a slowly disappearing Indian.

Though Eli's ghostly existence speaks consistently to loss and the deprivation created by colonial legacies, Marie's presence forestalls any willful blindness about the McCormacks' possession of the land, preventing the Métis who lived there from being reduced to objects of nostalgia and pity. There is never any doubt that the McCormacks are on land that they acquired by dispossessing someone else: Marie is not a revelation of that fact, but rather a sign of its inescapability. She permits Sweatman to highlight the ongoing question of Aboriginal land claims and the means and methods by which settlement of the Canadian west occurred. Marie is also a strong counterpoint to the perception of Eli by Canadian society as the last remnant of a lost people. She might be dead, but she has hardly disappeared. In fact, her appearance is more than nostalgia for what's safely removed to the past: Marie is voluble and a "Terrible nag" (91). When Alice and Eli take up residence in Marie's cabin, she shares her home, a phantom presence who continues to exert influence over the living present. Though she is only occasionally corporeal, she has an immense impact on the material world she no longer occupies: she is the one who pushes Blondie and Eli to marry and then performs the ceremony. She is even sometimes more present than Eli, who has a hard time with a sedentary lifestyle. Marie is also an unsettling figure in her refusal to be consistently intelligible to her family. She sometimes offers incantatory phrases that have the form of proverbs but

remain undecipherable: when summoning the future to describe her granddaughter Helen, Marie explains that Helen "'will need more than forgiveness and mercy. But they will give her only pearls'" (175). This persistent inaccessibility helps prevent Marie from being foreclosed as an object of knowledge and a figure of pity, a role Eli often fills.

It is in this comforting role, however, that Marie often functions to legitimize the McCormacks' continued occupation. Though prickly and opaque, Marie is primarily a source of vital comfort to her family. When Blondie remarks that Marie is a nag, it is with the bemused affection of a loved one. Marie is the one who suggests Blondie and Eli get married with a peaceful smile (174). She serves tea, she opens drawers in her house that Blondie cannot, she sees Helen's future and expresses regret for its tragedies, she helps Blondie better understand Eli's psychological state, she bemoans Helen's marriage to Richard Anderson – "Marie, inspired by our bereavement, had become an almost gladsome dirge, a marimba plunking, yet always with that vertiginous, descending atonality" (237) – and then protects Helen from Richard after she leaves him, she mourns for Helen when she dies in the Spanish Civil War, and continues to look after her family by keeping an eye on her great-great-granddaughter. Marie's indecipherability is limited to her pronouncements; because her actions are mostly unambiguously supportive of her descendants as she unites Blondie and Eli, helps her granddaughter Helen in her grief, and laments the violence of the 1919 general strike, Marie becomes a generalized spirit of healing. In this way, Marie serves a role not altogether unlike the one for which Blondie is cast. While indicating optimism for the remedy of historical injustices, this comforting aspect of Marie's presence in the novel suggests that she, too, serves less to signal history's persistent traumas than to offer healing for those wounds.

Derrida offers a vocabulary of haunting that helps explain why Marie's comforting presence forecloses the novel's postcolonial project. Derrida does not see communing with spectres to be easy. He describes inheritance as never being "a *given*, it is always a task" (*SM* 54). The work of mourning is bound with inheritance as Derrida conceives of it – the task of mourning "remains before us just as

unquestionably as we are heirs of Marxism, even before wanting or refusing to be, and, like all inheritors, we are in mourning" (54). All questions of being, in other words, are also questions of inheritance. The work of mourning is not to recollect or reanimate a universal truth, but to come to terms with one's intellectual heritage, the knowledge and values that have been passed down in explicit or implicit ways. The question of being (Hamlet's "to be or not to be") must be acknowledged as one of inheritance: indebtedness to what came before and responsibility for what and whom will come after. The reason Derrida believes that this inevitable inheritance is still a task, however, is in the relationship one must foster with one's predecessors: "One never inherits without coming to terms with [*s'expliquer avec*] some specter, and therefore with more than one specter" (21). If one refuses or neglects to come to terms with one's inheritance, it does not mean that the inheritance hasn't been bestowed but it begs the question of how to come to terms with these spectres.

In other words, in being a source of comfort rather than a presence with which the McCormacks must come to terms, Marie does not point clearly toward our colonial inheritance. Despite her immateriality and her irregular appearances, Marie demands little from the characters in the novel. Other than to Peter and Alice, Marie is not a persistent challenge to the settlers' occupation of the land: rather than highlight the costs of the McCormacks' possession of Métis land, she is a source of comfort that demands no difficult or complex ethical engagement. Marie's role is less of an irritant in the social structure of colonization than a gesture toward a reconciled relationship between colonizers and colonized. In fact, the flood of 1950 that washes away both the McCormacks' property and Marie's ancient shack highlights how Marie functions as a form of comfort even as Sweatman suggests the ways that fictional historiography serves this same function. Though Blondie acquires from Richard Anderson the capital to rebuild their homes, it is Jack (former monk and Dianna's lover) who rebuilds Marie's house. He "rebuilt the cabin much as Marie's old place had been, following the logic of the stone base and the trees. Soon after, Marie returned. I saw her shadow walking in the woods. She looked content. Jack thought she was content too. 'She keeps an eye on me,' he said" (413). Marie offers tacit approval of the recovery of her home and Jack demonstrates one of the

novel's concrete – and compromised – strategies for deploying ghosts. The rebuilding of Marie's home is a (perhaps self-serving) metaphor for the work of reconstruction that a novel such as *When Alice Lay Down With Peter* offers. The approval of Marie is comforting in this context as a form of authorizing the effort to tell her story. Though that approval is notably inferred and never spoken, it is a signal that *When Alice Lay Down With Peter* portrays a relationship with ghosts, embodied in the form of fictional historiography, as one of collaborative reconstruction and not of persistent unease at a fraught inheritance.

There is a risk with this dimension of haunting to rewrite the past. As Frederic Jameson explains, the appearance of the ghost

> calls for a revision of the past, for the setting in place of a new narrative (in which the King was murdered and the present king was in fact his assassin); but it does so by way of a thoroughgoing reinvention of our sense of the past altogether, in a situation in which only mourning, and its peculiar failures and dissatisfactions – or perhaps one had better say, in which only melancholia as such – opens a vulnerable space and entry-point through which ghosts might make their appearance. (43)

Jameson argues that hauntology requires a new version of the past that one can only access through melancholia, which is something of an oversimplification of Derrida's explanation of haunting as a matter of ontological uncertainty. Jameson's argument, however, does have purchase, as we can see through Marie in *Alice.* Recuperating Marie's ghost as a figure of personal guilt and melancholia limits the grounds upon which Sweatman can suggest colonialism's legacies. She is a manifestation of Alice and Peter's guilt, a shame that lasts but one generation. Their guilt is, indeed, the entry point by which Marie returns to her old home but her presence doesn't sustain that guilt, does not signal its transgenerational persistence. Though her presence dismisses the possibility of cleaning away the traumas of history, it does do so by replacing one coherent narrative with another. Marie oversees the reconstruction of her home and the returning of the land to a pre-colonial idyll. The return to a natural idealized existence, a pre-colonial time, is no more possible a solution than the eradication of colonialism itself.

The deployment of Marie's ghost as an agent of comfort is problematic. Critics such as Daniel Francis urge caution when discussing magical realist fiction by non-Aboriginal writers to evoke the culture and beliefs of Aboriginal peoples. This practice, Francis argues, runs the risk of replicating the "imaginary Indian": less a representation of actual Native peoples than a projection of the dominant culture's desires and anxieties about them (8). Herb Wyile also notes that "Marie's adoption of and by the McCormack family could be seen as an extension of Francis's 'imaginary Indian'" ("Takes" 743). He suggests that Marie can be read as a trope of the settler's desire to indigenize his ancestors, as the image of the younger Helen running through the fields certainly seems to depict. Marie's silent presence serves to emphasize Peter and Alice's illegitimacy, but she does not represent the legacy of displacement that they pass on to their descendants. Rather, Marie offers, through her intimate and loving relationship with the McCormack family, legitimacy to those descendants. The disquiet that Peter and Alice feel is overgrown like their graves, is swept away with the flood. As Marlene Goldman explains, the figure of the Aboriginal individual serves a psychological function for colonial settlers: "the settler's obsessive reliance on and bond with the figure of the Native and the latter's enforced displacement and homelessness […] performs the psychological function of consolidating and maintaining the settler-society's sense of being at home" (246). The idyll that remains after the heavily symbolic flood, the family that Marie lovingly oversees, belongs on that land. This is a beautiful image of inclusion, but it belies the actual displacement that Marie embodies for Alice and Peter. Marie becomes, like Blondie, a ghost who gestures to Manitoba's troubled past being prologue to a hopeful future.

Thomas Scott

Though Sweatman's novel demonstrates a tendency to feature ghosts that provide absolution for history's most painful indictments, it also shows awareness of colonialism's tenacious presence. Though some of the ways spectres function in *Alice* – Blondie and, to a more complex degree, Marie – are problematic, they signal a

postcolonial project that seeks to resist and revise colonial historiography. *Alice*'s most effective resistance in this project is the figure of Thomas Scott.

A complicated historical figure, Sweatman's version of Thomas Scott remains the infamous Orangeman sent to death by firing squad at the behest of Louis Riel for plotting against the Provisional Government of the Red River Colony and its Legislative Assembly of Assiniboia. Scott's political involvement in the Red River Settlement – he was employed by the Canadian government during the rebellion and believed in the settlement's annexation to Canada – and his execution at the hands of Louis Riel's provisional government highlight the incredible tensions between Métis and settlers in western Canada. The McCormacks are squatters, and it is into this anxiety of ownership that Thomas Scott makes his first ghostly appearance, casting a further pall over the McCormacks' appropriation of the land they call their home. In this, he is a manifestation of their growing sense of their fraudulence as they refuse to budge from the acres they stubbornly occupy. Though Alice and Peter die, and their graves are overgrown with the abundance of an idealized postcolonial harmony, Thomas Scott remains. He is present at Blondie's birth and continues to attend the birth of the McCormack daughters and mark them as his own. Where the ghosts of Blondie and Marie signal Sweatman's commitment to addressing a hopeful erasure of colonial narratives by telling neglected stories, the ghost of Thomas Scott addresses the indebtedness of any historiography to colonial structures of power. Scott's presence, and his present absence, is the least digestible haunting within the structure of the novel; it is the least palatable and incorporated. It is also the most transgenerational of the novel's hauntings. The younger Helen – Dianna's daughter and Marie's great-great-granddaughter – receives the same blistered kiss from Thomas Scott that he gave to her great-grandmother Blondie: "As our guests pass by, a mark appears upon the baby's chest, a tiny plum, a burnt kiss" (456). Alice, Peter, and Marie are not the only ghosts who oversee the McCormack clan.

Thomas Scott is, in fact, involved in Blondie's life before she is even born. Alice is part of the firing squad responsible for executing Scott, and her role leaves her deeply unsettled. Alice is haunted: "The sound of Thomas Scott's agony filled the

cavern of her soul. Her own life was bankrupt. She hadn't known that Scott would carry within himself the song of all voices, an unfathomable chorus of human voices, beyond justice, beyond blame" (42). The evocation of the undead or the not-living living beyond justice is particularly Derridean in its phrasing and immediately presents Scott as more than simply an antagonistic ghost to serve as Marie's foil. Derrida writes about the impossibility of ghosts being laid to rest or exorcized, and the nature of spectrality as a cacophony of voices. The spectre of which Derrida writes is not only the materialization of an abstraction but also the continuing existence of an idea or an ideology. As Derrida explains in one of the most often cited passages of *Specters of Marx*, "a radicalization is always indebted to the very thing it radicalizes" (92). For Derrida, this permits him to challenge Marxism on its relationship to Communism and preserve a "spirit of Marxism" (92). In the context of Sweatman's novel, this enables a nuanced untangling of the relationship of Canada's violent past and its present.

Scott appears in the novel as racist colonial attitudes personified. Before he is killed, Sweatman casts Scott in the role of vile antagonist. Initially unnamed, Scott first manifests in Sweatman's novel as an unnamed figure of horror and revulsion. He is a violent and violently racist, but not physically imposing, Orangeman bent on killing: "'You goddamn son of a bitch,' the skinny man wheezed through his nose and upper palate, the words steamed upwards by the heat of his rage" (35). Wearing his perpetual sneer as he savagely beats "poor Parisien, the slow-witted woodcutter" (34) to death, Scott mindlessly shouts obscenities that devolve into gibberish: "You goddamn half-breed fool. You ugly son of a bitch. You depraved idiot, you half-breed Indian Catholic bitch dog. You Pap, you Papist pap pap pop popery" (35). When Sweatman eventually identifies this bigot as Scott, after explaining that he will not eat bannock because "it would cause him to speak French gibberish" (37), the Orangeman refuses to accept the kindness and reasonable requests of his Métis captors. He embodies the hostile, ignorant, repugnant, and racist face of colonialism. Angry and utterly irrational, he becomes the target of Alice's hate: his "sneer had diminished the world she loved; his twisted smile as he struck Parisien with the axe had eviscerated her faith in human goodness" (38). She has violent fantasies about

his disembowelment, wants to "kill Thomas Scott and remove him from an otherwise blameless world" (38), and is thrilled to be part of his execution.

Scott's death fundamentally changes the world of the novel. It is not a cleansing of a toxic worldview. It is, rather, characterized as the release of a virus that infects subsequent generations. Sweatman does not limit Scott's racist attitudes to his lived existence: the means of his death, and Alice's involvement in it, catalyzes a reaction. As part of the firing squad, Alice shoots into Scott's "sobbing chest" and "a moan, deeply uttered, of no voice, of all voices, reached my mother like repentance, like eternal purgatory" (41). Peter believes that Scott's death "had changed the world": in Peter's experience "the deaths he'd known were healthy, as full of vitality of procreation," resulting in a mourning wherein "slept the sugar and starch for new growth, a hibernation underground, for life gnarled in the roots. But such was not the case in the death of Thomas Scott" (45). Not all ghosts, Sweatman seems to refute Northey, are the fecund stuff of regeneration. The means of Scott's death – execution by firing squad – is not unnatural in itself, and the novel has no interest in a critique of Riel or his uprising. It is in its uncanny dimensions, Scott's moan of no voices and all voices, that the death matters to Sweatman: he embodies inheritance. Instead of remaining silent, as the dead do, "the strange death of Thomas Scott hung in the air like the as yet unimaginable mustard gas" (49). He projects, as Derrida suggests, into the future, linking this historical moment to the degradation and death of the First World War and beyond, marking the inheritances of colonial settlement.

The spectre of Thomas Scott attaches itself to Alice and her only child. This creates a situation in which a ghost of colonialism oversees Blondie's birth, and the births of her descendants. When Blondie is born, Scott's ghost appears, visible only to Alice. His uncanny appearance horrifies the new mother:

> Through the visible darkness, a figure rose from the river and walked towards our firelit manger, past it and into the woods. Mum alone saw his passing, saw the white face, his scanty rounder's jacket, his thin-soled boots soaked with icy runoff and his six wounds, five to the scrawny body and one to the side of his face, right ear dangling. But worse, he would

> not meet her eyes. And the humiliation in the gait of Thomas Scott was beyond endurance. She had not only killed the body; much worse, she'd murdered the pride of the arrogant Orangeman. His broken spirit skunked by. (51)

Scott disappears into the landscape, a part of the myth of that place, encompassed into the land within which belonging is an inevitably fraught concept for Alice and Peter as for any settlers. Bearing the bullet holes from the firing squad, his decay and silence offers an unanswerable rebuke to Alice and a testament to the persistence of colonialism's legacies.

Scott's lingering spirit does not sit easily beside Marie and Blondie's comforting presences. His existence in the novel is less a matter of addressing history's wrongs by narrating them than an embodiment of the ways that those wrongs continue to haunt us. The most notable impact of Scott's repeated appearances seems to be a deep reminder of Alice's role in his death: unlike the comfort that Marie offers after the McCormacks displace her, Scott offers no forgiveness. As Alice continues to participate in, and benefit from, a life built on exclusion, Scott reminds her of an earlier version of herself. When she was a member of Riel's rebellion, she had the opportunity to break free of social and gender roles in order to take part in a cause to which she is deeply committed. Scott's execution precedes and precipitates Alice's rigid refusal to accept Marie's gift of cohabitation, and her insistence on sole ownership of the land, and informs the person Alice becomes. Scott seems to have infected Alice, and his spectral presence reminds her both of her abandoned ideals and her continued acts of displacement. He is the opposite of Marie: as Albert Braz points out in "The Orange Devil: Thomas Scott and the Canadian Historical Novel," Scott's ghost "is not a reminder of a history she wishes to recover but rather one that, despite herself, she is unable to forget" (49).

In deploying the spectre of a figure as universally villainized as Thomas Scott, Sweatman provides powerful postcolonial resistance to historiography. Her depiction of Scott, according to Braz, resists a "willful forgetting" that "remains essential to the contemporary Canadian historical novel" (39-40). Examining

various depictions of Scott in fiction, Braz suggests that Wyile's claim that the postmodern historical novel is intended to provide a more complete and less limited understanding of Canada's past hasn't been borne out. Instead, he contends "that today we do not necessarily have a greater variety of narratives than we did in the past but merely different ones" (40). Scott, for example, "has emerged as one of the few truly demonic personages in Canadian culture" (41). His renown is almost completely tied up in his xenophobia, tendency for excessive profanities, and being executed by Riel's provisional government: his narrative role to be Riel's nemesis and foil. Braz charts the "general, and largely unquestioned, consensus about Scott's utter malfeasance" (41) through novelists, poets, and historians. Braz sees these opinions to be in loose agreement that Scott was killed less for a particular crime than for his obstinate hatefulness.

The critical consensus in representing Thomas Scott leaves Braz with an intriguing question: of Scott and Riel, "who is the mainstream figure and who is the peripheral one?" (42). The figure marginalized by historical accounts – both fictional and academic – has largely been the skinny and profane Orangeman. Braz explains how Riel has been the subject of dozens of novels, poems, plays, and even an opera (*Louis Riel*, which was written for Canada's centennial in 1967). Though Riel's depictions in these texts places him as an ex-centric figure, for his status as being both inside the dominant culture and yet excluded from it (French speaking/Métis, religious training/political revolutionary), Manitoba has a statutory holiday named after him (the third Monday in February) and he has been adopted as a significant and victimized federal political figure. The relocating of Riel into the mainstream of Canadian history demonstrates the desire of historical fiction to resist myopic "official" history wherein Riel was a treasonous and psychotic revolutionary responsible for the North-West Rebellion and the deaths at Duck Lake.

Thomas Scott's reputation, by contrast, has only suffered over time. Contemporary portrayals of Scott after his death typically emphasized his innocence in the face of Riel's cruelty. Braz even points out two novels by J. Edmund Collins (*The Story of Louis Riel the Rebel Chief*, 1885, and its sequel *Annette, the Metis Spy: A Heroine of the N.W. Rebellion*, 1886) wherein Scott and Riel are romantic rivals:

Scott's death is the result of Riel's schemes to destroy his adversary, and Scott's racism part of a project of false accusations by the spurned Riel (45). Braz explains that Scott, along with Riel, vanished from Canadian popular culture until after the Second World War, where he is rediscovered as a symbol for Canada's historical wrongs. Writers as diverse as Rudy Wiebe, Don Gutteridge, and Janet Rosenstock increasingly depict him as lacking any nuance of character or political legitimacy. Two notable examples of fictional depictions of Scott as supremely vile include Chester Brown's comicbook biography *Louis Riel* and Rudy Wiebe's *The Scorched-Wood People*. Brown draws Scott with animalistic features and characterizes him as alternately affectless and prone to fits of apoplectic rage. His anger is of such ferocity that it renders his profane utterances illegible: pages of his shouted dialogue are represented only by strings of Xs. Brown explains in a footnote that these Xs "indicate racist comments and profanity" (61:2). Wiebe describes Scott as similarly profane and, additionally, infantile: a man who "always looked like a boy, you know, a kid till he opened his mouth and started swearing" (73). Scott's "gut-tearing curses" (75) represent his lack of conscience and moral corruption.

Scott's anti-Catholic, anti-French, anti-Aboriginal opinions were hardly exceptional in the late nineteenth century and Braz argues that demonizing Scott while elevating Riel to a position he was never offered in his lifetime is a way by which the enduring tensions between English Canada, French Canada, and First Nations can be obscured. Braz identifies the work inspired by Scott as being limited to a fifty-page monograph, a handful of essays, "and a short documentary film, which characteristically bears the name of his enemy (*Riel's Ghosts*)" (42). This, Braz convincingly suggests, begs the question of how historical fiction's uniform approach to Riel and Scott serves to resist "official" history and provide a multitude of historical perspectives often ignored. This observation resists notions that the principal effect of historical novels is to resist "official" history: if official history agrees unanimously that Riel was marginalized and that Scott was a violent bigot, then a depiction of Scott as solely demonic reinforces that narrative. Such a narrative cannot unsettle, cannot demand that we reconsider our relationship to Scott and his historically common perspective. To dismiss Scott as unambiguously

demonic is to deny that his particular brand of racism persists, that it has any continuity with current systemic and subtle abuses of power.

Thus, to incorporate Scott into the heart of a narrative of restoration is to acknowledge that the ugly inheritance Scott bequeaths is unavoidable. By including such an atypical portrayal of Scott, *Alice* effectively resists using this ghost as a figure of comfort and reassurance. In *Specters of Marx*, Derrida insists that learning to live requires learning to live with ghosts. As Marlene Goldman and Joanne Saul suggest, however, "his injunction, tied to a politics of memory and a conception of justice, seems, at least on the surface, vexed and difficult to heed in a settler-nation such as Canada which, for many years, was renowned for its supposed lack of ghosts" ("Talking" 645). Goldman and Saul argue that the politics of memory upon which Derrida relies signals anxieties associated with diasporic and/or multiple identities. This, to my mind, offers a helpful extension of Braz's reading of *When Alice Lay Down With Peter* as providing a "somewhat schizophrenic attitude toward the Orangeman" that "at least implies that his narrative may be more complicated than we are usually led to believe" (48). Scott is not a gesture toward a neglected history – tales of Riel and Scott have been well and often told – but part of Sweatman's concerted efforts to engage with colonial historiography. He is a reminder that we cannot hope to ever escape the injuries of that history.

Scott is also one for troubling the narrative of history that *Alice* often presents uncritically. Scott's emergence on January 28, 1916 when Alice is at the Manitoba legislature to witness the amendment of the *Election Act* complicates a triumphant historical moment. Alice is excited, but the recent harassment of a St. Norbert midwife leads her to call "Bullshit!" (270) on the claim that the enfranchisement of women will lead to an end to war. Overseeing the moment, Scott's presence highlights the ambivalence of what should be a victory for Alice. Her part in Scott's death prevents her from seeing herself as free of the violence that afflicts the world and she faints as she sees "the barely discernable trace of a skinny rounder with wet shoes" (270). This is his penultimate appearance in the novel in his spectral form, and the last for decades of the McCormacks' lives, but Scott's prolonged disappearance does not go unremarked. Blondie explains that the family

fears "the final absence of Thomas Scott" as much as his irregular materializations. Alice urges her granddaughter Helen to "never forget, darling, what's right is also wrong. Don't let that scoundrel's death be in vain" (273). Though she seems to be speaking of her part in Scott's execution (killing Scott was right and wrong), Alice also articulates the strange way in which the family has adopted Scott, almost come to accept him. He becomes a symbol for them: Blondie's birthmark, "the blister kiss of Thomas Scott," burns again during the Winnipeg general strike of 1919 (291), a dread premonition of violence to come. Later, when Richard Anderson, who will marry Helen, comes to apologize to Eli for violence against him during the strike, Blondie observes that "'It's like having our very own Orangeman'" (296). The McCormacks are evidently not through with Scott, as his absence is as much a reminder of what he represents as his presence is: the hoot of an owl causes them all to turn, expecting to see the spectral figure once again. As Blondie notes, "It takes more than mortality to make somebody dead" (272).

Like Marie, Scott attaches himself to the McCormack family. Unlike Marie, in his death he seems to be altered from his living self: though Scott remains a repugnant figure after death, at times petty and vindictive, he lacks the xenophobic profanity of his living moments. He is less garishly racist, but more unsettling. His relationship with the McCormacks illuminates Derrida's suggestion that "this being-with specters would also be, not only but also, a *politics* of memory, of inheritance, and of generations" (xix). As such, Scott represents more than the recurrence of one man, but acts as a form of social haunting. Unlike his living self, the ghost of Thomas Scott is relatively articulate, even sometimes wearing new shoes and smoking a cigar. His presence lingers and seems to be constantly observing: "A sporadic guest, all the worse because you didn't know when he *wasn't* there" (191). Cynthia Sugars and Gerry Turcotte argue that tropes of haunting have emerged in Canadian literature "as integral to the postcolonial articulation and interrogation of national identity constructs and dominant representation practices" (1). Scott's haunting is, indeed, a postcolonial interrogation of national identity: his presence materializes the persistence of colonialism even after the deaths of the generation of settlers embodied by Alice and Peter. He is more than the remains of an old ideology, but is a

truly transhistorical figure whose dimensions and abilities remain frustratingly unknowable. Scott represents not merely the lingering stench of old ideas but the ongoing materialization of those ideas: he is a Derridean intervention – often anachronistic, disjointed and unbound from linear time – into the fraught legacies of Canada's settler status, one that refuses to let the matter be closed. Blondie's blistered kiss is a constant reminder of a common culpability passed on to subsequent generations. His infrequent appearances unsettle Alice, such as when he appears before Riel's conviction for high treason with knowledge of the forthcoming verdict.

The politics, here, is one of justice and responsibility. This is not to say that Sweatman considers Scott's death to be a matter of gross injustice; rather, Alice's ongoing haunting performs her inability to exorcise those parts of her past about which she feels shame. Scott opens up a site of guilt that cannot be foreclosed, as he continues to generate unease even after Alice dies. She has internalized Scott and cannot escape him, but his gift of a blistered kiss to her daughters and their daughters suggests that they all share in responsibility for Scott's profoundly disturbing attitudes. This transgenerational unease, this sense of irreconcilability with one's inheritances, echoes Derrida's calls for a justice that would not be "reduced once again to juridical-moral rules, norms, or representations within an inevitable totalizing horizon (movement of adequate restitution, expatiation, or reappropriation" (28). Scott, by being so foul as to practically beg for his execution, does not permit the question of justice to be focused simply on restitution. There is no sense in the McCormacks that they need to repay a debt to Scott, no intuition about how to exorcise his lingering presence. They cannot escape him and what he materializes of their own complicity in systemic colonial attitudes.

The ghost of Thomas Scott also resists easy interaction. Unlike Marie, whose unintelligibility is generally limited to silence and obscure pronouncements, Scott remains indecipherable to the McCormack clan and his spirit a wholly irrecuperable intrusion into their world. Though he appears before Riel's own execution for treason, he remains unknowable:

> the ghost grew till he was eight feet tall or more (though the ceiling of our house was not more than six), and his spare frame filled out and a great white beard grew on his face with the snow white eyebrows, and the thin jacket of Thomas Scott became a flowing robe of black velvet and his cigar grew long until it was a gold sceptre inlaid with rubies emitting a red light. His voice, which had been reedy, now came from the depths of the hallowed halls of judgment, resounding the words "Louis David Riel! I hereby pass sentence upon you!" And the wall behind his shaggy white head flared as if by fire, and upon it we saw the great stark shadow of a gallows. (84)

Scott can transform, seemingly commune with the future, and alter his surroundings. He cannot be made sense of, nor can he be reasoned with. His presence sits uncomfortably in the novel, foregrounding the complicated obligations of the living present, never offering the tacit approval that Marie gifts to her descendants.

Derrida helps make sense of Scott's unsettling nature in Sweatman's novel. For Derrida, the ghost is an ontological disruption and Scott presents just such a figure. Nchamah miller describes the use of the French *hantise*, the etymological root for Derrida's *hantologie* (hauntology), as both a verb and a noun. As a noun, "it denotes the place inhabited by the *revenant*, the spirit, and spectres ghosts that keep returning; however, it also implies an obsession, or fear, or continuous repetitive acts" (2). As a verb, *hantise* functions much as the English haunting but "also expressing the return of *revenants*, their comings and goings with the caveat that the act of return is originary" (2). Derrida foregrounds this paradoxical, always already return of the not-living, this temporal disjunction, when he explains that the spectre "begins by coming back" (*SM* 11). The disjunctive temporalities, the time that is out of joint, unfix historical processes and produce angst, imbalance, and apprehension. The spectres he describes are not simply ghosts of the past, but spirits of the future. The emphasis on and anxiety about Thomas Scott's appearances in the McCormack family recall this Derridean disruption. Sweatman's version of Scott offers an

answer to Derrida's question of how the emotion circulating in cultural memory inscribes itself in the present: inalienably and with great unease.

Scott is able to materialize this hauntological dimension of colonialism's inscription in the present precisely because he is a less stable figure than Blondie or Marie. Derrida explains that when the spectre shifts out of material incarnation, even if only as an idea, it leads to calcification. Once the spectre has materialized, the fear it generates becomes interiorized or internalized; describing Marx and Marxism, Derrida writes that the experience of the ghost caused them to flee "from themselves, and had scared themselves […] it is as if they had been frightened by *someone* within themselves" (105). This process of materialization and internalization freezes the emancipatory hopes: the persistent fear aroused by the internalized other, even if only dimly perceived, represents for Derrida "an action that is the reversal of hopes for social transformation, the revocation of desires for new social relationships" (McCallum 240). The spectre allows Derrida to position temporality within an unstable nexus of past, present, and future. He contends that it is crucial to be aware of the "*non-contemporaneity with itself of the living present*" and that we must be attentive to "that which secretly unhinges the present" (xix). This instability, this haunting, creates a responsibility for those whose existence is entailed in the present; that is, for those who have produced it (those who have lived), those who occupy it (those who live), and those who will live out its consequences (those yet to live). Derrida's repeated invocation of King Hamlet's "time is out of joint" suggests that ghosts offer a means to interrupt the smooth passage of chronology: the "*spectrality effect*" (40) disengages the consecutive sequencing of the historicist model and undoes the opposition of past/future. It is, somewhat ironically, the embodiment of colonialism's worst aspects who provides the clearest resistance to colonial historiography and the lie of linear progress that suggests we have moved on from beliefs like Thomas Scott's.

We cannot dismiss Scott as a figure of the past, a knowable demonic figure of whom we are well rid. He is more than Alice's guilt materialized: he is a reminder that our present moment is built upon attitudes like his. He helps contextualize Peter and Alice's betrayal of Marie; he reminds us of our debts. Derrida's insistence

on living not merely in the present, aware and attentive to those already dead or not yet born, requires confrontation with ghosts like those of Thomas Scott. *Specters of Marx* offers an ethical injunction – a call to justice and responsibility – that illuminates much of Sweatman's project with *Alice*. Derrida's Hauntology offers a politics of memory to counter the premature and obfuscatory celebration of the "post" in postcolonialism, insofar as it implies that colonialism is now a matter of the past. Traumas sustained by the formerly colonized and enslaved are not finished, but persist: they are collective in nature and impossible to ultimately locate in an event that took place at a singular, historically specific moment in time. The ghost of Thomas Scott demonstrates one possible strategy for combating the rigid ontologies about our ability to know the past while retaining the ability to acknowledge the persistence of social ills.

Conclusion

As the ghosts of Marie and Blondie demonstrate, the introduction of spectral figures does not necessarily provide a postcolonial revision of historiography. Sweatman's postcolonial project of recuperation is not consistently served by spectres designed to unsettle and to signal hope: in this paradoxical position, the latter role subsumes the former. The shared political project of much fictional historiography to present a more nuanced depiction of history for the purposes of recuperation is not always assisted by ghosts, as *When Alice Lay Down With Peter* demonstrates. It is difficult to craft a text that is both sufficiently grounded in historiography to enable an identification of injustice and ontologically unstable enough to resist historiography's conservative impulses while avoiding undermining of the very narratives that writers hope to recuperate. Ghosts do not serve the same function as the postmodern techniques of historiographic metafiction that, "in the wake of poststructuralist skepticism toward metanarratives," emphasize "the rhetoricity of texts, and highlighting of the seduction of mimesis – the problem, that is, with viewing literature as simply a window onto the world" (Wyile "Mess" 821). Ghosts do not necessarily highlight the

act of historiography as an ideologically contingent narrative and, as such, require careful deployment in order to effectively permit fictional historiography's hauntings to open rather than foreclose the past.

Generally, ghosts like Blondie and Marie's can highlight representation within a novel. As Herb Wyile points out, one of the key markers of the ethical turn in postcolonial Canadian writing "has been a reaction to the shift in focus in poststructuralist criticism from literature as representation – as a window onto the world – to literature as textuality, as a fundamentally opaque and intertextual medium" ("Mess" 823). However, in order to be effective in such a project, ghosts need to be ontologically unsettling; they must trouble the smooth progression of a linear narrative or offer a space to resist hegemonic narratives. The spectre's liminality can highlight the artifice of literature and prevent the construction of an ethical foundation built upon historical practices that simply reverse the polarity of the centre/margin dichotomy. Thomas Scott's appearance in *When Alice Lay Down With Peter* resists containment and sublimation, even as it shares a popular reading of Scott as a symptom of trauma in Canada's history of settlement. We are reminded of a thing that we have taken for granted, a thing that we have come to accept as true, and then forced to revisit that knowledge in new ways.

Not all the spectres in Sweatman's novel are similarly unsettling. That Marie's presence legitimizes Blondie and her descendants undermines the novel's postcolonial project: instead of recuperating that history, revealing its ongoing effects and its indigestible dimensions, it provides reassurance that things are better now. It also raises concerns about the deployment of ghosts in fictional historiography more generally. Wyile suggests that these concerns are increasingly pertinent "within settler societies such as English Canada, where 'magic' – such as mythic or spiritual figures from Indigenous cultures, spectral visitations, atavistic appearances, and extraordinary natural phenomena – is being increasingly deployed within otherwise 'realistic' contexts" ("Takes" 736). In other words, there is a risk that hauntings in fictional historiography can be deployed to assuage colonial guilt. Wyile is right to point out how this concern becomes even more tangled in the context of writing history. As he explains, though "the genre provides

a form of resistance to the rationalist and potentially imperializing historicist suppositions of the traditional historical novel," magical realism's "dialogue between the irrational and the rational, between Indigenous and European cultures, between magic and realism, nonetheless runs the risk of reinscribing the 'otherness' of the former terms in these oppositions" (736). By casting Marie as a comforting *materfamilias*, Sweatman does not inscribe her inalienable subjectivity so much as rely on it for comfort: Marie's comforting presence and approval is proof that the McCormacks' illegitimacy on the land can be remedied. Marie does not disrupt the complacency of the Eden that Blondie oversees. For all the guilt she prevents Peter from escaping, her presence is an authenticating and legitimizing force for her descendants rather than a carrier of colonialism's painful legacies. Though she highlights the postcolonial project of Sweatman's novel, Marie also foregrounds some problematic aspects of haunting in fictional historiography.

Blondie McCormack, Marie, and Thomas Scott do varying degrees of work to destabilize colonial narratives and to invoke an ethical injunction to speak to the dead. Blondie highlights the constructed nature of any historiography, Marie materializes the postcolonial attempt to uncover silenced narratives while trying to mitigate the risks of recolonizing those narratives, and Thomas Scott materializes the spectral ideologies upon which our present moment relies. Much of *When Alice Lay Down With Peter*'s postcolonial work ties directly to either their material presence or the certainties they offer. In a novel designed to offer hope for the future – hope that colonialism can be overcome – Derrida can help us understand the ways that *Alice*'s ghosts function. Blondie's ghostly narration reminds us that the dead continue to speak, but it also does little to unsettle our understanding of history and historical processes. Though Marie represents a confrontation with the injustices committed against the Métis, in offering forgiveness and acceptance, she also obscures the persistence of those injustices. Thomas Scott is, like Marie, a figure of transhistorical persistence but he is also a reminder that we owe cultural indebtedness to forces that we would rather disown. Ghosts can unsettle our relationship to the past, but they are not always enough to enable a postcolonial project of recuperation.

Chapter Two

"The place where the dead walk": The Haunting of Cultural Continuity in Jacqueline Baker's *The Horseman's Graves* and Jane Urquhart's *Away*

"'"'Ghosts!' he exclaims, 'There are no ghosts in Canada! […] The country is too new for ghosts […]. It is only in old countries, likes your'n, that are full of sin and wickedness, that people believe in such nonsense.'" – Susanna Moodie, *Roughing It in the Bush*

"They had always been haunted, those hills. The place where the dead walk." – Jacqueline Baker, *The Horseman's Graves*

Whereas *When Alice Lay Down With Peter* is fictional historiography that features ghosts to address the persistent legacies of colonial settlement, the ghosts in Jacqueline Baker's *The Horseman's Graves* and Jane Urquhart's *Away* highlight the hauntings that settlers carry with them, the cultural baggage carried by immigrants to Canada. All three novels share a project of providing a postcolonial revision of colonial narratives and historiography within a relatively realist form. In summoning ghosts to support their postcolonial revisions of history, Baker and Urquhart's novels unsettle the solidity of their historiography in order to highlight the losses and exclusions of this historical record. In continuity with the work Sweatman does to revise narratives of settlement, Baker and Urquhart attend to a frequent concern in fictional historiography by English-Canadian writers: the difficulties of leaving a homeland for a New World. Both novelists eschew the triumphalist bravery for which such a narrative could be used to focus their attention on the costs and burdens of such a voyage without neglecting the inevitably colonial dimensions of that enterprise. As such, Baker and Urquhart contribute to the archive of novels that Jonathan Kertzer describes as challenging "the nationalism in which it is implicated because its self-interrogating forms put that ideology on critical display" (118). What marks both novels and sets them apart

in the archive of recent fictional historiography is in their similar approach to the maintenance and rebuilding of cultural nationalisms of immigrant communities in Canada. Both novels dramatize the haunted past of their featured immigrants and immigrant communities: they materialize cultural continuity as a paradoxical refuge and danger, and an inescapable colonial reality.

The Horseman's Graves and *Away* together, however, similarly demonstrate some of the limitations of spectres offering any resistance to the past that they embody. The ghosts in Baker and Urquhart's novels embody the inalienable and indestructible legacy of the colonial ideology that immigrants carry with them to "new" lands, and both novels deploy ghosts primarily as vessels of cultural inheritance. They unsettle the sense that the present moment is autonomous and ontologically stable. However, as Frederic Jameson reminds us, there is a risk with summoning the spectre of revising the past by reinventing it (43). Where Baker and Urquhart's novels reveal some of the potential problems of deploying ghosts is specifically in the context of obscuring the very particularities and lived experiences that the ghosts are deployed to highlight. Though both novels offer powerful awareness of the destructive and inescapable ideologies of nationalism and colonialism, they both feature spectres as representations of the inevitable losses of history in ways that obscure that which they reveal.

The Horseman's Graves

That Jacqueline Baker's novel *The Horseman's Graves* begins by evoking the old ghosts that predate colonial settlement is not its only gesture to revising settler mythology. Dick Harrison sees the prairies as without history or ghosts in his book *Unnamed Country: The Struggle for a Prairie Fiction*. "Like all unsettled territory," he writes, the prairies "had no human associations, no ghosts, none of the significance imagination gives to the expressionless face of the earth" (ix). In *Wolf Willow,* Wallace Stegner, perhaps inspiring Earle Birney, recollects his childhood near Eastend, Saskatchewan as knowing "no such history, no such past, no such tradition, no such ghosts" (29). Baker interrogates this history: describing the Sand Hills in

southern Saskatchewan, Baker's novel opens, in a strong rebuttal of Birney, Harrison, and Stegner by explaining that "They had always been haunted, those hills. The place where the dead walk" (1). Beginning with a well-trod story of immigration and settlement, the novel describes the journey of the Krauss family parenthetically and almost dismissively: "in 1909 (travelling from the stinking though venerable port of Odessa by polluted steamer to Montreal and then west by train and west by cart and west on mules and, finally, west on foot […])" (1). Contrary to what Harrison describes, the land the Krausses encounter is far from unsettled territory. The Krausses tread across a land already teeming with histories, though ones that have begun to be forced aside: "the ghosts that had once walked these hills had vanished, or were, at least, imperceptible to those already burdened by the past of another country" (1). In a further refutation of Harrison's model, the immigrant settlers are not pastless themselves. Their burdens of history are already heavy, and Baker suggests the complex network of power dynamics at play under colonialism.

Narratives of settlement often, as Harrison does, suggest the pastlessness of a territory to legitimize its colonization. One strategy to accomplish this is actually to banish ghosts. In a lesser quoted passage of Susanna Moodie's *Roughing It In the Bush*, after declaring that Canada is too new for ghosts, Mr. D___ explains that ghosts are "nonsense" anyway – "sin and wickedness" inherited from the "old countries." To deny ghosts as Mr. D___ does has a twofold effect: first, it denies the existence of a history on the land that settlers claim as their own (a denial that Sweatman confronts in *When Alice Lay Down With Peter*) and, second, it refuses to imagine that the cultural and ideological baggage of immigrants and settlers cannot be left behind.

Baker challenges the second denial. She pitches the tenor of the Krausses' arrival away from an encounter with a pastless country, away even from the Frygian encounter with an uncanny landscape. Instead of a land waiting to be gifted a culture or a natural landscape that seems portentous and supernatural, perhaps even malevolent, the prairies are simply arid. They are, rather than existentially vexing in the manner of Sinclair Ross, merely physically arduous, being "a land searing under the heat of a prairie sun" (1). This does not mean that ghosts are

banished from this landscape: ghosts are always already present, both the ghosts, as Baker describes them, "that had once walked these hills" and those associated with "the past of another country." The difference, as Baker depicts it, is that the homesteaders cannot detect those of the previous inhabitants, concerned as the settlers are with their own survival. Rather, the ghosts with whom these communities struggle, the forces that indicate their inheritances and debts, are the ideologies that accompany them. The past that the novel inhabits is bleak, where the burdens of old traditions and grudges irresistibly distort any attempt at redefinition.

There are valuable effects to this strategy. It highlights the persistence of colonial ideology, and foregrounds that the "post" in "postcolonial" doesn't mean "after." It enables the novel to explore the way cultures transmit their values and the inevitable inheritances that ensue. The past persists, and thwarts any attempt at escape. However, there are problematic consequences as well. The novel presents the ghosts of cultural inheritance in such a way as to occlude the past it seeks to represent. In resisting the teleological narrative of colonial progress via haunting, *The Horseman's Graves* represents how spectres can obstruct traumas of history as much as they reveal their persistence.

The novel's Epilogue reveals just how much work ghosts accomplish in *The Horseman's Graves*, while also demonstrating the way that the novel perceives the past. Before the Epilogue, Baker seems to direct the novel to a hopeful conclusion: Lathias, the Schoff family's Métis farmhand, takes possession of their farm, a plot of land that sits in his people's historical territory. The scene is not purely triumphant, as signs of industrial agriculture mark the land – "the smokehouse and the granaries and the chickenshed and the windmill and the pump and the corrals and the barn" – while "the Krauss place there in the distance, as it seemed always to have been" (426-27). The ongoing monuments to colonial settlement and grudges mute the reading of the scene as a victory for anti- or postcolonial resistance. Lathias's return is also muted by his avuncular relationship with the Schoff boy. The accidental shooting death of the Schoffs' unnamed son, mentally disabled in a farm accident in which Lathias is involved, at the hands of Leo Krauss mars Lathias's return in what is otherwise a hard-won victory. The homecoming, however, is significant in itself:

Sherene Razack argues that colonialism remains an ongoing process because of the "emplacement of the white settlers remains predicated on the continual dispossession and displacement" of indigenous peoples (via Goldman 246). That Lathias is able to return, and that he returns to a place that still bears the scars of its settlement, is not an erasure of the past in the hopes of returning to a pre-colonial idyll. Rather, it is a signal that dispossession can be addressed, even if it is precipitated by the settlers abandoning the land.

This, indeed, should be something of a victory in the text as a revision of colonial narratives. In taking over the farm, Lathias reverses the teleological narrative of colonial historiography. More than that, Lathias revises the picture of the historian. Lathias is an important figure in the novel as a bearer of history: along with, most notably, Elisabeth Brechert, he is an outsider from the German-speaking community of Knochenfeld Parish. He is a hybrid figure in the text, versed in his own Catholic upbringing and a deep well of transcultural historical knowledge. He regales the Schoff boy with the story of eastern European witch Baba Yaga, of the cursed local river, of the eponymous Horseman's graves. He knows "old stories of bloodshed and ghosts" (75) of the different tribes who passed through the Sand Hills, who followed the buffalo, who were displaced by the fur trade. His historical knowledge is unlike that of the townspeople of Knochenfeld Parish, for whom rumour and hearsay take on the power of legend. Lathias's stories are trans-generational, passed down by his great-grandmother among others, and signal a different way of living with the past. He carries his own cultural knowledge, but surpasses it as well: he is fluent in oral traditions, folk tales, local legends, and ecclesiastical history. In taking over the abandoned Schoff farm, Lathias seems to present a figure of hybrid cultural knowledge and historical awareness; as such he could present a model for a powerful resistance to the calcified colonial ideologies that settled with immigrant communities.

However, the Epilogue stymies the chance of reading that ending as conditionally optimistic. In a gesture that undermines a hopeful, if hard earned, rewriting of Saskatchewan's colonial past, Baker suggests that the work of historiography itself can never actually give us the past that we wish for. Instead of

concluding on the image of Lathias overseeing "the wild rose bushes beyond, tight with dark buds, and the green fields unfurling as far as the Sand Hills in the afternoon light" (426), the novel ends with a gesture toward the ultimate and tragic irretrievability of the past. The preceding chapters are all narrated in a past tense of shifting focalization, embedding the novel in the perspective of its cast but setting it apart from their strictly limited perspectives. The events of the novel, the narration suggests, have occurred and are incomplete in the way that memory is necessarily partial. With the Epilogue, however, the narration changes to the second person in the present and simple future tenses. The "you" of the Epilogue is both Baker herself and the reader of the text, a deft underlining of the work of collaborative imagination involved in fictional historiography. There is an implication that you have been constructing the story yourself: "There is a cemetery in a country churchyard – down where the South Saskatchewan River crosses the Alberta-Saskatchewan border" that "no one uses […] anymore," but you can explore "if you telephone the caretaker who lives nearby on one of the few farms still occupied" (430). The Epilogue further complicates the position of the reader, as the present tense includes prolepsis: the caretaker, you are told, "in less than ten years, will be dead too, killed instantly when a semi slams into her truck at the Highway 41 intersection, and buried in the new cemetery in town, beloved wife and mother" (430). Baker frames this imagined visit to the church graveyard as an upcoming event, imminent and destined. That it has not yet happened does not foreclose its inevitability, the pastness of this future.

The Horseman's Graves, then, communicates the losses in colonial historiography. In its epilogue, *Graves* turns away from suggesting that the past can be overcome, retreats from the idyllic ending of *When Alice Lay Down With Peter.* Instead, the Epilogue buries the past and highlights our contingent relationship to it. The Epilogue, and therefore the novel, concludes with (y)our discovery of "a grave off in the far corner, all by itself, marked by a weathered, wooden cross, and you will ask her about it and she will get a funny kind of look on her face, just ever so slightly, and she will tell you that story would take hours" (432). You will offer to buy her lunch in exchange for that story and the collaboration between Jacqueline Baker, her

research sources, and her audience becomes inextricably intertwined. You are her, and she is you. The past is the present is the future. The grave belongs to a boy whose "'name's all scratched off the marker here, always has been, kind of looks like somebody was at it with a knife sometime or other. Shame. Be damned if I can find anyone who remembers it'" (432). Baker reveals the reason that the Schoff boy remains unnamed. Furthermore, the knife that erased his name (the possession of which Baker highlights several times) surely belongs to Lathias, whose despair over the boy's death compounds his feelings of guilt for the debilitating injury that affected the boy's development; his feelings of culpability in the boy's death; and his complex sense of entitlement, custodianship, and debt to the farm the Schoffs left when their son died.

There is, as embodied in the defaced grave, permanence to the losses of the past even while the past, present, and future merge together. The graveyard is a site that carries the weight of history not only in the sense that it houses the bodies of those who lived in the past, but also in that those bodies are without voice. The woman who speaks for the dead is merely telling you stories, an embodiment of how we have only partial access to history:

> She will tell you a few records survived the fire in '53, but there's a lot of people down there that history just kind of forgot, she guesses. "Not just here," she will say, "all over. Family plots, unmarked graves." Then she will shrug and wave her hand dismissively out at the endless fields and tell you it would be amazing what you'd find, if you started digging around. "Gone now," she will say. "All gone." (431)

Baker undermines coherence of the present moment: the collapsing of distinct epochs links the past to the future, but the past remains accessible only in the fundamentally creative and collaborative act of recreating it by talking to the dead: only the imaginative work of fictional historiography, in other words, can give us access to the past. Rather than a repository of the past, the graveyard demonstrates its proximity and paradoxical inaccessibility: the past is beneath us, but is also gone. There is no word on Lathias beyond what we can intuit, and most of the records chronicling the Parish burned in a fire. Baker undermines the hopeful conclusion,

the gesture toward a revision of the destructive burdens of colonial ideology, in his overwhelming absence. More powerfully, she also communicates that fictional historiography – the only means by which we may encounter a past that has been so irretrievably lost – is at best a deeply compromised form of access.

Moreover, the defaced grave marker suggests the complex relationship between fiction and the past, and the demands that the dead make which we can never fully grasp. That Lathias has possibly transformed from a keeper of history to a destroyer of history – that his indigestible mix of guilt, resentment, and anger leads him to deface the gravestone of a boy for whom he cared – suggests the corrosive power of colonial historiography to erase everything outside its parameters. One of those who was likely excluded from the communal history even before it was lost in the fire, Lathias is doubly erased. That he becomes, himself, a tool of further erasure proves that he was not able to ever be at home on the farm: "'That's a sad story, that one. But I can tell it to you, if you want to hear'" (432).

This erasure also suggests the power of the present, or the future, to overwrite the past. The graveyard functions as a powerful organizing metaphor for the novel, and highlights the centrality of ghosts and haunting to Baker's novel. The graveyard concretizes the impossible conversation with the unknowable dead, the paradoxical need and inability to talk to the dead, which animates *The Horseman's Graves*. It suggests the role that a conversation with the dead plays in forming our understanding of the past: their inalienable silence demands we acknowledge the limits of our knowledge and the unstable foundations upon which we have constructed our present moment. It also frames the dead in the context of culture, and of exclusionary communities. This local graveyard, after all, houses only some of the dead: these "Family plots" are only for certain families. The custodian's gesture to the "endless fields," separated by a fence, only serves to reinforce the limitations and categories from within which we try to imagine and understand the dead. It is a sign that the past is forever out of reach, and our attempts to craft a truth around such story will forever be partial and informed by the colonial borders and fences that circumscribe our access to history. The graveyard also signals the importance of ghosts to Baker's postcolonial project of historical revision. It signifies not that

the past is only ever textually constructed and ultimately ontologically unstable, but that the past is distant and lost and the best we can do is to visit the dead and collaboratively try to tell their stories.

Baker's novel takes on this challenge. There are a number of spectres in *The Horseman's Graves*, all of whom demonstrate the powerful hold of colonial ideologies. In fact, all the spectres of *The Horseman's Graves* are similar carriers of colonial cultural continuity. The titular horseman, *Die Pferdekenner*, as "'the oldtimer called him, or something *die Pferdefreund*" (132) – the horses' friend – inspires legends and dread. When soldiers gathered up horses to help with the war effort, they only took them from the Germans, who were considered "Enemy aliens" (132). The horseman was known to love his horses so much that he "'would sometimes let one or two of them overnight in the house with him'" (132). When warned about the soldiers' approach, he lures his beloved animals with sugar so that he can tie them up, and waits for the soldiers' arrival to kill the animals with his shotgun. Before the soldiers can do anything, he turns the shotgun on himself. The Horseman is buried with his horses, their graves a permanent testament to Canada's troubled history. Yet, with no tombstones or markers, his grave is lost to myth and legend: the Horseman transforms from a political agent to a folk tale, the master of a herd of "demon horses" (218) who is "down there now, waiting to ride up some night, all of them are waiting" (137). Evoking Marlene Goldman's reading of ghosts as traumatic histories that cannot be repressed, the Horseman is a sign of the novel's abiding concern with how ghosts signal the inescapable force of cultural legacies. It also signals, however, how tales of haunting can obscure history rather than nuance its presentation.

This concern with the obscuring effect of spectrality appears most powerfully in the figures of Elisabeth Brechert, stepdaughter of Leo Krauss, and the *braucha* who stands with fierce ambiguity within an otherwise straightforward historical account. Elisabeth disappears under the ice of a frozen river, only to reappear hale and whole. The community credits the *braucha*, a figure of occult knowledge and healing in the Russian-born German community, with Elisabeth's survival, but the novel denies any clear answers to Elisabeth's strange disappearance. Baker's novel

points towards the "anxious negotiations of ways of being-with-others" (Tregoning 7) as a matter of negotiating cultural inheritances, particularly as embodied by Elisabeth's spectral presence. On the one hand, Elisabeth is romanticized: she is a figure of mystery and desire, and her eventual assumption of the role of *braucha* only solidifies her association with the community on whose behalf she accepts an important transgenerational role. On the other hand, she is a figure of division and alienation in the community, whose unfixed position – an American immigrant, a stranger to the German community whose mother married an outsider, and eventually a liminal figure between life and death – and tragedies expose the effects of romanticizing colonial history.

Furthermore, the ghost of the Horseman and the liminal Elisabeth both emphasize how the relationship between the living and the dead is always already culturally contingent. Narrating the past, Gayatri Spivak and Sneja Gunew have proposed, requires a critical awareness of the postcolonial critic's positioning, what they term "a historical critique of your position as the investigating person" (197). Baker's use of ghosts, framed by the presence of Baker as a character and reader in the direct address of the Epilogue, highlights the irretrievable subject positions with which we engage the past rather than emphasizing an ability (potentially an imperial, neo-colonial one) to restore the original figures fully into the present. In other words, we can listen to the dead, we can speak to them, but they will always remain fundamentally other.

Elisabeth embodies the spectre in the Derridean sense as a persistent reminder of the political, and thereby cultural, legacies upon which our present moment relies. Derrida frames this as an issue of inheritance and hospitality. As the spectre disturbs and interrupts historical and temporal processes, so must democracy be distinguished from any kind of regulating ideal or teleological horizon. "What is 'living together,'" Derrida asks in *Rogues: Two Essays on Reason*: "'what is a like, a compeer,' 'someone similar or semblable as a human being, a neighbor, a fellow citizen, a fellow creature, a fellow man,' and so on? Or even: must one live only with one's like, with someone semblable?" (11). John Caputo writes that, for Derrida, "one must watch out for the ways tradition and community

become excuses for conservatism, for the exclusion of the incoming of the other," and hence constitute "as much threat as promise" (108). The presence of a spectre is a threat to ontological stability, to the present moment's coherence, to our definition of ourselves. King Hamlet leaves his son with the knowledge that his world is not as he thought, and the spectre's challenge in Baker's novel extends to our understanding of our cultural communities.

In the context of *The Horseman's Graves*, spectres highlight this fraught negotiation. Derrida's conception of the injunction of talking to the dead helps frame this discussion, as he sees that conversation as inevitably conditioned around questions of communities and exclusions. He frames his discussion of the spectre around a concept of justice for the once-living, the living, and the yet-to-live: speaking to spectres is part of a concept of hospitality. Derrida explains in *Specters of Marx* that "As soon as there is some specter, hospitality and exclusion go together" (176). This is, Derrida reflects, the human instinct to summon the ghost in order to chase it away: "One is only occupied with ghosts by being occupied with exorcizing them, kicking them out the door" (176). In order to conquer an idea, one tries to banish it altogether: a task that, inevitably, will reconstitute the very thing it seeks to expel.

Elisabeth Brechert demonstrates the colonial context of such a Derridean haunting. When she arrives in Canada, Elisabeth is already involved in the internecine struggles of the community of German immigrants. Her stepfather's father, Old Krauss, named but never called Gustav, shows no respect for the barriers between properties – more specifically, between the end of his property and the beginnings of others'. Pius Schoff detests Old Krauss and his family for the habit of "always borrowing one thing and another and never returning anything, or returning things considerably more worn than when he'd borrowed them. Sometimes he did not even ask for what he took, just walked over and took what he needed whether anyone was home or not" (5). The conflict between Pius Schoff and Gustav Krauss represents the persistence of old conflicts carried over into the so-called New World. Their animosity is not about property lines; rather, property lines are the sites of their renewed conflict. "There was some rumour," the novel explains,

"some story about how in the old country Old Krauss's father had somehow crossed an uncle of Pius's" and the enduring animosity is because "they had carried their grudge with them from the old country to the new" (8). Without origin or terminus, the conflict between Pius and Gustav continues even after both men are dead, with Leo Krauss and Stolanus Schoff living as unhappy neighbours.

Elisabeth is the daughter of Mary Brechert, married to Leo at her father's insistence as a matter of "business" (90). Mary is Leo's second wife, after the mysterious death of his first wife Cecilia Dunhauer. Leo's first encounter with Elisabeth marks her difference: her "eyes, large and such a glittering reddish brown they looked almost reptilian, stared fiercely back at him without curiosity or shame either" (91). She is spectral from the first, and Lathias finds her both elusive and disconcerting. Baker characterizes Elisabeth's presence as an absence: "And she turned and walked away, disappearing gradually into the night, that white dress growing fainter and fainter across the prairie, as if it absorbed the darkness" (161). When she arrives at the Krauss farm, it is likewise a spectral site, which Hady ("Ma") Reiss describes as haunted: overgrown with Russian thistle, "desiccated plants," "gone to weed" and covered in rusted tin cans (96). Beyond the squalor, the house seems occupied by the dead; Ma Reiss wonders what she would do if invited in "'to sit and have coffee at that table with that picture of Old Krauss dead in his coffin hanging over us. And so I stood there and waited and crossed myself, I surely did, knowing someone might very well come to the door after all and invite me in" (97).

Mary is also a ghostly figure who, along with her daughter, seems not entirely of this world. She gives Ma Reiss chills: "she didn't know how exactly, it was kind of like the shiver one gets when someone walks over their grave – she knew at once that Mary was sitting there on the porch" (240). Part of what unsettles Ma is Mary's relationship with Leo. When commenting on the pleasant sound made by glass bottles in the cottonwood tree when rattled by the wind, Mary asks who put them there. When told that Cecilia installed them, Mary remarks "'So Leo put those bottles there'" because "'He married her'" (241-42). The way that Mary so starkly defines the gendered power imbalance in marriage puts Ma off. When Leo and Mary have a daughter, Leo chillingly names her Cecilia. Yet Ma is even more disturbed by Mary's

seemingly simple-minded belief in the ongoing presence of Cecilia's ghost. Cecilia mostly appears to visit Elisabeth: "'She would come sometimes to Elisabeth. She would touch her face, in the night'" (242). Ma suspects Leo of abuse, but Mary discards the possibility. In fact, Mary comes to see Cecilia's presence elsewhere and begins to find comfort in it. Alone in the house, Mary "could feel her there, the dead woman, when she was working, as if someone watched over her shoulder" (215). Rather than seeing the possibility of Leo's abuse of Elisabeth, and of Leo's culpability in Cecilia's death, Mary sees her daughter's stories as further proof of Cecilia's ongoing occupation of the house: "when she became used to the presence always at her shoulder, she befriended it" and came "to think of it as a her. Cecilia. And she would speak to her sometimes when she was alone there. And she did not feel foolish about it, but, rather, comforted. As if there were now someone who understood, someone who sympathized" (215).

Mary's reckoning with ghosts highlights the double bind of hauntings in fictional historiography as forms of postcolonial revisions of history. Mary's belief in Cecilia and herself as subsumed into Leo's agency presents itself to Ma Reiss as a form of haunting, an old idea that cannot be exorcised. It is an unsettling of the present moment as it highlights our indebtedness to the past. However, Mary's transformation of Leo's abuse of Elisabeth into Cecelia's ghost imbues the spectrality with an obscuring power: rather than making evident Elisabeth's abuse, it disguises it. It even, rather horrifyingly, becomes a source of comfort to Mary. That the idea of Cecilia's ghost, herself a possible victim of Leo's, is unsettling to Ma does make the ghost a vessel for illumination. However, Mary's comfort in the ghost – her reassurance in the transformation of Elisabeth's abuse into an ambiguous narrative – suggests the ways that spectres are not only forces for revelation and resistance. In a community built around hearsay and gossip, Cecilia's ghost becomes another way of dismissing the traumas of the past.

This double bind appears most powerfully in the figure of Elisabeth. When she dies, the community cannot fully believe it. Witnessed only by the cognitively impaired Schoff boy, Elisabeth's death is ambiguous: as he tells Lathias, "'She was on the ice […] And then she wasn't'" (253). Elisabeth, in a fight with the boy over

Lathias, told him that if he left her on the ice she would die. When she turns up alive again, it is verification that the boy was mistaken all along. However, Elisabeth remains ghostly to the Parish – or, perhaps, the Parish takes this opportunity to confirm their distrust of her. They are more comforted with Elisabeth as "'that dead girl'" (275) and "'that drowned girl'" (276) than with her as living:

> *But this is impossible, she is dead. We dragged the river until our arms ached with the cold, we held a Mass, lit candles for her soul, prayed for her and for the mother too, the church bell rang her to rest.* They had imagined her dead, out there in the river, everyone had. How could they help it? There had been no body. (314)

This ambiguity, this liminal state between living and dead, is certainly a form of haunting and Elisabeth presents an ontological challenge that the Parish cannot exorcise. The community notes the changes Elisabeth has undergone: sixteen year-old Ronnie Rausch observes that "'She was strange before. But something's different now'" (316). The question he poses is whether she had "been raised from the dead, or had she never actually drowned?" (316). By way of answering their question, the community continues to call Elisabeth the dead girl, "*the walking dead*" (329).

On the one hand, Elisabeth serves to comfort the community. Elisabeth speaks powerfully to the position Margaret Atwood outlines in "Canadian Monsters," echoed by Earle Birney and Susanna Moodie, about the ghost representing a culture's history. As Marlene Goldman explains, "an underlying fear is that without ghosts, the settlers and their descendants risk remaining ciphers to themselves and never fully establish a sense that they have fully arrived and are at home in Canada" (5). Goldman – like Atwood – foregrounds ghosts as objects that can be known, that ironically represent ontological certainty: Elisabeth establishes the authority of the *braucha* by proving that she does indeed have the powers that the community believes she possesses. She demonstrates the continuity of that knowledge and highlights its power. It is reassuring to have one's beliefs confirmed, even in matters that are perplexing.

On the other hand, her death makes her a troubling figure. This is often the case with ghosts of fictional historiography, a genre that generally, to paraphrase

Goldman, tries to explain settlers and their descendants to themselves. Elisabeth, like the Horseman and Cecilia, is not an object of certainty: she cannot be confirmed as dead or alive. Elisabeth is a liminal figure who – whether or not she fell through the ice, if the *braucha* had found her or rescued her, whether she had died – remains a mystery "since no one ever did learn for certain and it was all pieced together in the usual way, as history always is, by hearsay and supposition and outright imagination" (349-50). Derrida helps explain an understanding of the spectre that seems pertinent here: the spectre, as Derrida conceives of it, consists of a figure that "one does not know if it is living or if it is dead" (*SM* 6). It is unsettling precisely because it is not within our accepted frame of understanding. In never revealing the details of Elisabeth's disappearance on the ice, the novel insists that she remain a spectral figure outside a colonial settler narrative.

This double bind illustrates that the ghost is *only* a figure of occlusion. As Elisabeth and Cecilia's spectral natures make plain, the ghost story is one of the only ways to confront occluded trauma in the text. It is, after all, only through the ghost story of Cecilia that Elisabeth's abuse is made legible at all: she can only tell the story through coded language. Revised as a ghost story, this trauma becomes symbolic of something larger than one man's continued assault; in its troubled and troubling ambiguity, the spectre prevents certainty and forecloses the possibility of forgetting. However, this ambiguity also demonstrates a challenge with hauntings in fictional historiography: they can distance the trauma from its causes. As a spectre, caught ambiguously between life and death, Elisabeth foregrounds Baker's use of ghosts as signifying ideologies that cannot be expunged but cannot be fully recognized, either.

This is most powerfully apparent in the relationship between Elisabeth's death, her un-life, and the river. Her death in the river links her ghost to those that the settlers of the Parish have ignored: the river is a site of colonial haunting. Lathias's grandmother describes it as cursed, and it certainly presents a chilling insight into the settlement of the region. A rope for swinging was hung "from one of the larger branches, many years ago – three decades almost, according to those who claimed to remember – but as far as anyone knew, no one used it, not since that first

day it was strung up and Ollie Werner gave the inaugural jump" only to vanish, "grinning beneath the murky surface" and never reappear (154). The rope, an augury and a memorial, remains hanging "lifeless, ghostly as a noose" (154). The river claimed other victims as well: an older cousin of Lathias's grandmother; "a guide for the fur traders; a young officer from the detachment at Harrison's Landing"; a young Mountie who was trapped in the mud and begged his partner to shoot him rather than let him suffocate, which the other Mountie was unable to do (149); Constable McCready from Triumph, years after the events of the novel (323).

When Elisabeth disappears through the ice of the river, echoing a story Lathias knows about the death of a shaman's daughter, she materializes the immigrant community's anxiety about the land upon which they've settled. In fact, the river highlights the relationship between the immigrants and the Métis they have displaced. Lathias's Métis heritage explicitly characterizes his difference from the community, but it also communicates his link to the deeper history of the area. He tells the Schoffs' son about a medicine man's daughter who "'was very beautiful, this girl, but she was not right'" (77), a description that applies equally to Elisabeth. The boy is drawn to tales of this girl, with whom he feels a kinship as the effects of his injuries have left him with physical and cognitive disabilities. The story Lathias tells involves the girl being abducted by a "red-bearded peddler" (78), who is later found dead with his throat slit at what was assumed to be her hand. Her body is never found; though her father receives a vision telling him of her death, the moment of her mortality is an open question. The disappearance of the medicine man's daughter in the river casts a pall over the region. According to the beliefs of Lathias's people, the murder of the medicine man's daughter cursed the land. The curse, as Lathias describes it, bears the lasting scars of colonial conflict:

> 'After that, there was no more trade here, not much. More traders, different traders, opened the fort again a few years later. Blackfoot were here, then. Blood, too. And others. Hundreds. Thousands. But everything had gone bad. The Indians would not trade. They were angry. They fought, with the white men and with the Assiniboine and Cree. With the Gros Ventre and Sioux who sometimes raided from across the medicine

> line. It was a bad time. They refused to bring fresh meat to the fort, and everyone inside was afraid to leave. The fort was abandoned in the spring, as soon as the ice was out. People came back and went for a while, Indian, white. Nobody stayed long.' (81)

The legacy of the shaman's daughter is a marker of postcolonial haunting, of violence instigated by the uneven exploitation of resources and peoples under colonialism that has left an enduring trauma. Lathias's "grandmother's stories of the dead who walked there" (156), convince him that the Sand Hills, as he tells the Schoff boy, are twice haunted: "'The ghosts born here, the ghosts brought over'" (81). The ghosts represent the colonial conflicts that have seemingly rendered the land inhospitable.

The river, also a powerful image in Sweatman's *When Alice Lay Down With Peter*, evokes the passage of time and repeated cycles of colonial power. As with the drowned sailor in *Away* and the familial patterns of the O'Malley women, the river evokes the inescapable and unfathomable power of history in *The Horseman's Graves*. The river, and history itself, becomes a hidden burial plot.[13] The curse Lathias's grandmother articulates is a fear of a land laid to waste by its inability to recognize its history. Those who drowned in the river, particularly Elisabeth and the medicine man's daughter, become liminal figures between life and death. Their transformation into ghosts masks the significance of their deaths – Elisabeth rebelling against the insularity of her new home, resisting the torment brought on by her stepfather – as they become figures of mystery. This illustrates how the ghost can obscure the past as well as illuminate it. Leo's unspoken abuse of Elisabeth is submerged into a ghost story: Cecilia guarding Elisabeth rather than Leo assaulting

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[13] Elisabeth's death evokes Derrida's discussion of Oedipus's death and its relationship to cultural continuity, or being a foreigner, or stranger (*l'étranger*). For Oedipus, as Derrida explains in *Of Hospitality*, the choice between a grave or a hidden burial plot revolves around his position as a foreigner. A grave, Derrida explains, can function as a repatriation. A hidden burial plot, however, denies a location from and at which to direct mourning (113). If his tomb remains invisible, Oedipus promises Theseus that Athens will prosper for its hospitality. Derrida insists that this is part of the complicated network of subjectivities between host and guest, master and stranger: a "contract" (123) that can only promise salvation.

her. The Horseman's ghost reminds the community of their mistreatment at the hands of the government, but it transposes that abuse into a story not of civil disobedience but of supernatural horror. The Horseman's reaction is unfathomable, his murder/suicide the acts of a madman either cursed by the land or a curse upon it. The community reads the river as haunted, rather than as a site upon which colonial conflicts are continually reinscribed. That the Epilogue frames *Graves* as a story solicited, and that the second person narration of the Epilogue indicts readers in this ghost hunting, prevents the novel from marking ghosts as completely occluding forces. Yet they remain throughout the novel signs of a paradoxical need to remember the past while keeping it at bay. The spectres of *The Horseman's Graves* gesture toward the ways that hauntings in fictional historiography evoke the past and remind us of its legacies while also potentially obscuring even as they illuminate.

Among the inheritances that spectrality obscures in the novel is the weight of cultural ideology. A force for survival and marginalization, spectres both highlight and obscure the power of the traditions of Knochenfeld Parish. Elisabeth most clearly emphasizes this cultural weight, this force of unification and exclusion, when she takes on the role of the *braucha.* Knochenfeld Parish is a community in which religious tradition and superstition overlap: Lathias tells the Schoff boy that when you see two riders "'you make a wish. To get rid of something'" like warts or toothaches, by wishing it "'in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost'" (200). Baba Yaga, a witch of eastern European folklore, demonstrates how these interconnections are the result of colonial settlement. Elisabeth, for example, describes Baba Yaga with gleeful malice as having "'used to live in Russia, but I heard she came to Canada'" (172). When Lathias tells the boy the story of Baba Yaga – about a girl whose wicked father sends her to certain death at the hands of a witch, the girl's clever escape and uncertain future – it evokes Elisabeth's own journey. However, Elisabeth's return to life is on Easter Sunday: her story encompasses and echoes the girl from the Russian folk tale, the medicine man's daughter, and the risen Christ. When she takes on the role of the *braucha*, Elisabeth signals the complex web of indebtedness inevitable in colonial settlement, even as she

represents its occlusion.

The *braucha* concretizes these tensions between history and cultural baggage while embodying the historical mystification with which all hauntings in fictional historiography must grapple. For the community of Knochenfeld Parish, she fulfills the duties of physician, midwife, naturopath, and faith healer. The novel's first *braucha* is "Margarehta Stehr, née Nikolei, formerly of Culelia, Dobruja, third daughter of Piotr and Anna Nikolei, deceased, widow of Joseph Stehr, deceased, mother of Peter Stehr, whereabouts unknown, mother of others dead or never born, friend of no one and companion to none" (354). Boasting an impressively Derridean genealogy, she is certainly a liminal and unsettling figure: Stolanus calls her only the Grandmother even while his son, articulating what the rest of the community refuses to do, admits to being afraid of her. There is "something about her" that "kept people away, made everyone forget she was even there until a difficult labour or influenza or something else the doctors could not cure" (168). Lathias, on the other hand, sees the situation differently. He suggests that "it was not something about the old woman that kept people away but something about people that kept them from going to her. Something he felt in himself" (168). Lathias articulates an imagined community in the manner Benedict Anderson describes: a seemingly symbiotic relationship between self and other built on the tension between reliance and exclusion. He also describes, however, the role that spectral figures occupy in how they are the conjuration of old ideas even in the mention of their expiry. The *braucha* is what the people of Knochenfeld Parish have left behind and her presence is a sign of what they know, even if only subliminally, that they cannot escape.

When Elisabeth reappears, no longer dead, her newly deepened connection to the *braucha* suggests that it is not the woman that is unsettling but the role itself, a role that will be perpetually recast. Elisabeth demonstrates feelings of kinship early, wondering "'if she ever gets lonely'" (171). When Elisabeth takes over for the *braucha*, after the older woman's death, she claims access not only to the medicinal and healing practices, but also to an inherited spiritual force: "'She showed me, the braucha did. I see it now'" (360). The *braucha* teaches Elisabeth more than lessons for she bequeaths to her a social role and, possibly, some supernatural powers. Her

connection to the narrative of the medicine man's drowned daughter, another persistent historical role circumscribing possibilities for women, is explicit in the Schoff boy's mind: "She had drowned. She was gone. But now she was back. She had risen. Like the medicine man's daughter. But, no, she had not risen, that girl. Not at all. Why had he thought she had?" (402). The Schoff boy thinks the medicine man's daughter rose from the dead because her story continues, because the inheritance of that story continues, because her ghost is unheeded. The spectres of Cecilia and Elisabeth prevent history from being a totalizing force in their unsettling dimensions, but they also obscure the gendered and colonial scripts that redefine them. They are cast as ghosts precisely to obscure the lessons that their stories teach.

Elisabeth and the *braucha*, and Elisabeth *as* the *braucha*, highlight this obscuring dimension of summoning ghosts in fictional historiography. Elisabeth troubles memory, and emphasizes its inaccuracy as a gateway to the past. Ronnie Rausch's younger sister, "years after, decades, when she was grown with grown children of her own" (323) remembers seeing Elisabeth, "the dead girl" (323), and being struck by her otherness:

> "Of course, she did not look as I had imagined her, not ghostly, not deathly, but somehow seeing her that way, alive after we had all thought her dead, was more terrifying than anything I could have imagined. She was so utterly human. Only human. And that was the most awful realization of all. She was not dead. But one day she would be, that's what bothered me then […] All those mysteries you spend your life trying to figure out. Well, they're mysteries for a reason, aren't they?" (323)

Elisabeth is a figure who resists claiming, who resists easy categorization. It is ultimately Elisabeth's otherness that so terrifies the community, as is the case with the *braucha*: there is something ineffable and inalienably incommensurate about her that they cannot incorporate her into their communally derived narrative of self. She cannot be wholly understood. In this, hauntology helps us to understand Elisabeth's effect in the novel: she has the power to unsettle ontology. For most of the novel, Elisabeth's persistent indecipherability highlights how the process of

reifying colonial power is an act of unspoken negotiation from which most people are excluded. In her indecipherability and unanswerability, Elisabeth makes these transactions of power visible. However, as her status in the novel grows from strange outsider to nearly mythic figure, Elisabeth also obscures some very real traumas. She is a mystery, and yet she is also plainly legible as a survivor of abuse, likely sexual assault, and the exclusionary attitudes inherent to colonial settlement. These underlying traumas are somewhat effaced in the uncanny power of the *braucha* and the merging of her story with that of the medicine man's daughter.

The novel reinforces this effacement, particularly of the actual experiences of Aboriginal dispossession and persecution, in the *braucha*'s cabin. Like Elisabeth's mystery, and like Cecilia and the medicine man's daughter's ghost stories, the *braucha*'s cabin obscures and distances the narrative from the past: the cabin shows a distinct lack of Aboriginal faces. The survivors and ghosts of the old country are accounted for, but the previous inhabitants of the Sand Hills are missing. As Edouard Glissant suggests about ethnography, "The distrust that we feel toward it is not caused by our displeasure at being looked at, but rather our obscure resentment at not having our turn at seeing" (128). The presence of Lathias in the novel offers something of a corrective to the wall of faces that seem only to include the area's immigrant population, but his presence alone is not enough to sustain a thorough critique of the persistent historical silencing of peoples such as the Métis. That the medicine man's daughter is unnamed is a gesture echoing that of Lathias's defacement of the Schoff boy's tombstone. However, it also duplicates that work of historical occlusion as much as it serves as a commentary on the tragic losses swept away by the flow of history. The medicine man's daughter has her story absorbed into Elisabeth's, and her disappearance from history is not reflective of the novel's desire to better understand the past of a place.

As much as it marks the ways that ghost stories can obscure history as well as disrupt colonial historiography, the ghostly dimension of Elisabeth's story highlights how ghosts can reentrench a practice of cultural exclusion even as they resist them. Reading the medicine man's daughter as a ghost story can be a way to empower that story to unsettle colonial narratives, but that critique is blunted when

it is absorbed into Elisabeth's prior narrative of marginalization. There is a risk of summoning ghosts but not speaking to them: of summoning ghosts, as Derrida warns, for the purpose of exorcising them. Though the ghosts of *The Horseman's Graves* emphasize the persistence and inheritances of ideology, they also make apparent how summoning ghosts can obscure the very history that they have been called to clarify. The ghosts of *The Horseman's Graves* may indeed demonstrate the inevitable transmission and persistence of colonial ideologies, but their presence can distance those ideologies from their physical instantiations.

Away

Like *The Horseman's Graves*, Jane Urquhart's novel *Away* suggests that the double bind of colonial ideology is that its transmission is necessary for cultural survival but that same circulation creates destructive exclusions. As with Baker's novel, *Away* depicts ghosts as agents of that cultural transmission as well as figures that obscure the ways in which colonial ideology materializes. As *The Horseman's Graves* focuses its gaze on an immigrant community that brings its ghosts to Canada, Jane Urquhart's *Away* features this metaphor made even more concrete: Mary O'Malley meets her daemon lover, a sailor on a ship bound for Halifax, when he drowns after the ship sinks near Rathlin Island and this ghost will travel across the ocean with her, haunting her for the rest of her life. The novel, like *Graves*, has a retrospective narrative position. *Away*, however, features a framing device wherein Mary's great-granddaughter Esther tells her family's story to her empty house on the night of her death. Much as Margaret Sweatman would later do with *When Alice Lay Down With Peter*, Urquhart uses the narrative frame and a ghostly narrator to recount the cultural histories that reside in myth, legend, and story.[14] In materializing cultural history as a ghost, *Away* dramatizes the conflict inherent in

[14] Esther isn't dead when she tells the story, merely dying, but the novel places her quite explicitly in the liminal space between living and dead: she is "the last and the most subdued of the extreme" O'Malley women (3). She tells her family's story on her "last night" (4).

The Horseman's Graves that a focus on ghosts can obscure the past with which one wishes to engage.

The story of the O'Malley family, particularly Mary and her children Eileen and Liam, navigates the complex politics of immigration, with a focus on the possibility of both losing oneself to an idealized mythic past and of reinscribing the colonial power dynamics that one was lucky to escape. Like *The Horseman's Graves*, *Away* dramatizes the ethnic distinctions and tensions that exist underneath Canada's colonial European heritage, exploring mythological counter-narratives to Anglocentric accounts of nation building. Mary's doomed romance with a ghost informs her family's interactions with other Irish settlers and the landscape they inhabit. *Away* shows Liam O'Malley duplicate the land grabbing of the Sedgewick family who forced the O'Malleys out of Ireland; contrasting Liam's refusal to see the past is Eileen's inability to see the present apart from the myths and legends she inherits from her parents. The drowned sailor with whom their mother Mary communes represents the transhistorical power of their Celtic traditions, but he also signals the obscuring power of ghosts. *Away* echoes and reflects Moodie's claims to Canada's ghostlessness by engaging with the past as both succor and indulgence: it is not that Canada is too new for ghosts as much as it is recent Canadian immigrants being so powerfully haunted by their own spectres that they cannot encounter a new place on its own terms. The novel displays, to paraphrase Alessia Ricciardi, a melancholic devotion to certain traditions that unites a defiance of colonial historical erasure with an indulgence of sentimental nostalgia (126).

Away uses spectres in a way common to hauntings in fictional historiography: to complicate the historical revisions it seeks to provide. In this case, it is the history of oppression by the English behind the emigration of so many Irish families to Canada, the intense cultural negotiation within Irish communities, and the cultural politics behind Irish Catholic nationalism. This sense of nationalism develops as an effect of the great famine of the 1860s: the sheer quantity of suffering and poverty, sharpened by cultural oppression, greatly impacts those who can and wish to leave Ireland. The transportation of this sense of nationalism is deeply problematic and indicative of a larger pattern within immigrant communities in

Canada, as elsewhere, that immigration is a form of being "away" from home. In this formulation, the immigrant's sense of self is that of an exile: the ghostly return of Fenian nationalism is a paradoxical source of both identity and erasure. Urquhart ties the self-image of departure with the Irish folklore of being "away": being possessed or taken away to the Otherworld of spirits and mythic creatures. *Away* describes the legacies of ethnic nationalism in terms of survival, cultural cohesion, beauty, myth, and politics; it further presents questions of the transposition of such nationalism to a new context. The ghosts that haunt the novel "carry the burden of the Irish collective memory" and materialize nineteenth century debates concerning the foundations of Irish and Canadian national identity (Goldman 107). It is a novel of history by way of cultural memory where ghosts transmit and obscure the past. As Eli Wiesel suggests, this kind of mythic recasting of history refutes the status of "history" as a privileged term: "Myths imply morality and immorality, whereas history calls for objectivity. Myths take sides; history remains neutral" (23).

Indeed, ghosts are a force to resist the colonial imposition of historiography. Even the historical work that Brian O'Malley does in his hedge school isn't the same as the taxonomic accounting that the Sedgewick brothers employ. Ghosts disseminate the type of memory that seems most useful in the novel, and whose loss seems the most tragic, but they also impede characters' engagement with their lived circumstances. Many of the characters in the novel perceive themselves as victims of history, and in so doing they efface their own agency and their capacity to victimize others. In *Away*, ghosts suggest that imagining one's past, one's cultural legacies, as hauntings is both a tool of survival and alienation.

Away signals its concern with transgenerational cultural legacies in its narrative structure. In addition to Esther's frame story, Urquhart divides the novel into three sections: "A Fish on a Pool," "A Bird on a Branch," and "The Trace of a Man on a Woman" all highlight the spectral nature of historical knowledge. These are, an epigraph informs us, "The three most short-lived traces" and romantically configured images of the past that cannot stay. The novel finds much of its unsettling power by complicating this romantic sense of ghosts as vehicles for nostalgia as each section of the novel foregrounds the past as a kind of haunting. The first section

focuses on Mary's enchantment by the drowned sailor, her marriage to Brian, and the family's emigration to Canada. The aquatic imagery links Osbert Sedgewick's zoological studies, a discipline of examination and classification not unlike that of historiography, with the daemon Mary encounters. The second section – which focuses on the O'Malleys' early days in Upper Canada, Mary's departure and death, and Liam and Eileen's growing differences – has a title that further foregrounds the mystical elements of the novel. Exodus Crow, whose name the section title evokes, and Mary's prophetic visions reframe the O'Malleys' experiences as part of metaphysical rather than retrospectively teleological destiny. In equating the direction of the historical trajectory – the past seeing the future even as Eileen recalls the past – the novel's framing device emphasizes its disruption of the historiographical account Esther tells. The prophecy that hangs over Liam gives a metaphysical dimension to his colonial mimicry and offers a reading of his behaviour not merely as an effect of colonialism but also as the result of how the past interacts with the future. His desire to escape his fate, to escape the past and its demands, is a considerable source of the ambition that precipitates the damage his historical disavowal causes. The third section focuses on Eileen's relationship with Aidan Lanighan and her involvement in Thomas D'Arcy McGee's assassination. The title of that section highlights the romantic priorities of Eileen's involvement in that pivotal event from the public sphere, but also the broader legacies of Brian O'Malley's revolutionary tales. Eileen falls for Lanighan in part because he seems the materialization of the past that has so entranced her through her father's stories. Unlike Mary, whose choice of a spectral lover is not framed in terms of politics, Eileen's infatuation with the past is explicitly political yet untethered to the physical world around her.

Though the frame device locates the novel as transhistorical, the portion of *Away* set on Rathlin Island is what provides the context for the inevitable rise of Irish Catholic nationalism and its necessity in the face of harsh oppression by the

English.[15] This section also sets the novel's spectral forces to work. As his family slowly starves to death, Brian O'Malley laments the fact that their cultural identities are similarly being drained: "'The old language will disappear forever, and all the magic and the legends. It's what they want, what they've always wanted, to be rid of us one way or another'" (74). Brian's eulogy for his people's culture contains three key constituent parts – language, magic, and legend – that all point to the culture's links to the past. What Brian laments is not only the end of this culture, but also the ability to access the past. Without any living souls to speak the language, the loss is one that bleeds backward through time, rendering those parts of Irish history inaccessible to future descendants. The effect of that inaccessibility is not simply akin to the closing of a door: without language, the magic and the legends, that comprise the frame of reference and the linguistic structure in which the culture exists, the past will have ceased to be. It is an apocalyptic prophecy: the Irish will have never existed. That Esther, Brian's great-granddaughter, performs the same dirge in the novel's frame sequence provides paradoxical and oxymoronic undercurrents to Brian's lament. On the one hand, she proves that a culture can survive transplantation and deprivation and colonial dispossession but on the other hand, her own eulogy to an empty house without descendants suggests that Brian's mourning was less mistaken than it was prophetic.

The bitterness Brian feels at this prospect echoes throughout the novel as his history seems continually overwritten. When he arrives in Upper Canada, Brian discovers that the same cultural rivalries that dominated Rathlin Island persist: to his dismay, "many of his Protestant neighbours had taken the pledge to eliminate Catholicism wherever they might find it" (198). He finds his personal history being repeated as well when he is forced into retirement after the nationalist bent of his teaching becomes intolerable to the Board of Trustees of his township following the Fenian raids in 1866. This recalls the closing of his hedge school on Rathlin Island.

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[15] This section outlines a litany of injustices, borne both of ignorant colonial paternalism and malice, including the deforestation of Ireland, religious persecution, the banning of hedge schools, the exploitative practices that led directly to the famine, and forced exodus of Irish families as an expedient solution to the mounting problems.

Even in death, Brian finds his history subject to powers outside his control with the reappearance of Osbert Sedgewick, one of the two brothers who owned the land upon which the O'Malleys lived and who was responsible for sending them across the Atlantic. When Brian's daughter Eileen reveals that there is gold on the family property, Osbert buys out the land with the money from the sale of his Irish estate, which collapsed because he and his brother Granville had "sent so many away that there was no one left to work the estate and no money left either" (282). After securing the property, Osbert takes control of Brian's past by taking the dead man's grave into his possession and installing "a decorative wrought-iron fence" (282) around it. The effect of the migration of persecution during his lifetime, however, is to sustain Brian's Irish Catholic loyalties. The same factors that engendered his politics persist in his new context and serve to continue the cultivation of his cultural marginalization and responding nationalism. The Celtic collective memory that Brian champions is largely imagined: an ability Esther describes as being "skilled at building inner landscapes" (11). A reentrenchment of his national identity in the face of such constant disparagement and erasure is an entirely understandable maneuver, even as it dramatizes the ways that colonial ideologies persist even in their overthrow.

For her part, Mary is a carrier of another type of cultural legacy. In fact, Mary's spectral relationship with her daemon lover is the focal site of Urquhart's complication of romantic nostalgia for one's past. Mary is less politically strident than Brian with a more ambiguous relationship to her history: she has "had fragments of the old beliefs" that "had not been completely stolen from her" (75). Before the O'Malleys leave Rathlin Island for Canada, and before she marries Brian, Mary has an encounter with a drowned sailor, a daemon, whose intimacy sends her "away." Mary immediately recognizes the sailor who drifts to shore after a shipwreck and believes "that he came from an otherworld island, assumed that he had emerged from the water to look for her and knew that her name had changed, in an instant, from Mary to Moira" (8) after the last word he says before expiring. After "rescuing" the sailor from the sea, Mary's name change signals her transformation. She had been claimed by the Formoire, the ones from the sea; she becomes spectral

herself – present yet absent, there but not there – and the drowned sailor haunts her forever after.

Mary's haunted nature helps illustrate the colonial dimensions of her and her family's immigration. Under her spell, she sees visions of the passion and suffering of her history, which "are not being shed" but rather "accumulated" (127) and a premonition of her participation in one of the great waves of Irish emigration: "when you go, this is what you become part of," she is told (128). Her marriage to Brian O'Malley is a way for her family and people to salvage her, and themselves, after her true binding to a dead man. After settling in Upper Canada, where she discovers Lake Moira, Mary's friendship with Exodus Crow – a spiritual leader similarly marked as liminal in his name evoking Judeo-Christian and Ojibwe traditions – provides insight into a shared history of colonial exploitation:

> After she had been in the forest for several winters she told him dark things; about the time of the stolen lands of her island, and of the disease, and of the lost language and the empty villages and how the people who once sang were now silent, how the people who once danced were now still. (184)

She leaves her family to live by the shore of Lake Moira, to be close to her spectral lover, and is only returned to her family in death, Exodus Crow hauling her frozen body on a sledge. Along with her corpse, he carries Mary's prophecy for Liam that he "will move forward and make the change" (175). When Liam denounces Exodus Crow's accounting of Mary's prophecy by asking his father "Do you believe in this fairy tale?", Brian responds by saying only that "I didn't used to" (190). Eileen offers her own assessment of her father's softening resistance to the otherworld by saying that "He believes it […] because it is true" (190). Belief in the supernatural, the O'Malleys make plain, is very much tied into the preservation of cultural identity.

This desire to preserve cultural identity is central to *Away*'s preoccupation with the past. After Mary's death, Brian's academic rigour begins to blend with his dead wife's spiritual rapport with history. Though expressions of Irish cultural nationalism come most vehemently from the novel's political (and male) characters – particularly Brian, the captains O'Shaunessey, and Eileen's lover Aidan Lanighan –

the connection to the past is stronger in those characters who are supernaturally inclined. As with the *braucha* in Baker's novel, the transmission of cultural knowledge is primarily configured as something otherworldly. The O'Malley women demonstrate this transmission in the repetitive presence of the mythic intruding on their lives:

> They were plagued by revenants. Men, landscapes, states of mind went away and came back again. Over the years, over the decades. There was always water involved, exaggerated youth or exaggerated age. Afterwards there was absence. That is the way it was for the women of this family. It was part of their destiny. (3)

Away locates the O'Malleys's connection to the myths and legends of the Irish collective memory in its mothers and daughters, its redheaded heroines. Through them, particularly their affinity for ghosts, they represent the culture's enduring connection to its landscapes and its traditions.

Mary, Eileen, and Esther each have pale white skin and red hair, suggesting an uncanny resemblance that functions almost as a repetition or reincarnation. Their physical resemblance is borne out by their psychic similarities, since they all possess the supernatural gift of clairvoyance. As Lois Parkinson Zamora argues about magical realist fiction, "we often encounter successive generations of a family, but not in any realistic sense. Rather we may think of them, paradoxically, as a simultaneous series, an on-going progression of ahistorical archetypes" (508). Similarly to the passing on of the role of *braucha* in *The Horseman's Graves*, there is an element of role playing involved. As the gendered and familial archetypes pass from one generation to the next, the common thread of supernatural romantic entanglement suggests that "In this family all young girls are the same young girl and all old ladies are the same old lady" (325). Esther, Mary's great-granddaughter, echoes Mary's romance by becoming, herself, involved with a fisherman whose "dark curls, his pale hand and his bright green eye" (354) recall both the drowned sailor and Aidan Lanighan, Eileen's romantic object whose shape-changing is less metaphysical but no less significant. The recurrence of Mary in her descendants is

one sign of the transmission of cultural knowledge, and one of the novel's most significant hauntings.

Urquhart's conception of historical knowledge as a dangerous form of haunting is especially Derridean. He conceives of spectres as unstuck from time. Through her deamon lover, Mary seems to have access, despite whatever psychological burdens she carries, to disquieting prophecies. When Exodus Crow passes on her warning to Liam about "the curse of the mines" (175), her vision may or may not contain knowledge of the mineral wealth hidden beneath the land the O'Malleys have claimed, but it powerfully speaks to the potential for destruction that mineral exploitation can cause. This is, indeed, what comes to pass after Liam sells the family land to the Sedgewicks, who will destroy it to create an open pit mine to strip its immense wealth. Furthermore, the drowned sailor provides a means for Mary to commune with her past for cultural renewal. Before she leaves for Canada with Brian, the drowned sailor shows her a tableau of Irish history from the "obsessed kings and warriors" to the "great scholars carrying pictures of medieval poets" to the saints with "their raised arms thrust up to heaven" and tells her that "This is what you take with you and what you leave behind," that "'These are not being shed,' he said to her, 'they are accumulated'" (127). As Derrida explains, the spectre is timeless and always already returning: "no one can be sure if by returning it testifies to a living past or to a living future, for the *revenant* may already mark the promised return of the specter of living being. Once again, untimeliness and disadjustment of the contemporary" (123). A ghost, he explains, "never dies, it remains always to come and to come-back" (123).

As implicit in *The Horseman's Graves*, *Away*'s hauntings demonstrate some of the risks of summoning ghosts of the past. Though Mary's haunting is a source of renewal for her, it is a cause of great pain for her family. One cannot ever, as Goldman suggests recalling Derrida, exorcise the seductive power of mythical cultural fantasies. Cynthia Sugars remarks that *Away*'s framing device "is that of a warning" since Eileen tells Esther the O'Malleys' story as one of an ancestral curse so that Esther "may be safe from its damnation" ("Haunted" 9). Goldman argues that this presents the narration "as a means of expelling transgressive desires" (112)

since Eileen tells Esther the story when Esther is twelve years old to calm her granddaughter and to "put her in her place" (Urquhart 3). It is Goldman's claim that Esther's retelling of her family's saga "emphasizes the deleterious impact of Mary's transgressive behavior and departure on her children, Liam and Eileen" (112).

Indeed, even though Mary and Brian's children do not have the same attachment to a ghost, their mother's spectral lover marks them as well. Liam is overtly hostile to Mary's memory after she abandons them to live alone in nature and to search for her daemon lover. Marlene Goldman suggests that

> *Away* demonstrates on the individual level how fantasy serves as a salve for unbearable suffering. But the nation itself can likewise be understood as the product of powerful fantasies generated in response to terrible hardship and loss. These fantasies ultimately prove dangerous because they ignore *real* human beings in favour of pursuing ghosts. (111)

Though born in Ireland, Liam has little interest in his father's nationalism and even less in his mother's spiritualism. For Liam, "All he remembered of Ireland was a flat stone beyond the threshold of a door, the rest of the past had fallen away" (166). Wondering "What was it that lodged the homeland so permanently in the heart of his father" (207), he eventually becomes a landowner and capitalist, freeing his family from poverty but at the cost of selling their land to Sedgewick. He embodies the perils of one extreme of immigrant life as his becoming a landlord in a Loyalist village makes him one of the oppressors of the Irish immigrant population. His sister Eileen points out the continuity of colonial oppression, which doesn't seem to occur to Liam: "I think that the English took the land from the Indians same as they took it from the Irish. Then they just starve everybody out," or "they evict them, or both" (279).

Liam's determined rejection of his mother's beliefs are part of his pragmatic desire to jettison his Irish identity, to banish his ghosts, in order survive. He runs away from Mary's prophecy of what his life will be and defines himself by a refusal to value what his mother held so dear. In deliberately forgetting his inherited mythology and culture he reproduces the oppression that caused his family's emigration to Canada in the first place. This reconfigured duplication of colonial

expressions of power recalls Homi Bhabha's conception of mimicry in "Of Mimicry and Man: The Ambivalence of Colonial Discourse." Bhabha describes mimicry as "stricken by an indeterminacy: mimicry emerges as the representation of a difference that is itself a process of disavowal. Mimicry is thus a sign of double articulation; a complex strategy of reform, regulation, and discipline, which 'appropriates' the Other as it visualizes power" (86). Liam, indeed, sees power located in those forces against which his father is aligned. In what can be read as a small gesture of affinity, Liam proves willing to accommodate Thomas Doherty – an Irishman squatting on Liam's land – and eventually marries Doherty's daughter, Molly. His romance with Molly is a doubly articulated gesture signaling his desire for the kind of power that subjugated his family and, simultaneously, a kinship with his past. As Bhabha's articulation of mimicry helps illustrate, Liam's neo-colonialist behavior is less a clear betrayal than a fulfillment of one of the tragic fates that befall immigrants, underlined by the fact that he cannot escape his mother's prophecies.

The contrast between Liam and Eileen helps to further contextualize the burdens of a haunting past. Urquhart presents them as something of a binary that will, throughout their stories, be complicated: "She who was born into a raw, bright new world would always look back towards lost landscapes and inward towards inherited souvenirs, while he sought the forward momentum of change and growth, the axe in the flesh of the tree, the blade breaking open new soil" (207-8). Where Liam embodies a desire to reject that past that he can never hope to expunge, Eileen materializes a mystic nationalism that proves to be equally problematic. Eileen echoes Mary's story quite particularly in that she inherits some of her mother's prophetic ability and affinity for the supernatural world. She, for instance, foresees the emergence of Osbert Sedgewick and the coming of Exodus Crow when he delivers Mary's body: in a dream, she anticipates the arrival of "'The bird, the black bird'" (169). Unlike her brother, she is born in Canada; because she has no personal memories of the O'Malley homeland, she must rely upon stories. Though she has her mother's kinship for the Otherworld, she absorbs Irish history through her father's recounting. These take the form of lessons, but also Brian's tales and "Irish revolutionary songs," which she "cheerfully sang about the hanging of brave young

men, wild colonial boys, the curse of Cromwell, cruel landlords, the impossibility of requited love, and the robbery of landscape while she built snow castles" (199). This history transforms into tale, and the tragedies of colonial power are akin to the tragedies of unrequited love.

Eileen, more than Mary or any other character in the novel, demonstrates the destructive consequences of romantic nostalgia about a spectral past. Like her father, Eileen becomes seized with revolutionary spirit, but unlike her father, her true conversion comes from romantic involvement. Eileen's meeting with Aidan Lanighan revisits Mary's enchantment when Eileen senses a previous awareness of Lanighan, suggesting the persistent presence of the drowned sailor: "There's something in me that remembers you from somewhere," she muses; "How could I know you this well?" (290-91). Unlike Mary's, however, Eileen's enchantment combines her father's histories and political drives. After she meets Lanighan, Eileen becomes a devoted subscriber of *The Irish Canadian*, a nationalist and Catholic newspaper. She recalls the mythological Irish hero Finn MacCool and imagines Lanighan as part of a band of chivalrous patriots, galloping "over hills with the wind in their hair" and leaping "back and forth on the trunks of enormous, floating trees"; she sees the Fenians as "brothers-in-arms, fiercely loyal, and their arena was the new dominion" (293). Herb Wyile observes that Eileen's "perception of Irish nationalism is constructed as a naïve romanticism" (*SF* 87): she transforms her love of Lanighan into a purely mental picture, and creates a scenario where she finds the pleasure of his company almost completely independent from his actual physical presence. The story, in other words, obscures the thing for which it stands. She enjoys being haunted by a ghost that is in her possession, one that exists mostly in her imagination. Furthermore, Eileen demonizes Thomas D'Arcy McGee; fixated on McGee's rejection of Lanighan's vow to perform in Ottawa a dance expressive of the spirit of Irish nationalism, Eileen sees McGee as a traitor, which sets her cultural nationalism as counter to the Canadian nationalism that McGee represented.[16]

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[16] Isabel Skelton's 1925 biography of Thomas D'Arcy McGee does not pay much attention to McGee's political career, but shares the opinion of his early biographers who consider him as foundational in the lineage of Canadian cultural nationalism,

Just as Liam's assimilationist impulses and desire for freedom from any history are deeply problematic, Eileen's uncritical embrace of Irish nationalism as a translation of myth is a destructive tendency. Eileen embodies the summoning of spirits that Margaret Atwood explains in "Canadian Monsters" as a form of cultural anxiety about the past: "We want to be sure that the ancestors, ghosts, and skeletons really are there, that as a culture we are not as flat and lacking in resonance as we were once led to believe" (100). Her desperation for the romantic past of her father's tales gives rise less to anxiety, however, than to ironic destruction. Her patriotic fervor is not merely rooted in myth, but also increasingly disconnected from the world about her. This legendary past seduces her as "The idea of the oneness of the tribe, the imagined collective voice, calmed her. There were no uncertainties" (Urquhart 330). Her cravings become increasingly unmoored from practical considerations, as her desire for "the power, the collusion, the potential for tragedy" (298) propels her to an extremist position. Following Lanighan to Montreal, Eileen insists on participating in the nationalist cause by agreeing to hide a pistol that Lanighan intends to take "as a precaution" (323) when going to hear McGee speak in Parliament. When she gives the gun to Patrick, a revolutionary cohort of Lanighan's, Eileen becomes the unwitting accessory to McGee's assassination and responsible for preventing Lanighan's attempts to save McGee. Lanighan, a spy who turns out to be an agent of McGee's, accuses Eileen of murder and of being in "some kind of dream…some kind of goddamned otherworld island" (343).

The title of this third and final section of the novel is "The Trace of a Man on a Woman" and Lanighan's evocation of the Otherworld serves to reinforce the links between Mary and Eileen. Eileen's tragic fate exposes "the flaws that inhere in both personal and national mythic fantasies of (re)possession and incorporation," argues Goldman (105). When Lanighan leaves Eileen, it echoes the departure of the drowned seaman, Mary's daemon lover, and Eileen is similarly marked for the rest of her life. Underlining the kinship to Mary, she admits to being "away": "So this is

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and of vital importance literary development (Wilson 35). Her biography is adulatory, and she considers him an exhibitor of "the highest moral qualities" (30).

what it is to be away, her mother's voice told her. You are never present where you stand" (351). Eileen tells her granddaughter Esther that she can't "get the face of a certain young man out of my mind" (351). Though not a literal shape-changer like Mary's daemon lover, Lanighan has a similarly haunting effect on Eileen and signals the destructive familial cycle as a form of cultural transmission.

This repeated cycle gives the novel a mythic tenor, but also serves to highlight the persistent cost of spectral obfuscation. Esther, the novel's storyteller, is a delayed victim of her family's legacy. Because she "Was told a story at twelve that calmed her down and put her in her place," she has taken Eileen's advice "never to go away" (9). Eileen's desire to prevent Esther from duplicating the mistakes of past generations has left the novel's narrator lonely and somewhat embittered and it is this regret that informs *Away*'s romantic structure: Esther, from her vantage point, wonders if going "away" is really so bad. This regret manifests in the form of her own drowned sailor. She finds that

> it was his swimming to her land, the storm, his journey over beach stones that mattered. The unpredictability of his arrivals and the certainty of his departures. Between his visits, when she found herself waiting, she knew it was for a kind of completion – his absence from, not his presence in her life. (354)

Esther duplicates her family's pattern, repeating the stories of her ancestors. However, unlike Mary, Esther rejects her absent sailor in favour of a more prosaic life. Esther has a life much less formed by the prophetic powers of her ancestors – as Urquhart puts it, "Esther stayed alone on the land" (354) – but she is also the last of the family line. Having not had any children, she has no audience for her family histories.

If Mary provides the novel with its avenue into exploring the costs of longing too strongly for the ghosts of the past, and Eileen its concrete dangers, then Esther highlights the obstructive power of those ghosts. Her frame story is simultaneously the key to the novel's chronological progression – its terminal point – and the source of its interruption. Esther undermines the academic ideal of historiography in her often-rambling account by highlighting the necessary intermediary for any account

of the past. Though an underlining thematic presence of the frame is the foregrounding of the relationship between oral tradition and historical memory, Esther's story also serves to highlight the tension between any preservation of a culture's past and the difficulty of focusing too strongly on its spectral remains. All forms of historical knowledge, academic and mythic, in the novel are contingent. Historical facts are forever suspect: *Away* refuses to revise the controversial record of McGee's assassination, despite Eileen's central role.[17] Family history is uncertain: Esther had believed that her mother Deirdre was Liam's daughter, but she realizes during the telling of her family's story that she is Eileen's daughter. Mary's Celtic mythology is similarly contingent. Long after Mary's encounter with the drowned sailor, we learn of a ship named *Moira* bound for Halifax that sank near Rathlin Island, suggesting the possibility that Mary only encountered a dying sailor and misunderstood his last words. Even Mary's prophecies for her descendants, and the repeated patterns of behaviour, owe as much to psychological principles as to premonitions: to observe and record a family pattern of behaviour does not require supernatural powers. When Mary's children receive her visions, it is via the intermediary of Exodus Crow and those visions do not necessarily amount to more than the careful observations of a mother. They could even be, particularly in Liam's case, the cause of their own instantiation.

Away makes textually specific what *The Horseman's Graves* suggests about the dangers of ghosts obscuring the very history that they reveal. *Away* also materializes the seductive qualities of that spectrality: despite its powerful illustration of the dangers of ghosts obscuring or effacing the past that they are summoned to represent, *Away* takes an elegiac tone. Esther's narration to the empty house is a form of lament for a dying mythology. So much of Esther's, and by extension the novel's, preoccupation with telling her story is with the paradox of

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[17] Patrick Whelan – Catholic and a Fenian sympathizer, possibly the Patrick to whom Eileen gives Lanighan's gun – was hanged for McGee's assassination in 1869. His guilt is questioned, in part because of a letter he left with the sheriff regarding the murder. Many consider him to have been a scapegoat for a Protestant plot (Carstens and Sanford 246).

cultural memory: the dangers of living within it and the immense losses of abandoning it. Urquhart ultimately portrays the loss of the family's connection to the otherworld as tragic. Herb Wyile observes that "In the background of Esther's narrative swan song is the relentless operation of a limestone quarry (the curse of the mines realized), which is associated not with a recovery of the past but with the destruction of memory" ("Opposite" 42). Wyile points to Esther's ruminations on how things have changed since her grandmother's time: "in Eileen's world abandoned structures decomposed, sinking back into the landscape from which they had sprung. In Esther's lifetime she has seen architecture die violently. It has been demolished, burned, ripped apart, or buried. Nothing reclaims it" (Urquhart 135). In this mournful frame,

> Esther thinks of the million-year-old fossils that decorate these tones and how the limestone record of their extermination has brought about the demise of her own landscape, the enormous hole in the earth, the blanket of concrete dwellings that is obliterating the villages she knew as a child. (20-21)

She allegorizes the mine to such a degree that the men who work the night shift at the cement company are cast as figures of violence and historical ignorance, working in perpetual darkness, never bending "to the floor to rescue a fossil released by dynamite" (237). She describes them, ironically and spitefully, as "out of step with the rhythms of the rest of the world" and claims that they "represent the most dangerous kind of shape changers: those who cannot see, because of darkness, beyond the gesture of the moment" (238).

Derrida offers a critique of this kind of thinking. He explains that our inheritances do not end with the termination of a bloodline. As he remarks,

> All questions on the subject of being or what it is to be (or not to be) are questions of inheritance. There is no backward looking fervor in this reminder, no traditionalist flavor. Reaction, reactionary, or reactive are but interpretations of the structure of inheritance. That we are heirs does not mean that we have or that we receive this or that, some inheritance

> that enriches us one day with this or that, but that the being of what we are is first of all inheritance, whether we like it or know it or not. (67-68)

In part, Derrida is suggesting that we are defined – as Liam demonstrates so keenly – by the past to which we react. He is also suggesting that such elegies are unnecessary, even misplaced. Her fears are less about the loss of the past than about her own personal regrets.

This is an important reminder: much of the work of revising and recuperating the past in *Away* becomes part of Esther's regrets. Her summoning the past is marked nostalgically as a futile gesture against the encroaching brutality of the quarry: this is less a critique of progress and its imposition of colonial ideology than of lamenting the generalized loss of what it replaces. Anne Compton reads Esther's elegy as, evoking Margot Northey, a regenerative antithesis to the "industrial process that converts landscape into cement" (213). However, Esther's desolate descriptions of these workers comes at the beginning of the novel's final section, "The Trace of a Man on a Woman," which locates them in the context of Eileen's romantic and political involvement with Aidan Lanighan. As Esther's story argues, "The traces of wounds left behind by industry are permanent. Fragile architecture abandoned by settlers is not" (Urquhart 11). There is a worry here not about the loss of history as such, but about the loss of a certain *kind* of history. The image of the cement workers configures their work as political, the kind of work that later causes so much trouble for Eileen, as the kind of deliberately destructive and obscuring work that limits our proximity to the cycles of history represented by daemons and the natural landscape. Ghosts are a purer access to the past and Urquhart equates the work of political change with destructive toil. That this night crew ushers in the morning of Esther's death serves to cement them as representatives of the loss of historical consciousness. It is an image of fragmentation and confusion, of dissolution and loss:

> Now the land itself fragments, moves away from piers in boats named after histories towards other waters, other shores. No lamps at all are lit tonight in the empty house on Loughbreeze Beach. The men at the quarry, angered by something they don't quite understand, set their jaws

> and shift the gears of their equipment with grim forcefulness. Under the glare of artificial light the fossilized narratives of ancient migrations are crushed into powder. The scream of the machinery intensifies. (356)

The losses Esther mourns are those of the nationalist community that was mostly gone before she was even born. Like Eileen, there is a troubling romanticizing of magical thinking; unlike Eileen, Urquhart frames Esther's dying lament as the end of a cultural inheritance and, as such, a tragedy.

Conclusion

On the one hand, the spectral narratives that the drowned sailor and the *braucha* embody suggest that stories are necessary to strengthen communal ties, that stories are matters of survival. Esther's work is "recomposing, reaffirming a lengthy, told story, recalling it; calling it back. She also knows that by giving her this story all those years ago her grandmother Eileen had caused one circle of experience to edge into the territory of another" (Urquhart 133). The *braucha* is, herself, a healer, literally saving people by employing the same cultural knowledge that maintains her exile. On the other hand, Esther points out that this story, edging into the territory of another, exposes the rhetorical ploys by which notions of identity, home, and nation are constructed and foisted on less powerful individuals. As Esther notes, Eileen's story is designed to "put Esther in her place" (3) and, as such, is a part of a highly charged cultural discourse. That the *braucha* reminds her compatriots of Baba Yaga illustrates a similar point in *The Horseman's Graves.* Both Urquhart's and Baker's novels rely on the supernatural and mythic to highlight the contest between opposing worldviews as a means of sustaining a community. *Away*'s invisible ruins beneath the concrete graveyard recall the cemetery of *The Horseman's Graves* and the sadness implicit in both images is of a past that is forever out of reach.

This difficulty in deploying ghosts that occlude the same past that they are deployed to reveal is apparent in the way that *Away* and *The Horseman's Graves* use houses. As Esther's house carries with it the legacies of her family, so does the

braucha's cabin reveal the colonial history of Knochenfeld Parish. The decoration of the cabin, which has been bequeathed to Elisabeth, is a visual history of the region:

> on every inch of every whitewashed wall, a face, a hundred faces, five hundred, drawn there with charcoal from the fire, face after face after face, men and women, old and young, and when Leo had stared at those hundreds of faces long enough, individual faces began to emerge. (Baker 352-53)

There are charcoal drawings of people from the community – Mike and Marian Wieser, Art and Ma Reiss ("no one could mistake her"), Father Rieger, "Stolanus Schoff, his wife, the retarded son" (353) – in a gesture that transforms the *braucha*'s cabin into a genealogical record. In a Derridean sense, both the cabin and Esther's house are haunted: they, as Baker describes the cabin, house "all of the living, and the dead, too" (353). They are also cemeteries, where the *braucha*'s drawings, like Esther's stories, make them each a "place where the dead walked" (353). But they are also places that obscure. The cabin is notably lacking in any Aboriginal faces. Esther mourns the loss of her house, likely to be paved over by the expansion of the quarry, ignorant to the history that her home erased in its erection. That both novels approach the loss of this past in a dirgesome register suggests that the desire to speak to the dead is often borne out of nostalgia, a dangerous occluding force in itself. Ghosts can, these novels suggest, be powerful means of apprehending a past that is lost even as they can also become forces that themselves contribute to that loss.

Despite the fact that neither novel's narrators mention it, those two kinds of graveyards are reproductions of old settlements, continuing the transformation of a new land into an image of the old. The ghost stories that each graveyard summons is an unsettling force, but they are also occluding powers as well. They paradoxically suggest the powerful ways ghosts can reveal the painful legacies of the past while simultaneously stymying them. That the novel ends with Esther mourning the losses of one type of settlement's replacement by another, and that the spiritual connection to the landscape problematically positions Mary and Esther as a kind of indigenized settler-invaders, undermines the novel's marked suspicion of the kind

of romanticized vision of the past that both Mary and Esther embody. Similarly, Elisabeth's silence on the matter of her abuse, and the metamorphosis of that trauma into a ghost story that itself absorbs a tale of colonial abuse, enables settlers' old ghosts to overwrite the ghosts that Baker so powerfully reminds us are imperceptible for those unwilling to see.

That the past is always already lost is a distinctly Derridean gesture on the part of both novels. In *The Horseman's Graves,* the haunting of Cecilia's ghost signals how spectres can both unsettle historical narratives and obscure the very past that novels of fictional historiography seek to illuminate. With *Away*, even as the text powerfully uses ghosts to highlight how spectres can obscure lived realities, the novel at times succumbs to a sense of romantic longing for this very same mythical past. This is a more conflicted sense of haunting than what is present in *When Alice Lay Down With Peter*, where the most unsettling deployment of a ghost serves to highlight the ongoing legacies of colonialism. Both Baker and Urquhart have used historiography and haunting ambitiously to reckon with colonialism's legacies self-reflectively; they also demonstrate how spectres can serve to undermine the very work for which they are summoned.

Ultimately, both novels portray colonial inheritance as an immense and inescapable burden. They also, somewhat paradoxically, mourn the loss of the past, and participate in a project of recuperating it through the use of spectres. The latter, mourning the loss of cultural nationalisms, sometimes has the effect of portraying the hauntings of history as a form of nostalgia. There is a powerful sense of the past as a story, as a tale told through the lens of culture. In this respect, both novels deploy ghosts quite effectively to both revise colonial narratives of history and to prevent certainty about that history to become calcified. Both novels present ghosts as beings that transmit ideas that cannot be exorcised. Their focus on the loss of the past runs counter to a teleological sense of progress, or a Lukasian sense of the past as inevitable precursor to the present epoch, but that focus also downplays the ways in which the past continues to permeate the present. Both novels create a sense that the past is buried – either in an unmarked grave or under a concrete parkade – that isolates the present from the past, available only in collaborative imaginative

reconstruction. Both texts use that reconstruction to present awareness of the dangers of seeing the past through the lens of ghost stories, but both texts duplicate some of the obscuring effects of colonial historiography by viewing the past through too spectral a lens.

Chapter Three

"They're all dead now": Incomplete Healing in Ann-Marie MacDonald's *Fall On Your Knees*

"There came a time when everyone else was dead, but their words lived on in my book…There came a time when, all at once, I thought to myself, I am the book. I am the one who tells the story."
-- Douglas Glover, *The Life and Times of Captain N.*

"'Here, dear,' says Lily, 'sit down and have a cuppa tea till I tell you about your mother."
--Ann-Marie MacDonald, *Fall On Your Knees*

One of the common postcolonial projects of fictional historiography is a desire to revise a biased and incomplete historical record and, in so doing, to affect some measure of healing. This work of recuperation is part of the work of novels like *When Alice Lay Down With Peter*, *The Horseman's Graves*, and *Away* even as those novels reveal how deploying spectres can be a compromised gesture. As each of those novels demonstrates an affinity for the postcolonial project of revising incomplete or unjust versions of history, they also demonstrate how the ghost can both assist and detract from that aim. When looking at a novel such as Ann-Marie MacDonald's *Fall On Your Knees*, one can also observe how the desire for a more complete historical record is a gesture of healing. As with *When Alice Lay Down With Peter* and that novel's attempt to transcend colonialism's great sins, this gesture is complex, and MacDonald's use of spectres demonstrates some of the problems with imagining fictional historiography's revising of history can undermine its ability to offer a narrative of recuperation.

Fall On Your Knees is a novel that intervenes in exclusionary colonial narratives of Canadian history. As with *When Alice Lay Down With Peter* and *Away*, it is a multi-generational family saga. The novel charts the lives of the Piper family,

throughout a little more than the first half of the 20th century. Set predominantly in the multicultural landscape of Cape Breton Island, Nova Scotia, the novel has two notable excursions to New York City, where it concludes. Exploring the personal history of the Pipers, a Scots-Irish/Lebanese family, *Fall On Your Knees* deploys hauntings as it addresses controlling narratives of culture, race, gender, sexuality, the body, and the family. The ongoing presence of family signals other ways that the machinery of colonialism transmits itself: the family stands metonymically for larger communities, the nation in particular. MacDonald's novel charts the secrets and lies of the Piper family over decades; their figurative and literal hauntings; and their complicated cultural, religious, and racial histories. MacDonald uses spectres as an admonishment to revise historical narratives as well as to unsettle the ontological stability of the present moment. Like many other doubly haunted novels of fictional historiography, *Fall On Your Knees* uses ghosts to suggest that healing from history's many injustices is possible.

The novel begins with the interracial romance of James Piper, a piano tuner who wishes to be a performer, and the not-yet thirteen-year-old Materia Mahmoud, an exotic beauty of Lebanese descent. Disowned by her father for marrying an *enklese*, Materia gives birth to three daughters: Kathleen, Mercedes, and Frances. Frances is somewhat of a rogue in her family, a little too intelligent and rebellious to fit in to the more staid New Waterford community. She becomes a stripper in a bar, wearing her Girl Guide outfit and assuming a provocative and provoking attitude to the patrons. Mercedes embraces religion and sees herself as a mothering figure to Frances and, later, her "sister" Lily, particularly after Materia commits suicide. Kathleen, named after James's mother, is the eldest and the child upon whom James lavishes his devotion. She has a striking physical resemblance to his mother and looks almost nothing like Materia. As she pursues a promising career as an opera diva all the way to New York City, James's paternal tenderness transforms into incestuous abuse. Lily Piper grows up believing that she is Materia and James's fourth daughter when, in fact, she is the surviving twin that results from James's rape of Kathleen. Kathleen dies during an emergency C-section that Materia performs in their attic, where Kathleen is caged after James discovers her lesbian

romance with Rose Lacroix in New York and forcibly brings her home. Lily is haunted by the ghost of her twin brother Ambrose, who drowns as a baby when Frances tries to baptize him in the creek behind the Piper house. Lily eventually reunites with Rose, her spiritual if not biological mother, and Frances's son Aloysius, whose death Mercedes fakes in order to give him up for adoption without Frances's knowledge or consent.

Despite the overwhelming sense of loss that permeates the novel, *Fall On Your Knees* ends on an optimistic note. After the immense trauma that the Piper family suffers, trauma that also stands in for the myriad abuses of colonial power, the reconciliation between Lily, Rose, and Aloysius represents hope that colonial injustices can be healed. Unlike the hopeful ending of *When Alice Lay Down With Peter*, MacDonald's novel focuses its optimism on the work of reclamation rather than retreat, and unlike *The Horseman's Graves* and *Away* it is careful not to romanticize the loss of the past. The secrets that Lily belatedly discovers are matters of life and death, and their recovery is necessary for healing. The novel demonstrates the belief that reclaimed knowledge about the past has an essentially restorative quality: in fact, the imaginative reconstruction of fictional historiography becomes itself a means of healing. This is a potentially problematic vision as reclaiming the past is not necessarily sufficient to fix the wrongs it reveals. MacDonald seems to want to give her characters a happy ending at the risk of too settled a conclusion: all mysteries can be solved, all traumas can be met with grace. But equally problematic is the pessimistic view, that there is nothing that can be done, that the injustices of the past are simply ones we (victims to greatly varying degrees) must live with forever. MacDonald features spectres to motivate grace and forgiveness as a model of healing, a gesture that sits uncomfortably beside the novel's powerful focus on the unsettling historical narratives. Nevertheless, MacDonald's novel points to how spectres can unsettle colonialist narratives and highlight inherited injustices in order to facilitate healing, even as those ghosts indicate the complexities of fictional historiography's ability to depict such restorative work.

Spectres of the Repressed and Recurring

The spectres that haunt *Fall On Your Knees* are especially Derridean figures of ontological uncertainty and inheritance. MacDonald's primary purpose is, common to much of fictional historiography's double hauntings, to disrupt modes of knowledge and reveal our inheritances – particularly ongoing colonial and exclusionary injustices. MacDonald's ghosts accomplish this by highlighting repressed traumas and manifesting their inevitable recurrence. Unlike the spectres of Sweatman, Baker, or Urquhart's novels, MacDonald's ghosts are all, to varying degrees, figures of terror signaling that it is not a simple task confronting the legacies the present moment has inherited.

Ambrose is certainly the novel's most notable spectre, but the ghostly figure of Pete is the first apparition to appear in the novel. Pete appears after Materia forcibly baptizes a young Kathleen in the bathtub. He is a distorted version of the scarecrow James hangs in the garden, combining James and the spectral Holy Spirit: he appears after Materia warns Kathleen "against gazing too long into a mirror. If you like too well what you see there the devil will appear behind you" (93). Though Materia's warning emphasizes the sin of vanity, Kathleen's beauty is actually a danger to her insofar as it becomes a focus for James's constant doting. What seems to be exaggerated paternal devotion is something much more unsettling, and this disturbing future manifests in a demonic form in the mirror, peeking out of the "shadows behind her. His smooth stuffed head. His hat. His no ears. His no face" (94). Pete seems to be a form of James's self professed "demon" (76), an anthropomorphized manifestation of repressed or suppressed fear at James's incestuous desire. Pete's reappearance at Lily and Ambrose's birth evokes the horrifying reality of Kathleen's rape at her father's hands. Frances's dream of a faceless Materia, after James discards the scarecrow to bury Ambrose in his place, also reveals the persistence of family demons. Pete is a literal manifestation of the Piper family's deepest secrets and a reminder of the psychological trauma that has been inflicted upon them; he is also, however, premonitory. He presages Kathleen's (and later Frances's) horrific abuse and links the Mahmouds' treatment of Materia

to James's repressed desire to the marginalization of ex-centric groups in Cape Breton. He signals the Pipers' inherited traumas as forces of terror.

If Pete signals the horrors of suppressed or inherited traumas, Ambrose demonstrates MacDonald's sustained interest in the complexities of their transmission. Ambrose is, unlike Pete, not singularly a figure of dread. Ambrose does, certainly, unsettle the Pipers' sense of themselves. Frances is the initial vessel for Ambrose's appearance via the stories she tells to Lily. Claiming to be tasked with Lily's care by Kathleen, Frances swears Lily to secrecy and then shows her niece the family's christening gown, telling her that "'We were all baptized in it. Kathleen, Mercedes, me, you. And Ambrose'" (252). Lily doesn't believe the story of a brother she can't remember and Frances invents a story involving an orange cat that sucked the life out of Ambrose and would have done the same to Lily without Frances's intervention. Frances does, however, include a fair dose of truth: the cat housing Ambrose's soul drowned in the creek and James "'buried it in the garden. In the spot where the scarecrow used to be but now there's a stone'" (253). Ambrose, in his first appearances, is a signal to Lily from Frances that the official version of their family history is incomplete.

The second iteration of Ambrose's ghost is more material. Mercedes sees him, when she notices the door to her room open silently and sees "a whitish glimmer" that "moves into the slant of moonlight. And there – oh Mother of God – an unholy infant. Swathed in a mockery of the first holy sacrament" (257). This instantiation of Ambrose seems more the *bodechean*, the type of pagan demon that Kathleen believes Pete to be at times (119), and a figure of terror. However, the various instantiations of Ambrose mark him as having a shifting existence. Frances retreats from her veiled family history when she tells Lily that "'Ambrose is just a story'" (267) but almost immediately denies this, saying she "'changed her mind'" (269). Teasing Lily, she reverses course several times, leaving her niece/sister unsure about Ambrose and preventing his ghost from resting easily. It is not an accident that Frances helps Lily bury Mercedes's family tree, which Lily accidentally ruined, in the garden, in the same spot that Ambrose himself was buried.

Ambrose is also an unsettling figure in how he shifts from baby to man, from terror to protector. When Lily dreams a history she couldn't know – "Frances is standing in the creek in the middle of the night" while "holding a bundle in her skinny arms" (276) – it presages a visit from her brother's ghost:

> The first time Ambrose comes to Lily he is naked except for the decomposing bits of Frances's old white nightgown in which he was laid to rest. The shreds cling to him here and there, fluttering slightly because there's a bit of a breeze when Ambrose arrives. Safe and soundless in his garden womb, he has not been dreaming because he has not been asleep. He has been growing. His body is streaked with earth and coal but otherwise he is pale as a root. Although he is exactly the same age as Lily, he is full-grown like a man whereas she is still a little girl. This is because their environments have been so different. What colour is his wispy angel hair beneath the dirt and soot? Reddish. (279)

The vision is paradoxically horrifying and comforting until he opens his mouth and black water gushes out – a more horrifying image is hard to imagine. He has grown from the baby that Mercedes saw. He is a ghost who ages: though he drowns when he is mere minutes old, Ambrose grows up with, but not beside, his twin sister Lily. He is a repressed memory, a racially categorized object, and a threat to any easy reclamation. Yet Frances reads Ambrose's ghostly appearance as that of a guardian: "'Ambrose doesn't really care if you're bad or good, Lily," Frances claims; "'He just cares if you're okay. If you're happy […] Because he loves you'" (285). In part, this is Frances acting as a protector, trying to convert the terror of a nightmare into something else. Nevertheless, we cannot only read Ambrose's questionable status as Lily's "'guardian angel'" (285) as a touching and pathetic effort to transmute the family's trauma into a benevolent force: we later learn, near the end of the novel, that Kathleen made a promise to Rose to be her guardian angel.

Ambrose is the distorted fulfillment of that promise. Mrs. Luvovitz hears a singing voice the night Kathleen dies and finds it "Hard not to think '*banshee*' – sometimes they wail, sometimes they weep or just sing softly, but their message is always the same: someone will cross over" (199). In fact, that night, Kathleen's spirit

flies through the town and departs, possibly "all the way to Lebanon," her mother's homeland, "to sleep there in peace" (199). This is not a happy ending for Kathleen's spirit, not one that configures a triumphant reconciliation with her Lebanese heritage. It mournfully contradicts Kathleen's promise to Rose, revealed late in the novel, that her ghost will return: "'if I die before you, I'll come back'" (638). Similarly, Ambrose is not unambiguously a blessing: he may be a protector, but the form of that protection is not that of comfort. What he offers his twin sister is, in fact, deeply unsettling.

In this unsettling dimension, Ambrose is a particularly Derridean spectre. Frederic Jameson contends that the Derridean spectre says "that the living present is scarcely as self-sufficient as it claims to be; that we would do well not to count on its density and solidity, which might under exceptional circumstances betray us" (39). Ambrose represents, in other words, the uneasy confrontation with our complex historical and cultural inheritances: in his unsettling and unsettled nature, Ambrose embodies the mystery of that inheritance and its transmission. He signals that we cannot know all that we have inherited and he configures that inheritance at the level of the family, as a constitutive unit of a broader social apparatus like the nation. As Nancy J. Holland points out in "The Death of the Other/Father: A Feminist Reading of Derrida's Hauntology," family is one of the modes through which social values are transmitted, which Derrida emphasizes through the presence of the "F/father" in the work of mourning, personified by King Hamlet (65). She asks how family engenders debts, evoking Derrida's expressed desire in *Specters of Marx,* "*je voudrais apprendre à vivre enfin*" (xvii). Derrida notes that the expression cannot be fully translated as "*apprendre*" means both to learn and to teach. Holland rightly identifies this "magical" locution "as being passed from father to son" (65). In many ways, Ambrose represents both the inherently spectral nature of inheritance – even when it is overthrown, it is never gone – as well as the alien nature of its transmission.

This complexity in her spectres demonstrates how MacDonald negotiates the traumas of history's recurrences. Kathleen is a victim of more than just her father: she is a victim of the violent worldview he has inherited. As such, the troubles that

the Piper family endures stand in for a host of historical exclusions and injustices. The common project of many works of fictional historiography to revise the historical record without succumbing to historiography's conservative tendencies is fully at work in MacDonald's novel. Cynthia Sugars argues that the spectral dimensions of the novel are part of "a larger complex of social and historical meditation" (*CG* 208). When discussing the spectral in his book *Gothic Canada: Reading the Spectre of a National Literature*, Justin Edwards argues that spectres are a means by which writers have articulated anxieties about the persistent indefinability of any coherent Canadian identity. As a national affiliation that relies upon both colonial affiliation as settler/invaders and a desire to disavow that past in favour of a multicultural one, Canadian identity is indeed highly fraught. The hybrid Piper family, European and Middle Eastern, is racially other in the community of New Waterford. As it charts the rifts between Materia and her parents, the novel parallels this narrative with the experiences of black Canadians in the Maritimes, embodied by the Taylor family. As the only predominantly white Canadian in the novel's principal cast, James Piper's abuses of his family (emotional, physical, and sexual) recast the Piper domestic dynamic as a broader cultural narrative of marginalization and exclusion. Sugars cites Avery Gordon's *Ghostly Matters: Haunting and the Sociological Imagination* and its description of the "seething presence" (qtd in Sugars *CG* 208) of such legacies emerging as the occluded supplement of modernity: "slavery and racism, state authoritarianism, Enlightenment science, gendered repressions" (qtd in Sugars *CG* 208). MacDonald, Sugars argues, uses *Fall On Your Knees* to show "how the spectre of racial and ethnic intolerance undermines the consolidation of coherent settler-national identity" (208).

Indeed, James Piper animates most of the colonial traumas of the past, made material in the apparition of Ambrose. Though tragically not alone in his bigotry, Piper is the principal perpetrator of sexual violence and racial intolerance in the novel. Piper, whose family has inhabited Cape Breton for generations, is of Scottish-Irish stock; the Lebanese girl's exoticism partly fuels his initial attraction to Materia Mahmoud. Materia's father's wealth is not an unappealing element of her beauty:

James first meets the girl who will marry him when he is "summoned to tune the Mahmouds' grand piano" (11) for the celebration of New Year's Eve, 1898. James is eighteen and Materia is twelve. James's attraction also has much to do with Materia's mother, and James's feelings toward his own. James finds Materia's mother a strange, but appealing, hybrid: she speaks no English but learned Gaelic from selling products door-to-door with her husband, she offers him food that is neither "exotic" nor "horrible" (12), and "never spoke of her homeland" (13). That Gaelic was the language of James's mother, and the first language he spoke, immediately forges a connection with an otherwise foreign woman. Materia, then, is a manifestation of a comfortable exotic: a stranger who reminds James of the ways he himself was marginalized without challenging him to acknowledge her subjectivity or difference. When he meets this child for the first time, her physical differences are not what he registers: despite having the "darkest eyes he'd ever seen," he wants to say "'I know you'" (14).

Materia, however, soon becomes an entirely racialized being in James's eyes. After they marry, Materia's naïveté and immediate transformation into a mother curdle his affection. Just as his own father scorned his mother's Gaelic origins, James begins to find Materia's ethnic and cultural difference alien and repulsive. He explains angrily that he doesn't want their daughter Kathleen "growing up confused. Speak English'" (42). And, he charges, "on top of everything else," Materia "was dark" (45). He, ignorantly and ironically, bridles at assumptions from the Mahmouds about his cultural background: "What James resented most was the *enklese* nonsense. He wasn't English, not a drop of English blood in him, he was Scottish and Irish, like ninety percent of this God-forsaken island, not to mention Canada. Filthy black Syrians" (22). His own assumptions – that the Lebanese Mahmouds are Syrian, that Nova Scotia is ninety percent Scots-Irish – underline his kinship with Materia even as he refuses to see it. As the novel charts the range of lives and experiences outside the monolithic Canadian norm that James himself tortuously embodies, James's intolerance grows. He characterizes his wife as mentally deficient and blames her for all the variety his daughters represent (inter-racial

relationships and queer relationships, particularly, trouble him). Sugars describes James's authoritarian actions throughout the novel as "frantic measures to 'whiten' the family bloodline" that "leave in their wake a series of monstrosities that James will desperately attempt to cover over. In the process, the ghosts only multiply and plague the family for years to come" (209).

Kathleen, initially, embraces her father's rigid categorizations. Possessing "faery hair and fine deportment" (45), her "silky red-gold hair, green eyes and white white skin" (41), along with her paternal grandmother's perfect pitch and enviable singing voice, Kathleen meets James's criteria for female beauty. She calls her mother's language "barbaric yammer" which she can smell "hanging in the air while she's at school" (121). Even as a child, she rejects her mother's Catholicism; she "Tried not to understand" the songs, "worried that Daddy would know. And be hurt" (47). She warns Frances, after a visit from their maternal grandparents' maid, that "'you shouldn't take candy from strangers, Frances. Especially coloured strangers'" (149). It is only when she moves to New York, chasing her father's dream for her of becoming a classic opera diva that Kathleen begins to resist the roles assigned to her and her family.

The literal border crossing presages her own series of increasing transgressions of her father's accepted norms. Rose Lacroix is a jazz pianist whose white mother and African-American father have left her unable, unlike Kathleen, to pass as white. Kathleen and Rose meet when the latter is accompanying the former's singing instructor. Rose's piano playing gains power from pastiche, from a generically hybrid process of creation. Kathleen describes her first encounter with Rose's carnivalesque compositions as hearing "the most sublime, the most beautiful music. I thought it was Chopin at first, it was that romantic and thoughtful, but I knew it wasn't quite that, then I thought Debussy, it was dreamy enough but there was too much space in between some notes and not enough between others" (586). The contrast between "civilized" opera and Rose's virtuoso improvisations, as well as Kathleen's increasing love of jazz and blues, describe modes of resistance to the categorizations that mark James's worldview. This resistance rattles Kathleen's

stolid conception of the boundaries that govern her existence – "After listening to Miss Lacroix play in the mornings before class I feel like a total imposter with no musicianship" (587) – and begin the process of softening her inherited disdain for her mother's difference.

The diary sections of the novel, the "Hejira" book, parallel Kathleen's increasing embrace of otherness by charting her broader appreciation of music and her embrace of a more complex cultural and sexual identity. She sees "a coloured woman" on a streetcar and remembers some of her mother's words that she used to associated with barbarism and foul odour: "'*Salaam idEyyik*' she used to say. Bless your hands" (594). Through her relationship with Rose and generically hybrid music, Kathleen eventually discovers a kinship with her mother enough to try to convince herself in her diary that "I'm not ashamed of my mother" (619). As Rose points out, however, Kathleen is still dealing with much shame. She insists to Rose that "'I am pure white. My mother is white'" and that "I'm not ashamed of my mother, but I take after my father. My mother is devoid of ambition and not terribly bright'" (624). Rose's accusations that Kathleen is lying to herself lead to nausea, Kathleen's body torn between conflicting desires toward purgation. What Kathleen had seen in terms of dichotomies between purity and impurity is rocked by increasing awareness of a hybrid heritage and her lesbian desire. Her romance with Rose is cast as a liberating re-connection with her mother, and her own awareness of the senselessness of categories of purity and impurity – particularly placed, as it is, near the end of the novel.

Ambrose is the recurring spectral materialization of this inheritance of rigid categorizations and cultural exclusions that are implicit in colonial historiography. His ongoing presence is a sign that the social and cultural prejudices of one generation continue to haunt the next, even if their origin is occluded. James Piper and Ibrahim Mahmoud enforce strict categories of identity upon their children. Even Rose's mother, herself a victim of prejudice against interracial relationships, perpetuates the violence of social norms. Jeanne Lacroix is disgusted at her daughter's lesbian relationship with Kathleen and writes an anonymous letter to

James in 1918 that informs him of the connection between their daughters. She warns him that

> Your daughter is in grave danger. Knowing Kathleen to be of good family and blessed with prodigious musical gifts, I feel it my duty to you and to the world to sound the alarm. Sir, you are from another country and perhaps fortunate enough to be unfamiliar with the very term "miscegenation". (291)

Her accusation that Kathleen is "crossing nature's divide" is partly the result of the social condemnation she endured. Rather than creating empathy, it hardens her sense of rigid categories. It is, terribly, this letter that leads to James's rape of his daughter. The structural act of placing that formative trauma near the end of the novel disrupts its linear progression and creates a retrospective understanding that recasts the previous events. Corey Frost describes this as a "narrative rupture" that causes the story to "recursively retell the circumstances surrounding the trauma without telling" (209). To further illustrate the point, the novel foregrounds the official version of Kathleen's trauma that is a lie agreed upon: no one in New Waterford believes its authenticity, but it is an accepted fiction. Even in the novel, however, the rape is never named, never directly addressed. The revelation and simultaneous withholding of Kathleen's rape creates a recurring presence in the story that emphasizes the ways that hauntings permeate the novel.

Ambrose prevents this rape and Kathleen's trauma from being silenced or rendered palatable. He is the embodiment of James's fears: the ghost whose haunting signals the family's various secrets. These fears are more than just the concern that his abuse will be unveiled: Atef Laoyene argues that Ambrose represents "the haunting return of his father's fears of racial miscegenation" (137) and, I would add, fear of queer sexualities. Ambrose manifests the lie of the colonial, and illusory monocultural myth, the belief that James accepts, that difference is an infection. David Punter has highlighted how the returning spectre can stand as an index for the silenced Other of history. As Laouyene explains, "Hybrid and imagined though it is, Canadian national identity still feeds upon the chimera of an originary, mythopoeic idea of the nation, yet what that chimera usually spawns is an uncanny,

spectral otherness that keeps re-turning and haunting the nation at large" (137). James's actions, Cynthia Sugars contends, are best understood in the context of efforts to consolidate a coherent cultural identity "in the face of an increasingly uncontainable and fragmenting social world marked by hybridity and miscegenation" (*CG* 210). Sugars outlines the role of the spectre as one that signals the impossibility of silencing historical wrongs and as a means to identify the persistence of colonial modes of knowledge:

> MacDonald's novel reveals the ghosts of civilized intolerance and attests to the infusion of the everyday with the traces of racism's legacy, militating against the willed amnesia and violence that founds homogeneous national and familial identities, a condition that continues to inform conceptions of a purportedly postcolonial society. (210)

Ambrose, in other words, materializes "the horrors of racism's aberrant legacy" (210).

As such, MacDonald's ghosts constantly remind us of the colonial legacies they embody. Indeed, the losses for which Ambrose stands metonymically are considerable throughout the novel. The costs to those marginalized by colonial ideologies such as those of James Piper are devastating and enduring. The women of the Piper family primarily bear these losses. Materia is, perhaps, the novel's most pathetic figure and she demonstrates many of the other forms of inheritance that Ambrose manifests. After her parents reject her for marrying James Piper, Materia "was dead" to her family "from that day forth" (21). The Luvovitz family even recognizes her as spectral after this denunciation: "'Maybe she's a ghost'" (33), they wonder. MacDonald characterizes the house Materia and James move into – built by Ibrahim Mahmoud "so he wouldn't have to toss them from his doorstep a year from now when they turned up destitute. Such a thing would kill his poor wife" (20) – from the first as filled with ghosts: "just because it was new, doesn't mean it wasn't haunted" (21). James even "admits that there are places and times which he avoids in his own home" (258). Built by and enclosing the rigid attitudes that confine her, the house is not comforting to Materia. Only the attic becomes something of a refuge, at least initially, and demonstrates that her leaving the Old Country need not

actually be "for ever." The attic is where Materia keeps her hope chest; though James believes it to be empty "because she had nothing to put in it," in fact, Materia "kept it empty on purpose, so that nothing could come between her and the magical smell that beckoned her into memory" (30). After Kathleen's birth, with her startlingly fair complexion, and James's increasing doting upon their daughter, Materia finds less and less comfort in the smell of the hope chest. That the attic becomes the site of Kathleen's imprisonment and death (during a C-section Materia chooses to perform out of Catholic duty to save the babies, though she knows it will kill her daughter) deprives Materia of even this small comfort.

Ambrose's spatial attachment to the attic emphasizes the haunted nature of that site. The domestic space is always already haunted, and embodies the generational and undisclosed traumas that the Piper women suffer. Kathleen haunts that attic after the birth of her twins. She is confined to the attic for the duration of her pregnancy upon her return from New York. In addition to bearing the weight of his sexual assault, Kathleen's imprisonment in the attic is tied up with James's racism as he "hates blacks, he just doesn't want them near his bloodline" (449). The Pipers' house contains these horrors and more: Kathleen's visions of Pete, Kathleen's mutilated corpse, James's drunken presence scaring Frances into dropping Ambrose in the river while baptizing him, Materia committing suicide as Lily nearly dies of polio, Mercedes witnessing James molesting Frances. Women's bodies – Kathleen, Materia, Lily, Rose, and Frances particularly – are inscribed with "irrational anxiety about ethnic, cultural and racial difference" (Staels 325), a patriarchal domination that cannot abide transgression of its codifying of sex, gender, and power. The recurring motif of nausea – Kathleen's urge to vomit after attempting to come to terms with her conflicted feelings about her mother and her own heritage, James's vomiting after his first arousal at Kathleen's presence (74), Mercedes's nausea after seeing James molest Frances after Kathleen's funeral (207) – undercuts what revised history exists in "The Official Version" (203) of the events surrounding Kathleen, Ambrose, and Materia's deaths. In that story there was only one baby, Materia is the mother, Kathleen died of influenza. The truth behind the

official version haunts both the house – in Ambrose's spectral form – and the lives of the Pipers.

The haunting of the domestic space signals the perpetuation of paradigms of gender, race, and class. In *The Poetics of Space*, Gaston Bachelard describes what he calls "the maternal features of the house" through imagery that conflates the structure of a house with the figure and body of a nurturing mother. The house is a place of safety, where, like a womb, "Life begins well, it begins enclosed, protected, all warm in the bosom of the house" (7). The gendering of the domestic space, according to Mieke Bal, is contradictory: it is supposedly the proper place for women but is simultaneously the site for the reproduction of the patriarchal family. She argues that "in the house fatherhood establishes itself; the house becomes fatherhood's synecdochic metaphor" (171). The house is the "site, or the signifier, of descent, of patriliny" (172), the centre of an outwardly expanding realm of patriarchal power which links the house of the father to the house as familial unit (as in the House of Abraham) to the house as representing the nation.

That the house should be a constant source of anxiety for the Pipers is not surprising. As Joel Baetz argues, MacDonald uses spectres in *Fall On Your Knees* "to describe a condition of vexed belonging or possession; the uncanny is mapped onto spaces where identity — national, ethnic, racial, gender, sexual — is settled and unsettled, confirmed and called into question" (76). As a gift designed to perpetuate Materia's, and her daughters', exile from her family, the property illustrates James Piper and Ibrahim Mahmoud's similar concern over lineage. Kathleen's lesbian desire is subsumed into the attic, where Materia's past has also been locked away in the hope chest. In Althusserian terms, the house interpellates a particular form of feminine subjectivity: "the house *addresses* the woman in terms of certain *places* or roles, and the woman then recognizes and constitutes herself as a subject within that place" (Geyh 109). The house, with its rooms and physical perimeters, illustrates the construction, createdness, and maintenance of material and symbolic boundaries; the house becomes ideologies, particularly those of the patriarchal family, made concrete. The haunting of the house – be it Ambrose's physical apparition or James's inability to break with the past – represents more than the

material structures of the Pipers' home: the institutions and ideologies represented by the house as similarly haunted.

As such, the haunting of the Pipers' domestic space reveals the colonial worldview upon which their, and by extension our, present moment relies. The Pipers' house represents the haunted psyche of the various Pipers. In a very Freudian and Gothic turn, the attic becomes an unsettling site of repressed and suppressed secrets for James. James, eager to avoid his childhood memories, associates the attic with repressed trauma and his role in suppressing his wife and daughters. As Kathleen's prison, the attic is the locus of James's miniature recreation of colonial power dynamics. It is, as Bal would suggest, a site of perpetuation. James revisits past traumas upon his own family: as James becomes increasingly like his father – violent, prone to alcoholism, forbidding his wife to speak to her children in her native language – Kathleen's death closely mirrors her namesake's. The shared hauntedness of the attic demonstrates the way that James is himself bound by the persistence of the past and only deepens the tragedy of his inability to do anything but repeat old injustices. Frances, understandably preoccupied with death, manages this trauma by conceiving of her whole family as spectral: "'We are the dead," she tells Lily, "except we don't know it. We think we're alive, but we're not. We all died the same time as Kathleen and we've been haunting the house ever since'" (367). Frances uses stories about ghosts, much as MacDonald does generally throughout the novel, to undermine certainty in our ontological status. She also points to the whole family as ghostly as a way of articulating how they are each, like Ambrose, representatives of historical injustices that are both undiagnosed and ongoing.

Indeed, the hauntings that pervade *Fall On Your Knees* highlight the persistence of these ideologies and their subtle transmission into the present. There is a violent cost, as James so tragically embodies, to these ideologies of cultural and sexual exclusion. The struggles of the Pipers, the Mahmouds, and the Lacroixs with the nature of their cultural inheritances speak to the haunted narratives which *Fall On Your Knees* foregrounds. That MacDonald communicates these narratives through spectres demonstrates how ghosts can direct attention at injustices and traumas too obscured by time and history to ever see clearly. These hauntings also

underscore the recurring nature of these traumas. This engagement highlights the temporal nature of such a narrative, evoking Ralph Ellison's description of the racialized being in *The Invisible Man*. Invisibility, Ellison writes,

> gives one a slightly different sense of time, you're never quite on the beat. Sometimes you're ahead and sometimes behind. Instead of the swift and imperceptible flowing of time, you are aware of its nodes, those points where time stands still or from which it leaps ahead. And you slip into the breaks and look around. (11)

For Ellison's narrator, time has a musical component; it also has a recurring nature. Invisibility – a presence marked as an absence – is a form of haunting, and Ellison's novel echoes the concern at the heart of *Fall On Your Knees* about how the past recurs in unsettling ways. Ambrose's ghostly recurrence suggests both that the immense traumas of racial and ethnic marginalization are cyclical and ever-present. Ambrose, notable among other attributes for his ghostly and ghastly pallor, is a racialized Other who recurs and who cannot be understood in the bounds of linear time. His spectral presence, his impossible ageing, marks him as one of "those points where time stands still" as well as one "from which it leaps ahead." As the result of James's rape of Kathleen upon his discovery of her lesbian relationship, and the spiritual son of Kathleen and Rose, Ambrose manifests both the silenced stories of those marginalized by colonial historiography and the traumas whose persistence marks the present moment.

The Unsettled Restorative Power of Historical Revelations

MacDonald's use of ghosts to unsettle historical narratives and manifest recurring traumas is part of a common postcolonial maneuver: to reveal the troubled past in order to process it and move forward. This is, to some degree, what all fictional historiography implicitly suggests. Where MacDonald's novel proves a more compelling and nuanced example than those of Sweatman, Baker, and Urquhart – despite those novels' genuine accomplishments – is in the way that Ambrose is not an object of knowledge that can be foreclosed. Ambrose is not a

benevolent spirit or a sign of the paradoxical need and burden of cultural continuity. He is, rather, a force that drives secrets into the open and, as such, contributes more to a narrative of healing than of assuaging guilt. What MacDonald's novel also demonstrates, however, is how this gesture of restoration can undermine the unsettling required to highlight a trauma's persistence.

The gesture of recuperation that Ambrose suggests is Derridean. Derrida speaks of "the coming of the other, the absolute and unpredictable singularity of the *arrivant as justice*" (*SM* 33). He calls this coming "the messianic" and argues "that this messianic remains an *ineffaceable* mark – a mark one neither can nor should efface" that is a matter "of *inheriting*, of the experience of inheritance in general" (33). Without the ghost to qualify our inheritance, "justice risks being reduced once again to juridical – moral rules, norms, or representations, within an inevitable totalizing horizon (movement of adequate restitution, expiation, or reappropriation)" (34). In other words, we *need* to be unsettled in order to prevent our attempts at justice being reduced to the rote enforcement of rules.

From the outset *Fall On Your Knees* frames itself as concerned with how fictional historiography can be a productive means to healing. The novel begins with a series of images that capture both the novel's spectral and historiographic dimensions: a series of photographs – a paradox, since they act both as *aide-mémoire* and fraudulent representation of the Piper family – in a prologue entitled "*Silent Pictures.*" It is a moment of Derridean haunting, an opening into the future and into the past, simultaneously, time outside of time. The pictures set the scene for what follows and has already come: the first one is the image of New Waterford, "the town where they lived" (1). It is an idyllic night scene, but also one that demands participation. The narrator employs the second person to urge the reader to "Imagine you are looking down from the height of a church steeple," (1) casting the town in the shadow of the Christian faith as well as the historical imagination of the reader. A picture of the Piper house follows, wealth implied by its size relative to the miners' houses in the company town, creating a narrative for the Pipers that the novel will soon undermine. Pictures of the family, then: a photograph of Mumma (Materia) "the day she died," June 23, 1919; "a picture of Daddy [James]" asleep in

the armchair in which he will later die; and Mercedes with her opal rosary. The pictures stop as "There are no pictures of Ambrose" and Other Lily who "lived a day, then died before she could be baptized, and went straight to limbo along with all the other unbaptized babies and the good heathens" (3). That the narrator conceives of Ambrose and Other Lily as two distinct people, the former baptized while the latter not, frames the Piper family tree as fluid from the outset. Francis is not in her picture yet, which is a film taken at night of the creek behind the Piper house. Though "this is a moving picture, it is also a silent one" (4), and so when Frances enters the frame we do not know why Frances is in the middle of the creek at night and what is in the bundle she holds. We are then told that "All the pictures of Kathleen were destroyed. All except one. And it's been put away" (4).

The novel ultimately uses these pictures to suggest that art is our only means of accessing the past as more than illegible or even deceptive fragments, and our best hope at healing its wounds. History alone is insufficient to give us a sense of the past: the pictures are a mix of real objects – the photographs of Materia, James, and Mercedes Piper; the pictures of the town and house – that tell us nothing of the characters' suffering, and unreal – the movie of Frances, taken on a night no one could have filmed her – that demand interpretation. The spectres of these images haunt the narrator that speaks to an audience that is not revealed until the end of the novel to be Frances's son, Anthony (named Aloysius by his mother, before he was given up for adoption). That Anthony is the object and subject of the narration, that his subjectivity doubles with that of the reader, presents this story as one that is of universal as well as personal consequence. It also presents the novel itself, and the form of fictional historiography, as the best means to heal the ruptures that the photographs obscure. It is through the novel that Anthony comes to learn his (our) past and through the novel that he (we) can be reconciled to it. As Atef Laouyene suggests, the ghost in *Fall On Your Knees* "allows a re-visiting of the traumas of the past in such a way as to facilitate their mourning in the present" (128).

Further, the novel's opening line informs us that "They're all dead now" (1). Any reconstructive effort, the novel suggests at the outset, requires the work of talking to ghosts. The implication is especially Derridean in that the dead continue

to exert power on the living. Those first words – "They're all dead now" – highlight the opacity of the past, its fundamental inalienability, even as the photographs reveal a certainty in its existence. The past is a thing that needs to be reconstructed imaginatively, though that reconstruction can yield access to some measure of truth: there is no doubt in the novel that the story pieced together for Anthony is a true one. Summoning the past is like the movie of Frances as she (we later learn) drowns her brother/nephew Ambrose when trying to baptize him: it is an act for which there is no documentary evidence but which functions metonymically for the many silences in the colonial historical record. In both the reconstruction of the past – which Lily must accomplish, being an inheritor of this historical trauma – and in the engagement with Ambrose's ghost, MacDonald characterizes the possibility of reconciliation as always already spectral.

Fall On Your Knees characterizes the haunted and haunting work of fictional historiography as an artistic reconfiguration of the past. Throughout the novel, art serves a psychological function for providing an avenue to explore trauma too painful to confront consciously. MacDonald illustrates this most painfully in Frances's witnessing of Kathleen's blood-soaked corpse in the Pipers' attic, after the emergency C-section that delivered Lily and Ambrose. When she sees Kathleen,

> Frances is young enough still to be under the greater influence of the cave mind. It will never forget. But it steals the picture from her voluntary mind – grand theft art – and stows it, canvas side to the cave wall. It has decided, "If we are to continue functioning, we can't have this picture lying around." So Frances sees her sister and, unlike her father, will forget almost immediately, but, like her father, will not get over it. (179)

That MacDonald configures the repressed memory as a painting, as an object of art, underlines the work of novels of fictional historiography: a representation of a trauma that once needed to be hidden but that will eventually need to be seen in order to better understand its persistence. The scene is complex and fraught, however, and demands a nuanced engagement with spectres. Frances, after all, requires the suppression of these memories "to continue functioning": she

suppresses them in order to survive a trauma that she, at not even six years old, cannot hope to comprehend.

In fact, Frances's vision recalls her father's attempt to process Kathleen's death. Kathleen's death reminds him of his mother's death:

> What can you do with such a picture? You never want to see it again yet you can't bring yourself to burn it or slash it to dust. You have to keep it.
>
> *Put it in the hope chest, James. Yes. That's a good place for it. No one ever rummages in there*. This is crazy, of course. You can't stuff a memory of a moment into a real-life hope chest as if it were a family heirloom. But for a second James feels as though that's what he's looking at – an old portrait that he hid in the hope chest many years ago and just stumbled upon again. (176)

James's desire to hold on to the memory of his mother's death, to retain access to this trauma, is his deeply buried drive to be a different man this his own father – a man whom James loathes and paradoxically imitates. Despite this drive, James refuses to come to terms with his past. There is a clear correlation between his refusal to acknowledge his history and the repetition of his inherited habits: James does not understand his inheritances because he refuses to see them, because he refuses to speak to ghosts.

Ambrose, like Frances's hidden painting, is a figure whose presence is terrifying but ultimately restorative. Like the work of fictional historiography, he embodies the necessity of confronting the horrors of racism's – and, more generally, colonialism's – aberrant legacy. *Fall On Your Knees* is a text organized around the recurring image of the family tree, suggesting that such legacies are built into the fabric of the nation at an atomic level. The chart of genealogy constitutes historical and social limits on identity, and in a Derridean sense, remains forever incomplete. It is worthwhile to speak to ghosts such as Ambrose, precisely because they trouble our normative ontologies. Sara Matthews, Trish Salah, and Dina Georgis comment in their "Introductory Notes – Memory Foretelling the Story: Essays on *Fall On Your Knees"* for a special issue of *Canadian Review of American Studies* (35.2, 2005) that for those who occupy normative positions in social relations, discourses of

difference may "decentre the very terms of their own identity and hence trouble the grounds of intelligibility upon which the self is supposed, coalesced and recognized," while those who experience the normative order as always already a site of estrangement are "caught between the misrecognition and negotiation of stereotypes imposed by the discourses of otherness" (98). MacDonald's novel, they argue, positions reading across difference as a practice that may pay attention to what Michel Foucault calls "subjugated knowledges" in *The History of Sexuality.* These knowledges are local, discontinuous, disqualified, and illegitimate and the critical practice they advocate in approaching *Fall On Your Knees* is not a mimicry or attempt to re-articulate these knowledges; rather, it is one that "transgresses the stabilities of the representational across the stories of our own differences" (131). Ambrose highlights the ways that those differences, those subjugated knowledges, both constitute and disrupt in productive ways.

Indeed, the novel's spectres demonstrate how MacDonald considers the work of fictional historiography to be essentially recuperative while mitigating the type of mimicry Matthews, Salah, and Georgis warn against. For instance, many years after Kathleen's death, Materia's death, and the death of Materia's mother, Giselle, Frances attempts a complex reconciliation with her maternal grandfather. After making a habit of stealing from Ibrahim, Frances decides to dance the *dabke* that Materia had taught her years before. Frances performs an act of near-seduction on her grandfather, "Swirling and swaying and quarter-turning, hips beckoning, fingers twinning in air, wrists caressing one another above her head, the pearls of her veil swinging to the rhythm of the reeds, the drums and the wailing voices of the love song" (423). She summons the ghost of her grandmother, highlighting the proximity of the past to the present while also emphasizing its incommensurate distance. This dance stirs desire in Mahmoud, and the use of "caressing," as well as "closer" and "shimmering" in other passages recall the same language that appear in the sex scenes featuring Kathleen and Rose. As with Kathleen and Materia's partial reconciliation through Rose, Frances demonstrates her own desire to find healing with her mother through reclaiming her lost history and she manages to grant her grandfather a complex gift in an act of mutual grace. The healing act of artistically

reconstructing her cultural past permits a moment of rapprochement in a text where such experiences are rare and hard-fought. Such a summoning is essentially healing: for a moment, Ibrahim Mahmoud is not the rigid voice of cultural exclusion, the colonial mimic who duplicates the conditions of his own marginalization. This presages Frances's eventual reconciliation with her own father, and the novel's optimistic reconstitution of the Piper family tree. Frances is, eventually, able to find peace despite the many traumas she has suffered and inherited. Lily's narrating of the novel to Aloysius represents the purpose of these hauntings as a necessary coming to terms – with a legacy of racial and social exclusions, with a legacy of homophobia, with a legacy of domestic violence – that creates the space necessary for healing.

That *Fall On Your Knees* ends in the 1960s – an historical moment associated with transition and radical political movements – attaches the novel to the rise of feminism, the Civil Rights campaign, increasing awareness of gay rights, and the seeds of Canada's policies of multiculturalism. The novel's temporal span suggests both the persistence of the horrors of colonialism's aberrant legacies, as well as a hopeful movement away from the tyrannical figures such as James and toward reconciliation, particularly as the novel ends with Frances's mixed-race and illegitimate child Aloysius finding his aunt Lily in New York living with her mother's lover Rose. He gives them a family tree that has them "'all in it'" (695), a gesture of reconciliation by Mercedes. Anthony, who didn't know his past, is surprised by "the reeling sense of the family awash with the foreign" (695), through the new family tree. He joins Lily as she continues the process of healing old wounds by telling him about his mother. Ambrose stands in for this version of the talking cure, of healing by imaginatively reconstructing the past.

This is, indeed, the narrative trajectory of MacDonald's novel: the grisly painting that Frances must hide is eventually taken out again when it can be properly remembered and mourned. Atef Laouyene describes the presence of the spectre in the novel as one that "not only blurs the boundaries separating reality from illusion, but it also triggers a process of remembering that eventually leads to the collective re-witnessing and ultimate working through of trauma" (128). As

Sugars explains, Frances's cave images are the "real" scenarios "whose shadows emerge, in encrypted form, in the various songs, stories, lies, and games with which she torments Lily" (*CG* 210). The truth of the family's secret does, in fact, lie in the illusions that Frances casts, the work of disentangling them a task that requires the participation of more, even, than just her family. For MacDonald in this novel, that work is collective, a feat of common labour, a shared task in which those affected by the traumatic event (the victims, the victimizers, the witnesses) collectively reconstruct the event in order to heal. Laouyene describes the novel's teleology as "a sort of inter-subjective empathy or an affirmative osmosis, as it were, by virtue of which the subject(s) may be released from the debilitating hold of trauma" (128). For Laouyene, the "repetition compulsion dynamic, to which the characters often fall victim, is resolved once the traumatic event in question is commonly remembered, narrated, and passed on from one generation to another" (128).

The novel, for all the traumas that it reveals, is generous in providing happy endings. There is an overwhelming sense that each injured party is not too damned to receive grace. The emphasis is a hopeful one, that colonialism's immense injustices need not be perpetually destructive and that those who must endure its abuses retain their humanity and agency. Derrida's claims help articulate this conception of spectres; in *Specters of Marx*, part of the power of confronting ghosts revolves around the promise that critical examination of the instabilities and exclusions of past political action offers a messianic promise of justice and redemption (which, for Derrida, can act as inspiration for a "New International"). This is certainly, as Jason Kosnoski suggests, a Utopian vision. Spectres of the "excluded past, present, and even future" must "be not only welcomed but integrated into one's experience as polite company" (513). This is the work of mourning, of embracing rather than exorcising the existence of the previous political act that conjured the spectres in the first place. This is the work of imagining the new of which spectres are a necessary component.

This healing has a complicated relationship to the novel's spectres, however. In *Fall On Your Knees*, it is not in communicating with the dead that healing occurs but in showing grace to those who have committed wrongs. This focus on grace can

obscure the risks of reclaiming histories lost to racism's aberrant and abhorrent legacy. Linda Hutcheon's *A Poetics of Postmodernism* argues that, since the 1960s, postmodern art has moved away from "the language of alienation (otherness) to that of decentering (difference)" (62). However, as Susanne Becker points out in *Gothic Forms of Feminine Fiction*, "the awareness of difference – in the sense of gender, race, class, and so on – that has been a radical cultural, intellectual and theoretical force throughout the last twenty years has now become 'institutionalised', and thus domesticated into 'political correctness'" (285). It is not a useless gesture to work to identify difference, but there is a loss when such conversations do not account for otherness. Indeed, critics such as Melanie A. Stevenson and Pilar Somacarrera take issue with MacDonald's subscription to multiculturalism as an alternative to the racial and sexual intolerance that still informs relationships in Canada.[18] Indeed, MacDonald undermines much of the novel's unsettling work by providing such clear and unambiguous healing. In so doing, *Fall On Your Knees* limits its ability to illustrate the persistence of the very intolerance that it works to bring to light. As Ambrose all but disappears from the novel, MacDonald reveals that his purpose is to reveal the traumas that will eventually be healed rather than to remain a persistent reminder of their effects.

These effects are, indeed, enduring: as James wounds his daughters, they themselves wound others. The unprocessed traumas of the injustices they suffer exert an unsettling influence over their actions. Frances seduces Leo Taylor by faking a drowning that compels him to bring her back to life. Leo's sister-in-law

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[18] Stevenson argues that novel resists "the modern idea that racial identity is a fluid social contract" (34) while Somacarrera suggests that MacDonald relies too heavily on the subversion of gothic conventions. Other critics disagree: Katarzyna Rukszto argues that the novel unequivocally exposes "the limits of multiculturalism as a basis for imagining community and nation," for multiculturalism, she notes, hinges upon a reductive classificatory principle that identifies and defines specific cultural groups in terms of their race, origin, language, religion, customs, and so on (25). Rukszto, rather, contends that the novel's resistance of punishing codes of behaviour and being is in its "queerness of difference" (21), a concept that describes a resistance to normative racial, sexual, and gender categories of identification of fluid otherness, of transgressive affirmation of flexible, elusive, and indefinable identity (25).

Teresa tries to kill Frances – who, in addition to inserting herself into Leo's marriage has also been stealing from Ibrahim Mahmoud, for which Teresa was blamed when she was about to become his second wife – by shooting her. However, after the shooting, Teresa helps Frances come to a moment of belated reconciliation with her mother, assuring the injured girl that it was Materia who comforted the bleeding Frances and not Teresa herself. When the police come to arrest Adelaide Taylor by mistake, only to realize Teresa was the shooter, Teresa is singing "A West Indian lullaby" to Frances, her "hand rests lightly on Frances's forehead" (513) in a form of benediction. Frances prevents Teresa's arrest when she claims "I did shoot myself" and, in this complicated act of mutual forgiveness, finds a way to take "Teresa's hate away" (514). That Frances is in love with Teresa permits her to frame her shooting as being inseminated anew: as Gabriella Parro argues, the "bullet provides Frances with a way of having her baby with a person she loves" (188) and a chance to fulfill the love that Kathleen and Rose were denied.

Frances, herself, is transformed after receiving and bestowing grace. Mercedes notes that "This new Frances says thank you; is careful of her health, looks forward to being a mother" (521). She is even suddenly possessed of skills that she seemed to lack, such as "a natural talent in the kitchen," which Mercedes likens to "one of those strange persons who awake one morning and play the complete works of Bach with never a lesson" (536). The changes Frances undergoes enable her to heal others, as well. After forgiving and being forgiven, Teresa is able to get pregnant herself and she "gives birth to a perfect baby girl she calls Adele Claire. Adelaide was right. Hector still works" (514). Teresa's invalided husband – broken in body and spirit by the weight of an injury, his marginalized position, and the institutional and social racism he feels unable to combat – is granted some form of bodily healing by dint of Teresa and Frances's rapprochement. Nearly all wounds can be healed, the novel suggests. Particularly in the context of Christian forgiveness, the title of the novel, a phrase from the Christmas carol "O Holy Night," is a call to prostrate oneself in awe or in penance before the presence of the ineffable. The original French version of the song "Cantique de Noël" calls for "Peuple à genoux, attends ta deliverance," which is a more stoic and expectant image

than the injunction of its English translation. MacDonald's novel is filled with the overwhelming confrontation with the sublime that characterizes the English interpretation. That Frances's pregnancy results in the birth of Aloysius, who appears at the apartment shared by Lily and her mother Rose to reunite the broken family, is a further sign of the novel's focus on healing through grace: ineffable mercy seems the only means to overcome a force as pernicious as colonialism.

Indeed, there is a soul-crushing amount of tragedy that befalls, and is inflicted by, the Pipers. In addition to the myriad abuses James inflicts, the rejection of the Mahmouds, and Frances's various selfish acts, Mercedes's untended wounds lead her to visit misery on others. Having repeatedly deferred her own happiness – she sacrifices her romantic interest in Ralph Luvovitz on the altar of her increasingly fervent Catholicism – she becomes James and Frances's caretaker. Mercedes's religious devotion and refusal to offer or receive forgiveness evokes her father's earlier desperate grip on nebulous and exclusionary conceptions of the good as a way of avoiding the infinitely deferred work of speaking with ghosts. She destroys James's cheques to charity because she determines, and not incorrectly, that "this family cannot survive on" only her "female junior teacher's salary" (545). Mostly, however, she is upset that the role she had been forced to assume – that of surrogate mother to Frances and Lily – will be obsolete with the arrival of Frances's baby. She resents Sister Saint Eustace for making her "feel like the bad one – when everyone knows that she's the good one" (546) for suggesting that the baby be put up for adoption. She rejects Adelaide's offer to raise the child with Leo and, instead, lies to Frances about the baby's fate. First, she resists Frances's desire to have Mrs. Luvovitz help deliver the baby at the Pipers' home, instead pressing for a convent out of town. Mercedes arranges for the baby to be taken from Frances while she sleeps and invents a story of Crib Death to cover her tracks: "'He just died, Lily. Sometimes it happens, a baby just dies in its sleep, they don't know why'" (555). Lily escapes Mercedes's plans for her to travel to Lourdes and to seek healing for her polio-damaged legs by travelling to New York. However, Anthony/Aloysius's eventual appearance at Lily and Rose's apartment is at Mercedes's urging. She is the one who assembles the belated family tree that includes all of the various members

of the Piper family – including Rose. She is an agent of reuniting her family, and demonstrates a transformation as startling as Frances's in her addition of those who she, like James, had long excluded.

The possibility of healing is nowhere more complex than in the figure of James Piper. Derrida's injunction to speak to ghosts, and his warning about ignoring those liminal figures, helps account for James's position in the novel. He, more than any other character, refuses to speak to ghosts. He denies his inheritances and denies them to his children: he forbids his daughters from speaking Arabic, as his father insisted that his mother not speak Gaelic to him. Though Frances and Lily create a private, hybrid language of Gaelic, Lebanese, and English, James is stubbornly unwilling to see any similarities to the private language he shared with his mother. James's racism and abusive nature arise from his steadfast refusal to properly account for his suppressed traumas, his recalcitrance in the face of any possibility of empathy. He is more than vile: he is a rapist, a racist, and vicious to his family; he accrues through his repeated sins a sense that he is representative of every sin which exclusionary colonial history has committed. Yet, as Gabriella Parro points out, James is the "one who receives forgiveness" (191).

In the novel's model of grace and forgiveness, James Piper is integral to *Fall On Your Knees*'s project of healing. If James Piper, in many ways symbolic of colonial hypocrisy, can receive forgiveness it is because those he wounded are resilient enough to offer it. His forgiveness is not easily won, nor a tacit acceptance of his misdeeds. Parro claims that James's "psychological state is a mystery to characters and readers" (191) but this is only partly true: his obsession with his demon (the embodiment of his incestuous desire for Kathleen) is the driving force of his life and MacDonald present his racism either directly or filtered through the words of his daughters. After Kathleen's death and Materia's suicide, James is not a changed man: his sexual abuse of Frances suggests that an Oedipal conception of his rape of Kathleen as a stand-in for his lost mother is insufficient to account for his horrific acts. MacDonald goes to some length to establish both a psychological antecedent for his abuse, as illustrated by James's own father, as well as contextualizing his violent racism, misogyny, and homophobia. His library, "Fairy-tales and Freud"

(527), offers further access into his psychological state. We see continual glimpses of James's frame of mind obliquely: for instance, after becoming aroused while holding Kathleen after striking her for misbehaving, James has sex with his wife. We learn that "The next night, Materia conceived Mercedes" (75). His sublimated desire continually escapes the hope chest of his memory, providing a somewhat thorough accounting of James's fragile mind.

When James transforms and finds healing, it is not through a confrontation with a ghost. James does not see Ambrose, and his healing is not predicated on any conscious work of mourning. As such, his healing does not involve acknowledging the past or the persistence of his crimes, nor does it challenge him to live in respect for the subjectivity of others. An outside force rehabilitates him: James suffers a stroke that changes his personality. In the section of the novel entitled "The Bullet," which includes Frances's own transformation after being shot by Teresa, we learn that, after blowing up his illegal still, "James has had his first stroke. But no one knows it, not even James" (521). In fact, "The stroke itself was actually a pleasant, if strange, experience" (522). MacDonald demonstrates keen awareness of the need for James to be confronted by the weight of his misdeeds. Following the explosion, his denial of the past is unable to withstand an onslaught of memory:

> He opened his eyes next on a sky full of stars and a high new moon. For a moment he had no past. He was no one, no man. He was the clear night air. The next instant, however, he was a pit full of memory. Corroded shapes of used-to-be things, now twisted beyond recognition. He got onto his hands and knees, his head a wrecking ball, blind with pain. (522-23)

The stroke puts him in a penitent pose, opening him up to the physical pain of his repressed memories. The stroke permits him a spectral dream of his mother and he cries. She speaks to him in Gaelic, calls him by his Gaelic name – Seamus – and he discovers the ability to apologize: "He speaks to her. He tells her he is sorry. He feels her hand, cool on the side of his face. He knows she is healing him, but he also realizes that with this she is preparing to send him away from her" (524). However, the person to whom he apologizes is not a person that he injured, and the flooding of memories that leaves him prostrate is not a sign that he will in any way make

amends: it is enough to have the memories revealed, as the novel suggests about the work of fictional historiography generally. The story of his crimes is enough to reconcile them, is itself an act of healing.

James is healed in encountering a ghost, but not being confronted by the enduring consequences of his misdeeds. In this sense, he avoids confronting his own inheritances and what he has passed on. Derrida's injunction to speak to ghosts helps illustrate why this is an incomplete form of healing. James is a spectator, one who receives grace not one who puts in the work of mourning. This effaces the work of mourning for those implicated – even to less monstrous degrees – in the ongoing injustices of colonial power: James cannot atone, and his forgiveness is not predicated on an acknowledgement of his debts. After the encounter with his mother's ghost, James seems utterly changed, but not going so far as admitting the error of his previous racist hatred. Though he speaks to Frances after his stroke, kindly and without the agenda that previously distorted his paternal injunctions, the narrator does not make us privy to the extent of his revelations. In fact, when asked directly by Frances "'How did the babies get in the creek, Daddy?'" (543) he does not answer: "James reaches out his curled left hand without looking. He finds Frances's head and bonks it, saying kindly by way of answer, 'That's all over and done with'" (543).

MacDonald characterizes James's healing as forgetting, not as memory or confronting the past. He imagines Frances "settling down to raise her coloured child – oh yes, he hasn't forgotten that. He has simply forgotten how such a thing was ever able to call murder into his heart; the birth of an innocent child" (535). His racism is a mystery to him, a force somehow separated from him, and not a constituent part of the world in which he lives. Frances's own newly transformed state includes the revelation of her ability to cook and her surprising knowledge of Lebanese cuisine. In a denial of his previous racism, "James does not express surprise at the Lebanese feast spread out before him" and even compliments Frances on her cooking in a way that affirms her connection to Materia: "'You've outdone yourself, Frances,' he says. 'It's every bit as good as your mother's'" (538). His hate has been taken from him and James does not have to wrestle with the "dis-ease" or the "out-of-jointedness"

produced through the disjuncture inherent in the hospitable attitude toward the spectre. He dies peacefully, and with heavy symbolism, while reading Dante's *Paradiso.* The vision of healing in *Fall On Your Knees* is ultimately one of grace, not one of labour.

Though her vision of healing does not involve confrontation with one's inheritances and debts, MacDonald presents a hope for a future that requires an enunciation of the past as its primary instigator. This is a more productive avenue than grace, one evoking Derrida's injunction to speak to ghosts, to recognize the performative violence that constitutes the attempt "to ontologize remains, make them present, in the first place by identifying the bodily remains and localizing the dead" (9). When Lily tells her nephew to "sit down and have a cuppa tea till I tell you about your mother" (696), it is fair to sense a positive outcome to the Piper family's tragedy. The act of telling, performed by Lily and by MacDonald in the novel itself, is the possibility of healing both enacted and verified. Lily is participating in a communal memory, as she will tell her nephew the story that includes the memories of her various family members (though not her mother's to any substantial degree). The novel itself, with its instances of second person narration, suggests that this document reflects the story Lily will tell/is telling/has told.

Conclusion

Fall On Your Knees provides a powerful example of how the productive unsettling of spectres can itself be disrupted by a focus on forgiving injustice. Though the goal itself, and the politics behind it, is laudable, there is a disconnection between the two goals of the novel – revelation and healing – when spectres signal that undisclosed traumas can be healed by their revelation. At its most powerful, *Fall On Your Knees* features Ambrose as a revelation of trauma that is unsettling and unforeclosed. Ambrose is a powerful force for revealing the persistence of trauma, particularly as MacDonald frames him as an act of narrative reclamation. He is, to a large degree, Frances's creation: Ambrose is born for the second time during Materia's funeral, which takes place two days after Kathleen's. Frances

> concentrates on the mass card instead: ST AMBROSE. The name detaches itself from the card, leaving its holy prefix behind like a tail, and floats up into her mind, where it wafts about gently until it settles via some mysterious associative route upon the infant boy who died a few nights ago in her arms. Ambrose Yes. That will be his name. Ambrose. (173)

Frances is, effectively, Ambrose's second mother. When she tells Lily's stories about Ambrose, about the ghost, she continues to narrate him into being. This suggests that the act of storytelling that the novel embodies has an essentially spectral dimension. More importantly, this suggests MacDonald's awareness that the work of mourning is more fraught and productive than the bestowal of grace. Frances holds a complex position in regards to Ambrose: though only partly responsible, she feels unspeakable guilt for the accident that kills him. Her act of re-birthing Ambrose is also an act of confronting her sense of her own culpability and a reckoning with the past as a matter of responsibility. Ambrose's re-birth, the narrator (likely Lily herself) suggests, "was also her greatest gift to Lily" (174).

This signals how *Fall On Your Knees* most clearly articulates the ongoing effects of trauma when it focuses on ghosts. It is not in engaging with Ambrose that James becomes healed: unlike the acts of grace that heal James and, unseen to readers, Mercedes, Frances's gift to Lily is one that does not foreclose the trauma that Lily has inherited. Ambrose reveals the incantatory power of language and illusion to shape the world. His second birth during Materia's funeral occurs during a Christian ritual about her mother's change of state – living to not-living – that demands the illusion that Materia's death was not by her own hand. For such a mortal sin, Materia would be unable to rest in consecrated ground and her immortal soul would not occupy a secure space in the afterlife. All that seems required to change such incomprehensible matters of life-after-death, however, is James's simple deception: he "hauls his late wife upstairs and into their bed, scrunches her rosary into her hands," which "allows Materia to be buried next to Kathleen in the churchyard instead of in an unsanctified field somewhere – in the type of place where soldiers and suicides and unbaptized babies sit out eternity, some unholy No Man's Land" (170). For Frances, who submits to an uncontrollable urge to laugh at

the funeral, the immaterial distinction between act and interpretation becomes powerfully evident when her fits of laughter do not result in her being "dragged in disgrace from the church" (174). Instead, Frances's outburst generates something unexpected: "her father's sympathetic hand, her sister's offer of a sodden hanky" (174). To Frances's surprise, "*They think I'm crying*": she learns "that one thing can look like another. That the facts of a situation don't necessarily indicate anything about the truth of a situation" (174). Ambrose's present absence, as Julia Briggs suggests about ghosts, deprives readers of the luxury of narrative disambiguation and dislocates illusions of truth, reality, and stable identity (122). For Lily, this ambiguity is Frances's gift; rather than teaching her sister/niece how to lie, rather than healing James, Frances's re-birth of Ambrose teaches Lily how to engage with undisclosed traumas without ever solving questions of their origin. As MacDonald's narrator points out, the story is not one of certainty: "Memory is another word for story, and nothing is more unreliable" (336).

It is when Ambrose disappears from the narrative that MacDonald's novel loses its best tool for its project. The fluid nature of Ambrose's ghost and ghost story highlights the fact that Frances's memory of the event *is* unreliable, sheltered in her cave mind for much of her life, and the stories she tells Lily are not strictly true. James, who has unfettered access to the truth of Kathleen's trauma, is less able to process the truth of his role in his daughter's immense suffering. The story, and the transmutation of the story into a ghost, is rehabilitating: a lie that is more truthful. The distinction Frances notes between "the facts of a situation" from "the truth of a situation" (174) suggests that storytelling is the vehicle by which these concepts are mediated. Ambrose is mute, and not defined solely by Frances's tales. He is not merely the ghostly return of a trauma, nor its preservation and containment; that he defies the realist bent of the novel as well as the bounds of storytelling Frances creates marks him as an unassimilable trace. As Cathy Caruth suggests in *Trauma: Explorations in Memory*, "For history to be a history of trauma means that it is referential precisely to the extent that it is not fully perceived as it occurs; or to put it somewhat differently, that a history can be grasped only in the very inaccessibility of its occurrence" (Caruth 187). The necessary impossibility of memory marks the

living present as always already a haunted transmission of the past. We can never fully heal those breaks, those gaps, but the necessity of trying is of confronting memory that we cannot fathom or apprehend. Ambrose signals the losses – Materia's language, Kathleen's subjectivity, Frances's innocence – that are forced upon the Piper women, and his uncanny presence demonstrates the ongoing violence of their erasure. Notably unlike the restored family tree that Anthony/Aloysius inherits from Mercedes, Ambrose does not reappear at the novel's happy conclusion in New York. He remains painfully undefined, the transmission of a horror that cannot be included within the restoring narrative of the newly inclusive family tree. Ambrose, unlike Anthony, is not mistakenly taken for dead only to be discovered alive. He cannot be reintegrated, he cannot be assimilated, he cannot be fully understood. He is a signal, missing in the novel's final scene, that some wounds cannot be healed.

MacDonald's focus on healing is one that dismisses the ghost when the truth is revealed. The text suggests that James's eventual decision to share his own story with Frances is what allows her to successfully integrate the fragments of childhood memories still locked in her cave mind and to construct the "truth of the situation," to construct an assimilable story, but James is notably reticent to provide any actual answers. The narrator informs us that this is because James's "story is done" (543): not his *telling* of the story, but his *role in* the story. He is no longer relevant, now that he has been forgiven. Frances's dawning awareness of her role in Ambrose's death, by contrast, is given power precisely because she confronts the past: "I was there" (549), she tells Lily.

Fall On Your Knees demonstrates, in example and in contrast, how vital the work of spectres is to fictional historiography's project of recuperation. As the work of writers like Sweatman, Baker, and Urquhart contribute to our sense of how spectres can accomplish historical revelation even as they occlude its political power, MacDonald similarly blunts the power of her most effective textual strategy. The ghosts they deploy complicate the desire that all four novels display to use fictional historiography for catharsis, for an assimilable story, even as those ghosts are vital to their common project of unsettling historical narratives. Though the

ghosts of Marie and Blondie affect an erasure of the injustices of colonialism and the ghosts in Baker and Urquhart's novels gesture to the ways that ghosts can obscure the very things they reveal, MacDonald's novel demonstrates the ways that ghosts can be powerfully useful for recuperating the past. The unsettled dynamic of history – represented by Ambrose's shifting nature – is resolved in favour of a grace that settles history's traumas simply by being revealed. When Lily belatedly fulfills Kathleen's promise to Rose that she will come back to New York, the family is united. There are some ruptures that cannot be healed and MacDonald insightfully undercuts the triumphalism of the novel's ending – Kathleen never sees Rose again, never got to see her children grow; Ambrose is dead; Frances loses her son – but the world is a more just place for revealing buried secrets. The abuser has been forgiven and his crimes disappear with Ambrose. That Ambrose is welcomed into the family tree, that his ghost is put to rest rather than exorcised, suggests the difficulty of deploying ghosts in a narrative of healing. That the ending itself seeks to bestow grace rather than live with ghosts diminishes the unsettling persistence that MacDonald highlights.

Chapter Four

"To Carve the Illness": The Healing Spectres of Joseph Boyden's *Three Day Road*

"Take up our quarrel with the foe:
To you from failing hands we throw
The torch; be yours to hold it high.
If ye break faith with us who die
We shall not sleep, though poppies grow
In Flanders fields" – John McCrae, "In Flanders Fields"

"'I'm sick of hearing about the feats of others,' Elijah says. 'What do you really want from me?'

"The corporal smiles. 'Think of me as your conscience,' he says. 'And you can be mine.'" – Joseph Boyden, *Three Day Road*

Joseph Boyden's novel *Three Day Road* speaks powerfully to the complex negotiation of revelations and erasures that result from hauntings in fictional historiography. Novels such as *When Alice Lay Down With Peter* offer insight into how writers can deploy ghosts in historical novels to highlight the persistence of the past, even as that narrative strategy is fraught with potential complications. Other forms of haunting, such as those in *The Horseman's Graves* and *Away*, demonstrate how using ghosts to signal obscured traumas inaccessible by other means can still efface the very stories they seek to reveal. Even the postcolonial project underlying most novels of fictional historiography – revealing a more accurate depiction of the past to better process its injustices for the purposes of recuperation – itself is not unambiguously aided by deploying ghosts. Though spectral figures can enable a novel to confront the inalienable traces of the past, while preserving the unrecoverable subjectivity of the narratives and peoples who were silenced, novels such as *Fall On Your Knees* emphasize the difficulties of depicting that healing

project without resorting to exorcising those ghosts. It is in this context that *Three Day Road* offers an invaluable look into the possibilities of hauntings in fictional historiography.

Though overtly concerned with reckoning Canada's historical injustices, many postcolonial novels of fictional historiography deploy ghosts in ways that obscure as much as they reveal. These are not spectres who, in a Derridean sense, remain ontologically unsettling but rather spectres that are deployed to highlight the persistence of historical trauma. This is an especially challenging narrative strategy in fictional historiography, a genre that prioritizes the stability of historical knowledge. The spectral dimension of ghosts is often at odds with this project, which leads to novels that can spin against their own axes. Boyden's *Three Day Road* demonstrates how spectres can continue to unsettle (as they do so effectively in *When Alice Lay Down With Peter*, *The Horseman's Graves*, *Away*, and *Fall On Your Knees*) even as they resist the political gesture of confronting historical traumas and injustices to be foreclosed. Rather than choosing between exorcising ghosts in order to accentuate optimism for the future and permitting tenacious suffering to overshadow any possibility of change, Boyden uses spectres to stress that confronting the shadows of our past is work that will never be complete, even as the work itself is our reason to be optimistic for the possibility of redress and healing. In foregrounding a supernatural and hauntological force, Boyden's novel can be productively considered alongside novels with more clearly delineated ghosts. In fact, the categorical change in its spectre makes *Three Day Road* an especially important alternative to the ghost as it appears in novels by writers of European descent. His novel demonstrates not only how productive the present absence of ghosts can be to novels of fictional historiography that are concerned with revising the past to point towards a more informed and compassionate future but also how such a consideration must be understood as emerging from within a cultural context.

Three Day Road, like Ann-Marie MacDonald's *Fall On Your Knees*, is explicitly a novel of healing, where the infirmities and injuries of its protagonist, Xavier Bird, stand in for the host of crimes, both disclosed and undiscovered, that we inherit. In

part a family saga, a recurring trope in fictional historiography to signal continuity and stand in for larger communities, Boyden's novel suggests productive strategies for the deployment of spectres in service of healing. When Boyden articulates his explicit goal in the novel's Acknowledgments, it is as an act of commemoration: "I wish to honour the Native soldiers who fought in the Great War, and in all wars in which they so overwhelmingly volunteered. Your bravery and skill do not go unnoticed" (353). Notable in the direct address is the use of the second person, a shift in address from the living (presumably) readers to the dead.[19] Boyden does not indicate *who* does the noticing: the agents of colonial power, indirectly implicated as agents of forgetfulness? The various peoples, in Canada and elsewhere, who have been similarly unnoticed and mistreated? Boyden himself? *Three Day Road* exposes the implied collective, the silent "we," to the harrowing journey of just such an unnoticed soldier. The Acknowledgments reveal the work that the novel does in how it opens up space for such ghosts to unsettle our certainties in the present moment and remind us of the debts that we too often ignore; as with so many novels of fictional historiography, commemoration is a necessary antecedent for healing.

Commemoration is, itself, a complex narrative task. In a scene in *Three Day Road*, Francis "Peggy" Pegahmagabow, an Ojibwe soldier known for his skill as a sniper during World War I, provides a narrative parallel to the exploits of the novel's characters Xavier Bird and Elijah Whiskeyjack. Elijah, particularly, wants to equate himself to Peggy and to compare his own number of confirmed kills against those of the infamous "Indian" sniper – one whom Elijah has heard called "the best hunter of us all" (187). The intersection of the real Peggy and the fictional Elijah emphasizes the extratextual function of *Three Day Road* that Boyden outlines in his Acknowledgements, making sure a soldier such as Pegahmagabow does not go unnoticed, but it also highlights the spectral nature of fictional historiography where "real" characters interact with ones created by the writer. Boyden makes clear how the project of much fictional historiography is to "honour" experiences or voices

[19] Though the commemoration of those who fought in "all wars" suggests that the shift isn't from the exclusively living to the exclusively dead, the gesture to include the dead and the not-yet-living in the address is especially Derridean.

that have been suppressed. He does this by dramatizing the fact that, for the subjects of this novel, their being historically "unnoticed" is part of the systemic racism Aboriginal soldiers endured both before and after (if they survived) fighting – a racism that continues to the present. As Peggy asserts in the novel, "You know that the *wemistikoshiw* do not care to believe us when they hear about our kills in the field" (265). He remarks to Elijah that "We do the nasty work for them and if we return home we will be treated like pieces of shit once more" (265). Xavier and Elijah materialize that story: their commanding and superior officers are generally dismissive of traditional Cree practices and beliefs, and are petty in their resentment of how well those cultural practices translate into military success.

However, Boyden suggests frankly in an interview that he might have been overly optimistic in the declaration he made in his Acknowledgments. He confesses to Herb Wyile that "I think my acknowledgments were more wishful thinking than anything" (*Speaking* 265). Boyden's admission makes clear the difficult task of novels such as *Three Day Road* – and *When Alice Lay Down With Peter*, *The Horseman's Graves*, *Away*, and *Fall On Your Knees* – and points to the role that ghosts can play. Boyden seeks to do more than highlight the injustices of the past, as his use of "to honour" suggests*. Three Day Road* offers a form of commemoration that does not emphasize, nor make the case for, the conferring of high public regard upon soldiers. It is not a hagiographic novel; rather, it is one that illustrates the service and sacrifice of men whose contributions did, in fact, go "unnoticed." In the context of *Three Day Road,* Boyden's claim to honour these men is less about praise than it is, in a Derridean sense, about acknowledging and paying a debt. Doing work that goes beyond novels that seek to revise (and sometimes unsettle) history as a postcolonial end unto itself, Boyden's project includes an explicit desire to heal and seek redress even as the hope of such an outcome might be "wishful thinking." *Three Day Road* is less invested in deconstructing the myth-making apparatus surrounding World War I than, for example, Timothy Findley's *The Wars* or creating a postcolonial idyll like *When Alice Lay Down With Peter*. Boyden intertwines the narrative of Elijah's disintegration with that of Xavier's healing and rebirth, and of Niska's careful ministrations with the haunting of the *windigo*. The novel, thus,

deploys spectres both to highlight the damage inflicted upon Aboriginal peoples by colonialism (and the irrecuperable losses such damage continues to entail) and to signal the possibility for healing. It is precisely in reckoning with spectres that Boyden suggests the work of healing can be effected, providing a vital image of the work that fictional historiography's double hauntings can accomplish.

Spectres of Healing and Redress

Boyden deploys a spectre in a way unlike many writers of haunted fictional historiography: in *Three Day Road*, the ghost is not primarily a metonymic representation of a repressed or undisclosed trauma. Instead, the figure of the *windigo* suggests a nuanced engagement with the spectral nature of fictional historiography itself, and the frequent use of the genre for healing. As Boyden explains in an interview with Herb Wyile, "There's no question this is a war novel, but just as importantly this is a novel about the healing power and love of family and how that can save you" (238). Despite Boyden's specific mention of the war novel, *Three Day Road* is also emblematic of a certain type of fictional historiography: the novel of postcolonial revision. It is through active engagement with both spectres and fictional historiography that Boyden accomplishes *Three Day Road*'s work of healing and redress.

Three Day Road holds a different position in regards to fictional historiography than the work of Sweatman, Baker, Urquhart, and MacDonald. Herb Wyile notes that his collection of interviews with writers of recent historical fiction, *Speaking in the Past Tense,* has an underrepresentation of "those whom the historical record has tended to exclude – women, the working class, and racial(ized) minorities" (4). Wyile suggests that

> the resulting predominance here of writers of European heritage is arguably an accurate reflection of the state of Canadian historical fiction. Historical novels by Native Canadian writers or by Canadian writers of Asian, South Asian, Middle Eastern, or African heritage are relatively scarce, something which may have to do with their historical exclusion

> from (albeit recent embrace by) the Canadian literary scene and with their exclusion from dominant narratives about Canada's past. (4)

The reason, Thomas King suggests in his introduction to *All My Relations: An Anthology of Contemporary Canadian Native Fiction*, that most Aboriginal writers in Canada "have consciously set our literature in the present," is that it "allows us the opportunity to create for ourselves and our respective cultures both a present and a future" (xii). He adds that "we will begin to write historical novels once we discover ways to make history our own" (xii). Examples such as Eden Robinson's *Monkey Beach* and King's own *Truth and Bright Water* are set in the past, but the proximate past of the authors' lifetimes and not in the past of history, record, and legend that characterize fictional historiography. That Native Canadian writers have not tended to write about the past through the lens of historiography, Warren Cariou argues, is due to the fact that "Native people already have plenty of evidence in their daily lives of how the legacies of colonialism have been passed down through the generations; they do not need to summon spectres to fulfill that function" (730).

As such, Boyden's engagement with fictional historiography is a significant part of *Three Day Road*'s textual project of healing. In an interview with Wyile, George Elliot Clarke makes the point that he thinks the reason why novelists such as Sky Lee, Joy Kogawa, Joseph Boyden, "and myself (if I can put myself in the group) are writing historical novels anchored in Canada is that we are of a generation that is secure enough finally, after umpteen years of inhabiting this space called Canada, to be able to write about our cultural Canadian past" (157). As Clarke notes, such postcolonial novels explicitly wish to educate, often as part of a desire for social justice, reconciliation, and healing. He explains that "It's not a question of making anybody feel bad. It is a question of recognizing what things were really like, so that we don't kid ourselves and don't have false impressions about that history or about the way the society was" (141). Boyden shows much the same instinct, as his Acknowledgments demonstrate: part of what fictional historiography is well suited to accomplish is a story of recognition of past injustices, of showing "what things were really like." Yet Boyden also shows remarkable subtlety in his engagement with the genre by seeking to avoid the dismissal of either the risks of too much

certainty in historical knowledge or paralyzing mourning over the undeniable and irretrievable losses of history. As he pointedly remarks to Wyile, the chain of oral memory and oral history has been badly damaged: "there was a real break for many generations due directly to the residential school system, which makes a lot of people not sure of their own history any more and which is really sad" (239). *Three Day Road* dramatizes a desire to highlight incredible and persistent traumas without suggesting that those traumas are permanently disabling.

Boyden's desire to acknowledge historical injustices to enable healing is, then, the central project of the novel. As Sweatman, Baker, Urquhart, and MacDonald's novels suggest, however, this is a difficult project. Neta Gordon calls *Three Day Road* an historical novel "established on an ethic of constructive deconstruction, and a forward-looking inclination toward healing and hope" (121). Gordon argues that the novel's commemorative function "appears to defy the deconstructive impetus, as commemoration depends on a reification of the historical record, even as that historical record 'diversifies' to recover previously marginalized histories" (121). For a novel of historical fiction to be commemorative, she argues, "it must remain attuned to the touchstone of a stable historical record" (121). She thus argues that Boyden's stated desire to honour Aboriginal soldiers, particularly those who served in the First World War, is predicated on a paradoxical commitment to Canada's myth-making apparatus: the symbolic value of Canada's World War One effort. As Gordon argues, "World War One operates as a highly mythologized set of events popularly associated with the 'birth' of Canadian nationhood" (124). Tim Cook describes the mythic power of the First World War in his book *Clio's Warriors: Canadian Historians and the Writing of the World Wars* as nation-building: the popular narrative is that Canada was "forged during the Great War" (253). This nationalist myth is reinforced both by writers of fiction and by historians, "who produced nationalistic histories that focused on the operational success and well-earned reputation of the Canadian Corps" (253). By exploring Aboriginal participation in this mythologized narrative of national birth, Boyden deploys the symbolic weight of one of the most formative elements of Canada's history that highlights its destructive, rather than creative power.

What Gordon describes is precisely the difficult negotiation of the postcolonial project of much fictional historiography. There are many strategies to manage this paradox; one that Boyden employs is ironic subversion. To disrupt the colonial narratives that marginalize men like Xavier and Elijah, Boyden ironically deploys the colonial truism that history is the story of great men fighting for their country. Herb Wyile argues that *Three Day Road*

> suggests the potential of writers of Aboriginal heritage to extend the borders of the historical novel in Canada in exciting new directions, by revising the prevailing Eurocentric accounts of Canadian history by bringing the formal innovation of contemporary Aboriginal writing to the genre of the historical novel, and by raising important questions about the very nature of history and historical time. ("Windigo" 83-84)

Both Wyile and Gordon point to the fact that Boyden originally wrote *Three Day Road* in chronological order – "chronicling the main characters' apprenticeship in the bush, their enlistment in the Canadian army, and their horrific experiences as snipers at the front" ("Windigo" 84) – but dramatically revised the linear presentation of the novel's plot to give it "a circular, elliptical narrative structure and an oral narrative framework" (84). Gordon sees this revised narrative structure as a more engaged negotiation of "historical time, sacred time, and genealogical time" (121). This highlights the novel's goal of honouring Aboriginal soldiers as an act of redress, "as it suggests an attitude towards time that is simultaneously active and retroactive, in that all current political activity is defined by dealing with the past" (121).

Indeed, Boyden's stated desire for healing informs *Three Day Road*'s narrative organization. Built around a circular and dialectic structure, the novel dramatizes how the disclosure of historical injustices can be recuperative in multiple senses of the word: Niska travels to meet, and then heal, her nephew Xavier after his return from the front in World War I, while Xavier's morphine detox fills his mind with the parallel story of how he came to be the broken man his aunt struggles to save. "Healing" is, itself, a fraught term, particularly in the context of

Aboriginal cultures in Canada.[20] Sophie McCall argues that fissures in approaches in Indigenous literary studies stem from and echo "other, overlapping tensions between those critics who argue for Indigenous nationalist positions, emphasizing the need for deeper engagement with tribal traditions of storytelling, governance, and cultural practice" against "those who draw on postcolonial theories that focus on issues such as cultural hybridity, liminality, and white-settler complexes of guilt and complicity" (57). Keavy Martin argues that the political shift to reconciliation reflects "the desire for closure that governs […] national discourses around Aboriginal issues – in particular, the legacy of residential schools" (49). She observes that "a fixation upon *resolution*" is both "premature" and "problematic in its correlation with *forgetting*" (49). To use fictional historiography not to open and not resolve historical wrongs, to avoid fixating on forgetting as Martin suggests, is not an immediately effective strategy.

The historical novel can, indeed, impede a concept of the future by focusing on the atrocities of the past. Laura Smyth Groening describes this, in the context of Aboriginal peoples in North America, as the "field of opposition that consistently renders those once savage people as dead and dying, a thing of the past" (156). Boyden contests the terrain of the "disappearing Indian" as well as the narrative of teleological progress that defines colonial historiography and he does so on the field of one of Canada's defining narratives: the First World War. Though the Cree community Boyden depicts in *Three Day Road*, primarily through Niska's stories to Xavier, is often under physical and psychic attack by encroaching *wemistkoshiw* culture, the violence included in this narrative is not strictly oppositional and, more importantly, is not depicted in the elegiac terms of a "last stand." Due to the cannibalistic destruction of the so-called Great War, Boyden provides a spectral

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[20] The recently concluded Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRC) reveals the continuing challenges of this discussion by highlighting a disagreement over what the term "reconciliation" means: according to Paulette Regan, a "deep divide exists between Indigenous peoples and Canadians about what reconciliation is and how best to achieve it" (47). While Canada wants to "achieve legal certainty," First Nations' advocates highlight the need for reparations in the form of land, resources, and other forms of restitution (48).

counterpoint to a Lukasian sense of epoch: paralleling Xavier's recovery with the destruction of World War I, an event that many consider to be historically definitive for Canada, serves to comment upon the myths that inform Canada's dominant narratives. Boyden suggests in this juxtaposition that the self-definition of Canada depends on a marginalization of Indigenous peoples. Further, he demonstrates how the mythic obfuscation of glorifying narratives – of war, as of colonialism and settlement – is an impediment to accessing suppressed histories of those Indigenous peoples.[21] In his dialectical approach to structuring time in the novel, Boyden upholds the ethical challenge present in many postcolonial works of fictional historiography while also moving beyond to locate the recuperative powers of such narrative work. Boyden organizes the novel around the concept of sacred time, of healing time, with Xavier and Niska's three-day journey to healing. *Three Day Road* dramatizes the importance of the local, situated, and authentic cultural moment to provide the foundation for healing and forestall the act of recalling the past for the sake of isolating it.

However, as Sweatman and MacDonald in particular demonstrate, an emphasis on describing history's wrongs as healed can have the effect of foreclosing them. Boyden deploys a hauntological framework with an emphasis on how confronting the recurring nature of these traumas can prevent them from being effaced while simultaneously being an act of recuperation. When Elijah and Peggy[22]

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[21] Indeed, Boyden consistently recalls and subverts the triumphalism of the mythology surrounding WWI. He draws attention to well-documented instances of specifically Canadian military strategy, fiasco, and success in the war: for example the invention of the "creeping barrage" at Flers-Courcelette in the Somme (166) and the apparent waste of subsequent months of attritional fighting (182), as well as the major victories at Vimy Ridge (213-21) and at Passchendale (280-84). Throughout the novel, however, Boyden takes care to undercut the heroic mythologizing: the soldier cruelly nicknamed Fat takes a bayonet to his lower leg during the fighting at Vimy Ridge during a lull in the fighting. Fat either cut himself on purpose or "stumbled and fell, somehow cutting his leg badly in the process" (222); either way, this soldier points to the spectrum of very human reactions to senseless carnage that Boyden investigates.

[22] In his interview with Wyile in *Speaking in the Past Tense,* Boyden discusses his family's longstanding friendship with the family of Pegahmagabow, who had a

meet, their conversation – an imagined exchange between a fictionalized version of a man who lived and a man who lives only on the page – locates the Derridean injunction to speak to the dead in Boyden's novel. Elijah complains about being inundated with history without knowing what those historical figures desire from the present: "'I'm sick of hearing about the feats of others,' Elijah says. 'What do you really want from me?" (266). Peggy responds that Elijah should think of him as his "'conscience […] And you can be mine'" (266). That there can and should be such a relationship between fiction and the material world is evidently one of Boyden's goals with *Three Day Road*. Niska understands that Xavier's physical wounds are not the greatest threat he faces: the violence of the war upon his soul, and the burdens of colonial hegemony, compound the weight of the acts he was forced to commit. Xavier's talking while asleep and his reticence to speak while awake prompt Niska to decide to "speak to him. In this way maybe his tongue will loosen some. Maybe some of the poison that courses through him might be released in this way. Words are all I have left now" (82). She endeavours to heal him, through the form that the novel itself takes: "The story is not a happy one, but something in me has to tell it. There is truth in this story that Xavier needs to hear, and maybe it is best that he hears it in sleep so that the medicine in the tale can slip into him unnoticed" (240). The trip on which Niska takes Xavier down the river is a "three-day paddle home" (8), the nearly literal three-day road of the title, which refers to the journey to the spirit world – the journey of death. Niska's talking cure highlights the role that Boyden sees the historical novel playing, as he explains that Niska realizes that "she has no medicine to give Xavier, who is very close to death, other than feeding him the stories of her life. She remembers her father told her that when in danger, when in trouble, when sick, remember who you are, remember where you come from. There is real strength in that" (*Speaking* 238). This invocation of the past, this invocation of the dead, as a story is central to the possibility for healing that Boyden finds in the novel.

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reported 378 enemy kills, "which is kind of a horrifying number if you think about it (250).

The way that Boyden approaches this recuperative work, especially as he frames it in his Acknowledgements, seems of a kind with Derrida's injunction to speak to the dead. Warren Cariou states that ghosts in texts by Aboriginal writers "may be malevolent beings such as the wihtiko or the skeleton-spirit Pahkakos, but they may also be figures of healing, ceremony, or political action. Or they may simply be ancestors" (730). Importantly, he notes that "while many such spirits do seem to address the transgressions of the colonial past, they usually do so as part of a call for some kind of redress or change in the present" (730). Indeed, the way that Derrida conceives of the work of mourning aligns closely with the ways in which Boyden undertakes an engagement with fictional historiography. Boyden's novel ends with Xavier's successful overcoming of his morphine addiction, paralleling the psychic invasion of the *windigo*, with a hopeful and prophetic eye to the future: Niska sits contentedly by the fire with a sleeping Xavier, comforted that "By tomorrow we'll be home" (351). To achieve this moment of tranquility and optimism is by no means easy, particularly the struggle with the *windigo* that ultimately corrupts and destroys Xavier's cousin Elijah. For Derrida, the "messianic hope of a better future must, at least initially, cause discomfort, not only because of its seeming autonomy and independence from the will of the individual, but also because the uncanny leads one to question the status of one's most basic conceptual assumptions" (Kosnoski 511).

The spectral figure of the *windigo* is certainly not comforting or hospitable and it causes Xavier to reconsider his most basic assumptions. In fact, the *windigo* is an imminent and persistent threat to both the Cree and *wemistikoshiw*. When Derrida suggests adopting a hospitable attitude toward the spectre, it is not because the spectre is itself a comforting presence. It is the approach to the spectre that leads to the experience of the messianic through a constant cultivation of "dis-ease" and "out-of-jointedness" with one's surroundings and existence. In fact, "Derrida asserts that only through actively welcoming the discomfort of hectoring specters will individuals engulfed in a culture of depoliticizing reification truly perceive the messianic possibilities that surround them" (Kosnoski 512). Derrida characterizes this embrace of the *unheimlich* through "the work of mourning." Though for Derrida

this act of mourning requires the recognition of the previous political act that conjured the spectres in the first place, the work of mourning is one that "consists always in attempting to ontologize remains, make them present, in the first place by identifying the bodily remains and localizing the dead" (*SM* 9). To mourn "entails spending time with the dead, but not attempting either to resurrect them or dispel them. One does not ask for the specter's presence, but one does not attempt to push it away, either" (Kosnoski 512). Derrida states, "One should not rush to make of the clandestine immigrant an illegal alien, or what always risks coming down to the same thing to domesticate him. To neutralize him through naturalization. To assimilate him so as to stop frightening oneself with him. He is not part of the family, but one should not send him back, once again, him too, to the border"(*SM* 174). Antonio Negri identifies such spectres as both intimate and destructive, channeling traumatic energies toward treating the wound in the body politic: a reduction of the ghost is a reduction of the political (15). What Derrida seems to be saying "is that in working to create new strategies and visions of the future, one must first acknowledge and, in fact, realize how one is constituted by the ideas and values that one rejects" (Kosnoski 513).

For Boyden, this means not that one must embrace the ghost generally or the *windigo* specifically to achieve healing and hope for the future. Rather, it means that one must acknowledge how one defines oneself, what one must contend with, and what one leaves behind. Imagining the new must, in fact, create a sense of contingency or the "irreducible unfixity of both individual identity and the values, hopes, and visions for a better world that underlie identities will ironically bring about clinging to the supposed certainties of the past" (Kosnoski 513). The *windigo* does, indeed, emphasize the inalienable power that spectres wield over the present moment. Derrida claims that mourning is in

> fact and by right interminable, without possible normality, without reliable limit, in its reality or in its concept, between introjection and incorporation. But the same logic, as we suggested, responds to the injunction of a justice which, beyond right or law, rises up in the very

> respect owed to whoever is not, no longer or not yet, living, presently living. (*SM* 97)

Thus the *windigo* emphasizes and dramatizes a necessary condition for healing: acknowledging fear of ontological instability and the inducement not to find comfort in the past. Killing those possessed by *windigo* is not the same as an exorcism, which Derrida advises against. It is impossible to kill the *windigo*; it is not even a possibility of which Niska can conceive. The *windigo*'s toxic presence suggests the danger of ignoring the unseen debts upon which the present moment is based. Hunting the *windigo* suggests, rather, "an active desire to project that sense of justice into the future and hence the messianic. The desire to bring healing to the world and imagine possible permutations of time without injustice" (Kosnoski 513).

Windigo

The relationship of the *windigo* to Boyden's project of healing in *Three Day Road* points to the usefulness of deploying spectres when negotiating a desire for healing and justice through narratives of the past. It is through the figure of the *windigo*, in fact, that Boyden challenges the horizons of such possibilities. Derrida's injunction to learn to live with ghosts is not a simple task, as the past is both impossible to access and a source of persistent traumas. The *windigo* is not merely a "hectoring" presence, but an actively dangerous and seductive one. The risk with the *windigo* is not in refusing to speak to the dead but of refusing to acknowledge its persistence. It is not a force that stands in for other traumas, nor is it simply the manifestation of a destructive ideology. Boyden highlights the value of Derrida's concept of Hauntology, even while pointing to its conceptual limitations. Derrida's concept of the messianic, separated from the apocalyptic ontological certainties of Marxism, is more akin to Walter Benjamin's concept of "weak messianic power," what Frederic Jameson refers to as "a wandering signifier capable of keeping any number of conspiratorial futures alive" (66-7). In the undifferentiated howling of all the spectres that always already surround us, a clear call for recuperation and healing must be an intentional reading that prioritizes and excludes.

In such acts of discretion, Boyden's use of the *windigo* highlights some of the ways that Hauntology cannot fully account for the work of spectres in fictional historiography. The meta-narrative of Hauntology values social relations, and Hauntology is a matter of often-indeterminate chaos. As Derrida asks, "What is a ghost? What is the effectivity or the presence of a specter, that is, for what seems to remain as ineffective, virtual, insubstantial as a simulacrum?" (*SM* 10). The *windigo*, in being a particular and particularly brutal force, places more direct demands and requires more careful strategies than what Derrida suggests about the spectre that "would harbour within itself, but like circumscribed places or particular effects, eschatology and teleology themselves" (10). Boyden reveals the power in Derrida's injunction to speak to the dead, but provides a powerful extension of that concept: the dead are more than hectoring and some spectres have sharp teeth. We must confront the dead even as we must be painfully aware of their power.

Locating this spectral power of the *windigo* in the context of the First World War, Boyden intervenes both in historiography generally as well as specific historical narratives that circumscribe particular traumas. Writers such as Emilie Cameron argue that postcolonial ghostings become a means by which settler guilt is manifested as a figment of the past; as such, these spectral apparitions exemplify a denial of the present and insistent political demands of Indigenous people today (a possible outcome of hauntings such as those in *When Alice Lay Down With Peter*). Postcolonial hauntings are, in other words, a rhetorical device that – knowingly or inadvertently – seeks to prioritize "the notion of reconciliation with ghosts rather than a reckoning with the specific and ongoing violence of colonialism" (Cameron 152), ultimately valuing settler anxiety over contemporary Indigenous experience. Positioning the spectral *windigo* in the centre of his novel, Boyden forestalls any narrative of reconciliation with the past: the *windigo* is not an invitation to a more just future. Furthermore, he makes clear that the *windigo* is not a spectre that can be given a podium and then ushered politely off the stage.

As Boyden makes clear, the *windigo* is not a ghost that can be reckoned with. The plot of *Three Day Road* does not reduce the *windigo* to a strictly allegorical framework, wherein the haunting spectre is a manifestation of the corrupting

influence of the encroaching culture. The *windigo* is, to some degree, a psychological affliction but it is not limited to the colonial context. The first *windigos* that Boyden describes are a Cree family who fear death by starvation during the privation of winter: the *windigo* represents a tragic reality that predates the colonial impoverishment of Cree culture, and that gives the Cree agency independent of what the colonial powers have given or taken away. It is not a case where Niska must cure Xavier because "it is up to Indigenous people to restore themselves to health in spite of contending with the ongoing effects of assimilative and genocidal policies in Canada" (McCall 59). Boyden avoids the Western psychoanalytical conceptual framework of healing that emphasizes "the *victim's* responsibility in pursuing therapy, overlooking the pathology of the perpetrator and bracketing larger historical contexts of colonialism and the intergenerational transmission of trauma" (59). Instead, the *windigo* signals to the ongoing continuities in Cree life and the modes of healing that are independent of, but required all the more because of, colonial interference.

Indeed, one must approach the spectral effects of *Three Day Road* with awareness that the *windigo* cannot be fully incorporated in Western theoretical models. Cynthia Sugars argues that Indigenous cultures are "marked by a suffusion of the natural world with spiritual presence – spirits or creatures that could be benign or malevolent, sometimes both at once" (*CG* 215). Colonizing narratives rejected as a psychic aberration the lived contact with spiritual and supernatural entities, which forms part of everyday experience for Indigenous peoples. To subsume the *windigo* as merely another Derridean spectre, for example, is to risk reenacting the same effacement. The grotesque and terrifying *windigo* is not a psychic aberration, nor is it dismissed by the novel as anything less than an existential threat of immense proportions. Its threat includes the corrosive power of colonialism, the loss of cultural memory, personal traumas, and even arrogance and greed. As such, we can view the insights that Derrida offers to *Three Day Road* in terms of how the *windigo* can be read as a signal to the danger of ignoring the not-living and as a reminder of the unspoken debts upon which the present resides. Despite Xavier's healing, the *windigo* is untimely and its threat is not one that can

ever be banished. The novel evokes the words of Warren Cariou about Maggie Siggins' *Revenge of the Land,* which evokes Derrida's sense of the need to be unsettled by spectres: "Instead of wondering nervously when the repressed terrors of colonialism might be visited upon them, readers are left with a more active imperative, to do something to acknowledge and to redress the wrongs of the past" (732).

Central to this work of acknowledgment and redress, the *windigo* links together the various threads of the novel. Following a narrative analepsis in the form of a prologue, or placing the rest of the novel as an extended prolepsis, *Three Day Road* frames Elijah and Xavier's time as soldiers within the large conflict of the home front, where the lives of Cree and Ojibwe characters are being profoundly disrupted by their forcible transition to an urban environment at the expense of their traditional lifestyle in the bush. A threat underlying all of this is the spectral figure of the *windigo*, the monstrous cannibal that haunts the Ojibwe and Cree. Niska, like her father before her, is a *hookimaw* and burdened by her special responsibilities to her people, including the ability and duty to kill those who become *windigo*. We learn about Niska's life through the stories she tells as she paddles Xavier down the river. She is a rare holdout whose retreat further into the bush is an escape from the coercive *wemistikoshiw,* preserving a more traditional way of life – one whose self-sufficiency is constantly beset both by *wemistikoshiw* encroachment and the unforgiving climate of northern Ontario.

Boyden uses the figure of the *windigo* to connect the institutions of law, police, prison, residential school, reservation, and army, suggesting that these bodies are responsible for an imminent threat to the Cree community and way of life. Despite her seemingly certain position as a source of cultural history, Niska did not always believe in the *windigo*. In her childhood, the beast had been restricted to fiction and myth: "We'd grown up on stories of the *windigo* that our parents fed us over winter fires, of people who eat other people's flesh and grow into wild beasts twenty feet tall whose hunger can be satisfied only by more human flesh and then the hunger turns worse" (41). It is when she sees her father kill a woman who has gone *windigo* that the fiction becomes real to Niska – the same moment, not

coincidentally, as the imposition of colonial-capitalist regulatory systems encroach in Cree territory. An unnamed Cree woman breaks with her community three times: wasting a piece of meat from a sacred bear feast (36); leaving the starving tribe along with her husband Micah to seek their own sustenance (37); and, having failed to find game, eating human flesh (40). The woman descends into madness when, in the brutal cold of winter, she carves up her husband to feed herself and her baby. Niska watches her father, who is called upon to prevent "'Micah's woman's madness'" from spreading (41). The scene, though not overly violent, is deeply unsettling:

> Micah's wife must have sensed what was coming. She pleaded and begged, screamed and howled, whispered to the children to untie her ropes. On the day that my parents called for her, it took five men to carry her to them. Once again I hid under my father's moose robe. My stomach ached with what I thought was hunger but the ache turned to a dull throb when my father sprinkled crushed cedar into the fire and muttered prayers. Micah's wife watched him with eyes sparkling, her body shaking, her mouth gagged now. The baby lay sleeping beside her.
>
> He didn't take long to do it. His eyes looked sad. He leaned down and whispered something I could not hear into her ear. She immediately went slack and her eyes reflected fear and then expectation as he straddled her chest. My father covered her face with a blanket and placed his hands on her neck. He looked above him and the muscles of his body tensed. Her feet quivered, then went still. (41-42)

After killing Micah's wife, Niska's father "covered the sleeping child's head with a corner of the blanket, placed a hand about its small neck and, looking up once again, squeezed until the life left it" (42). Niska, overcome, urinates where she hides. Her father, aware of her presence, tells Niska that he permitted her to watch "'because one day I will be gone and you might have to do the same'" (42).

This scene is vital to the work Boyden does in the novel. It sets Niska on the path of spiritual leader in her community, while demonstrating the immense cost that such a role requires. It is also an ethically challenging moment in the novel, and

one that precipitates and shapes Niska's relationship to the *wemistikoshiw*. Niska's father kills a baby for a crime in which it had no agency. This killing suggests both the very real fear the Cree feel in the face of such an enormous betrayal of the necessary mutual reliance of the community and, more importantly, for the work Boyden is doing, an awareness of how injustices can be passed down to subsequent generations who might have no knowledge of the sins that they inherit. The scene is also an ethical challenge, one that puts the reader in a complicated position. The spring following the *windigo*'s appearance,

> George Netmaker, father of Joseph, brought an important message to my father. What my father had done over the winter seemed to have angered the Hudson's Bay Company men, and they demanded he come to them to discuss his actions so that they might decide whether or not he should be considered a murderer. (43)

Though our sympathies lie with Niska and her father, whose actions are neither wanton nor cruel, the fact that he killed an infant who posed no imminent threat gives weight to the North West Mounted Police who come and arrest Niska's father. Though Niska's mother continues her daughter's education, the following spring arrives "where news awaited that my father was dead" (44). Suffering from the convulsive visions of the *hookimaw*, Niska had already seen a vision of her father, "the tiny room with no windows that they locked him in," already witnessed "how within a week he'd stopped talking, how within a month he'd stopped eating," already known that "they'd kept his body from us, how they buried it underground, a place where he'd surely be unhappy" (44).

Partly through the sympathetic depiction of Niska and her family, her father's determined but humane execution of the *windigo*, Boyden demonstrates the immense disruption that the imprisonment of the *hookimaw* creates. Niska explains that "To take the *hookimaw* who was to lead us into the bush for the long winter was unimaginable. Ignorance. Malice" (44). The *wemistikoshiw*'s ignorance, Niska laments, is the same as malice, as the novel makes clear in the ongoing context of institutional racism in residential schools and the Canadian military. Niska's talking cure is not merely to Xavier, who understands the importance of his people's

spiritual leader, but to readers more generally. Boyden makes clear that the *windigo* is a real and present threat, not merely a superstition or even a figure of supernatural horror. As Basil Johnson observes in *The Manitous: The Supernatural World of the Ojibway,* the *windigo* is a creature of a life of privation: "From the moment their supplies began to thin, the people faced starvation and death," Johnson explains, "and the Weendigo. What they feared most in their desperation and the delirium induced by famine and freezing to death was to kill and eat human flesh to survive. Nothing was more reprehensible than cannibalism" (224). The prospect of a long death by starvation is terrifying on a level difficult to imagine, but the existential dread of turning that hunger inward toward the community, the source of support and the means by which individuals can endure the uncompromising privation of the winter, is a much deeper fear. It is not merely a philosophical or cultural matter; rather, the *windigo* represents what happens when the community neglects its own past and attacks itself. As Boyden makes clear, stopping the spread of the *windigo* is a matter of life and death.[23]

The *windigo* is also, however, an existential and cultural threat. As Johnston explains, "as time went by, more and more learned people declared that such monsters were a product of superstitious minds and imaginations," and they were "driven from their place in Anishnaubae traditions and culture and ostracized by disbelief and skepticism" (235). When Niska's father kills Micah's wife and child, he does something unsettling. No confrontation with a spectre is without cost, Boyden suggests, and the vital preservation of a cultural tradition is not the same as imagining the culture free from ethical and moral complexities. This particular

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[23] In her 1977 essay "Canadian Monsters," Margaret Atwood writes that much of the fiction from Canada engages with the uncanny wilderness, which features supernatural monsters that represent the immense and untamed northern wilderness. These creatures materialize the otherness of that space, and of the people who can live and have lived there: a psychological "Other" who is both greater and lesser than human. She adds that much of the evocation of the *windigo* (wendigo) follows the inspiration of Aboriginal folklore, adding that it is part of a tradition of "semi-human heroes" fighting monsters in Canadian fiction (109). Atwood's vision of the *windigo* seems miles apart from the unsettling rapaciousness that lies at the heart of the corruption Boyden describes.

windigo killing is paradigmatic in the novel as Boyden continually foregrounds the complex moral commitments of such acts. Boyden particularly emphasizes this the first time Niska must confront a *windigo* herself. Herb Wyile argues in his essay "Windigo Killing: Joseph Boyden's *Three Day Road*" that Niska sees her role as *hookimaw* as a defender of her people, and that she sees the *wemistikoshiw* as a threat as dangerous as the *windigo* (85). As Niska explains in her first duty as *hookimaw,* "The sickness of the *windigo* could spread as surely as the invisible sicknesses of the *wemistikoshiw*. I was the surgeon summoned to carve the illness from this small group, the one assumed to have the skill that the others did not" (Boyden 242).

Boyden allows this moment to be laden with ambiguity, as he does in the scene Niska witnesses with her father killing Micah's wife and child. The complexity of malice as ignorance, embodied most pathetically in Micah's child and most chillingly in the RCMP's inadvertent killing of Niska's father, reappears in Niska's acknowledgement of the alienation of the *windigo:*

> I realized then that sadness was at the heart of the *windigo*, a sadness so pure that it shrivelled the human heart and let something else grow in its place. To know that you have desecrated the ones you love, that you have done something so damning out of a greed for life that you have been exiled from your people forever is a hard meal to swallow, much harder to swallow than that first bite of human flesh. (242)

The empathy Niska feels does not stop her from fulfilling her duty, but it mitigates any sense of purity and righteousness in the act of killing: it explains her understanding of the burden of delivering death that comes belatedly and in a distorted form to the soldiers, such as Xavier and Elijah, in the fog of war.

The *windigo* provides Boyden the means of examining the threats to Ojibwe and Cree life in the bush that prey on the "greed for life" that Niska identifies with sadness. Wyile suggests that "the depiction of Niska's apprenticeship as a *hookimaw* portrays the erosion of traditional belief in the existence of the *windigo*" ("Windigo" 85). That Niska still receives her visions "but no one listens any longer to what they tell us, what they warn us" (Boyden 43), links the insidious disintegration of

tradition with both the *windigo* and the Great War. Niska has visions of the war, where she sees "numbers of men, higher than any could count," being killed; men living "in the mud like rats" who "only think of new ways to kill one another" (45). She sees this looming threat and laments the consequences to people's souls: "War touches everyone, and *windigos* spring from the earth" (45). The *windigo* is not merely a threat to the Cree: as Niska's vision makes plain, such a spectre is a threat to all. Niska ostensibly refers to the sacrifice of millions during World War I, but she may as well be describing genocidal colonial practices in Canada: the appropriation of Cree territory, the ignorance and dismissal of Cree institutions of law, the diminishment of Cree people's lives and freedoms. It is as if, in refusing to fear the *windigo*, people become blind to the ways in which the "greed of life" survives in other forms. As Boyden demonstrates through Niska, Xavier, and Elijah's relationship with *wemistikoshiw* society, the ignorance of the power of corruption can be the same as malice.

Boyden deploys the *windigo* skillfully to inflect the novel with an abiding awareness of the persistent and dangerous power of unacknowledged debts. Particularly, he uses the *windigo* to frame the toll of the First World War. It is, as Neta Gordon suggests, a moment in history as such – an event marked as epochal – and *Three Day Road*'s focus on the so-called Great War is one of the ways the novel considers how we can commune with the past to heal. The First World War defined a generation in large part because it caused the deaths and maiming of so many; though the advances in technology permitted the act of killing to become industrialized, Boyden does not devote much of *Three Day Road* to the complex industrial or geopolitical causes of the war. Through the eyes of Xavier, the First World War is a site of the *windigo* writ large: the belligerent racism; the bloodlust; the maliciously ignorant commanding officers; the mass destruction of land, property, and life; and the chaotic, senseless slaughter condoned and championed point to a society that has become corrupted. Boyden constructs the war as a manifestation of the *windigo* in that it is a malevolent entity born and transmitted through dangerous human appetites. Elijah, as Nicole Brandsma observes, "struggles to survive by the values of individual heroism," which, she argues, leads

him "to cannibalistic greed" (125). The *windigo*, Brandsma suggests, is the epitome of individual strength, but also of individual selfishness and greed (126). The Great War, certainly, demonstrates that the vaunted militaries and ideologies of the world's colonial super powers led only to destruction. For instance, while Xavier and Elijah are in France shortly after their arrival in Europe, Xavier comments upon the landscape that lies razed before him after the fighting has paused: "It's as if the war has moved to another place. It has sucked the life from Saint-Eloi and left it like this, has moved on in search of more bodies to fill its impossible hunger" (67). The corruption that the War causes is itself monstrous; as Xavier witnesses Elijah's transformation into a *windigo*, he wishes that he could "help pull him from the war madness that swallowed him whole" (249). Unlike more mechanized depictions of the War – focused on the advances in humanity's technological improvements and the tragic use of that technology to transform ourselves into machines of death – Boyden suggests that the war is monstrous because it is the manifestation of greedy ignorance.

Elijah's transformation and corruption is a clear sign of the destructive power that the *windigo* represents. Herb Wyile comments on the phrase "war madness" that Xavier uses to describe Elijah and argues that it "evokes the profound alienation caused by the sheer scale, mechanization, and immobility of trench warfare in what is seen as the first truly modern war" ("Windigo" 86). Citing scholars such as Eric Leed and Paul Fussell, Wyile points to depictions of the First World War in fiction that focus on the effects of the war upon its combatants, the "radical disorientation and disillusionment in so many of those who took part" (86). Wyile cites Leed's suggestion that "Men were 'estranged' from their societies, and one must take this estrangement literally"; in fact, "they were 'made' strange to the men and things of their past, and made strange to themselves" (Leed 4). This is certainly the experience of Xavier and, more tragically, Elijah. Like their *wemistikoshiw* compatriots, the war traumatizes and consistently dehumanizes the soldiers who fight for causes and countries that demand complicated allegiance and offer little in return. As McCall points out, "Although both Elijah and Xavier have

ways to try and undermine its authority, the military successfully co-opts their full participation in the primary activity at the front: hunting for Germans" (65).

The dehumanizing effects of the war affect Elijah more rapidly, and he is more susceptible to the corruption of the *windigo*, because he has experienced significant trauma. Unlike Xavier, Elijah was taken from his family and put in a residential school, where he suffered immense abuse. Creating a clear and direct antecedent for the tragedy that will befall him, Elijah's time at the residential school at Moose Factory scars him deeply. While "fighting what's become of him," Elijah tells Xavier a story of his time in Moose Factory, "the story of the nun, Magdalene, who liked to bathe him each week when he was a boy" (314). He tells Xavier "of how she would rub her soapy hands over him, how Elijah would get an erection, how she would scold him and then take his erection in her hands and rub him until his taut penis thumped against his lower belly in a spasm" (314). Near the beginning of the cycle of abuse – the sexual assault, the shaming, the resulting silence – Elijah "was horrified. He thought he was broken" (314). Herb Wyile argues that "The continuity between that traumatic background and his experience in the military is suggested metonymically by the fact that when he leaves the town for the bush, he absconds with a rifle belonging to the nun who abused him ("Windigo" 90). Indeed, Elijah describes the gun as "small payment for her always wanting to bathe me" (Boyden 248). The means by which Elijah survived his time in residential school – his facility with English; his gregariousness; his willingness to assimilate – initially allow him to succeed as a soldier in ways that Xavier, the more skilled bush hunter, cannot. What seem to be the after-effects of the interruption of his cultural upbringing, before Xavier and readers learn of the depths of the abuse Elijah suffered, manifest mostly as a sort of religious fastidiousness: he doesn't understand why Niska calls Xavier "Nephew" when his Christian name is Xavier, and he calls them heathens. As Boyden observes to Herb Wyile, Xavier manages to survive the war "because he has a grounding in who he is and where he comes from," whereas Elijah "isn't grounded in his place or culture, and this ends up being very damaging to him" (*Speaking* 230).

The abuse he suffers heralds Elijah's transformation and corruption into a *windigo*. When Niska rescues Elijah from Moose Factory, Xavier's cousin must

belatedly learn the hunting skills and cultural practices that had been denied him. This is why, in the scene that opens the novel, Elijah is so concerned with being included in the tradition of "*great hunters*" (2). In a reversal of the dynamic between himself and Xavier, however, Elijah is the one who more quickly adapts to military life. More naturally outgoing, and much more practiced at disguising his discomfort and shame, Elijah assumes the responsibility of mediator for Xavier in the face of a culture and language that his cousin barely understands. Elijah's greater comfort in *wemistikoshiw* culture seems like a distinct advantage in these early parts of the novel, before Elijah has confessed to Xavier the story of his sexual abuse and before we see the true depth of the impact Elijah's enforced captivity and education had on him. In fact, Elijah's proficiency in war signals not his advantageous hybridization but the beginning of the poisoning that will kill him. The war changes the affable and talkative Elijah into someone "withdrawn and focused and serious since we came here" (25). Xavier notices the change and notes "how he is feeding off the fear and madness of this place. He makes a good soldier" (25). Elijah fears that "the war will end before we arrive" because "This war will make him into something" (93). The horrible truth of that wish manifests in the corrosive appetites of the *windigo* when we learn that "Elijah has learned to take pleasure in killing" (262).

Indeed, the Elijah created by the systemic abuses of the residential school system and the endemic racism of the British military becomes *too* skilled at killing. He begins to sneak off during the evenings, not content with the killing he does with his rifle during the day. As the corrupting medication of morphine is the dark reflection of the traditional healing power of the sweating tent, the *matatosowin*, so is this hunting a distortion of the hunting skills Niska taught him. This appetite for killing is not (yet) a literal hunger for human flesh, but it does signal the destructive power of the *windigo*. It is not enough to hunt Germans, setting traplines for them as if they were rabbits: Elijah soon turns to murder when he kills Grey Eyes. Responsible for introducing Elijah to morphine, Grey Eyes betrays Elijah by revealing his addiction to the racist lieutenant Breech. Elijah responds to this betrayal by taking advantage of a shelling bombardment to kill both men: he finds a piece of wood and "swings it down hard as he can onto Grey Eyes' forehead" and

"smashing" Breech's head "with the wood" (313). It is after these murders that Elijah confesses to Xavier the story of the nun Magdalene and her sexual abuses, contextualizing his descent into addiction and madness. The sadness at the heart of the *windigo* that Niska identifies – the untold and imposed suffering inflicted on Elijah at the residential school at Moose Factory given tragic context by Micah's baby – links the corruption of the *windigo* to the ongoing and persistent traumas of colonialism.

Though it is a book about healing, *Three Day Road* uses the *windigo* to demonstrate an awareness of the painful and irrecuperable losses that such ongoing traumas can inflict. When Xavier discovers that Elijah has been scalping his enemies, he realizes that his friend is past saving. Boyden's approach to Elijah's practice of scalping treads the same delicate path that he set for himself with the novel's approach to addiction; without care, Elijah's actions could be read as stereotypical of Indian savagery in comparison to European civilization. Boyden subverts this dynamic: it is, in fact, French soldiers who initiate Elijah into the practice of scalping. They corroborate what Elijah has already witnessed, in Lieutenant Breech's racist behaviour, that an Aboriginal sniper's kill count will never be believed unless he accumulates proof of his exploits. The soldiers even urge Elijah to "'Do what we do. Collect evidence of your kills. Do what my people taught your people a long time ago. Take the scalp of your enemy as proof. Take a bit of him to feed you'" (188). The first time he takes such a trophy echoes, once again, the perversion of the bush hunting of which his childhood in a residential school robbed him:

> He turns the dead man on his stomach and removes his sharpened knife from its sheath and pulls the man's hair back and removes his scalp with careful motions as simply as he would remove the skin from a pike. He places the hair in his bag, assuring himself that just as some other Indians consider it a sign of honour in battle, this counting coup and taking scalps, he will too. (193)

Even in his drug-addled state, with its accompanying suspension of ethics, Elijah demonstrates awareness that this is not an act of a great hunter; it is, rather one that requires reassurance.

The scalping, Boyden makes clear, is not a sign of Indian savagery but of colonial corruption. Despite the fact that the soldiers were drunk – "and some of them are very drunk" (188) – and may be mocking Elijah when they suggest scalping, their comments provide a clear signposting of Boyden's efforts to put Elijah's scalping into context, both broadly historical and personal. Lieutenant Breech's practiced horror at Elijah's scalping only further implicates colonial hypocrisy, framing Elijah's descent into *windigo* madness in explicitly colonial terms. Basil Johnson notes that a person might "become a Weendigo by his or her own excesses," but it was possible that "one human being could also transform another into a Weendigo" (227). With the abuse he suffered in residential school, along with the irrecoverable loss he feels for the break from his cultural upbringing, Elijah's transformation is not simply one of destructive appetites indulged. JR Miller remarks in *Skyscrapers Hide the Heavens: A History of Indian-White Relations in Canada* that Europeans' horror at the idea of scalping was hypocritical, given that the "taking of trophies had, after all, been a common enough practice among all armies at least since records were kept" (275). The French soldiers represent what Miller describes as common custom in the war: "Europeans who encouraged and promoted the growth of scalping by offering bounties for enemy scalps" (275). Johnson describes the *windigo* as a creature that dismembers its victims (222), and so Elijah's scalping of his is a signal that his corruption isn't merely on personal terms, but is part of the destruction wrought both by war and colonialism.

Hookimaw

Elijah's practice of scalping helps contextualize the healing historiographic work Boyden does in *Three Day Road.* As symbolic of cultural indebtedness in a Derridean sense as well as a persistent trauma, Elijah's corruption into *windigo* should not be read allegorically as the plight of Cree people, or other Aboriginal peoples more broadly, in Canada. Boyden's portrait of Elijah is not one designed to precisely reflect the problems continuing to face Aboriginal peoples today. Instead, Elijah marks the destructive powers that are a clear and present danger: the legacies

of the residential school system, systemic racism in Canadian institutions, the deprivation of culture and community. Boyden seeks to demonstrate the means to fight these illnesses, while acknowledging their permanent impact, and it is through the hauntings of fictional historiography that he undertakes this cause. Boyden does not abandon the ghost, like *Fall On Your Knees,* in his pursuit of a healing story. The healing in the novel is, rather, enacted in the form of hauntings that revise and recontextualize the historical record.

Boyden locates this storytelling power to resist and cure the *windigo* with the *hookimaw*. At a most basic level, there is no reconstruction of the past capable of undoing the damage caused – signaled most strongly by Elijah's tragic fall but most concretely for Xavier by the loss of his leg. Niska can help push the poison out of him, but she cannot bring Elijah back to life nor repair all the physical wounds her nephew suffered. At a more complex level of engagement, Boyden contrasts Xavier with Niska as agents of healing. The parallel narrative strands juxtapose Xavier's failure to heal Elijah with Niska's successful cure of Xavier, even as the confessional form of both stories enact a broader method of the same talking cure.

Due to the entrenched nature of its colonial root, Elijah's corruption is soon untreatable. When Elijah shares with Xavier some meat he has brought with him, "a gift from the Frenchmen" (287), he suggests after Xavier has eaten some that "'It is human. German, to be exact'" (287). Though Elijah claims to speak in jest, Xavier begins to believe that Elijah has become a cannibal. When Xavier happens upon Elijah killing a German soldier, the scene is horrific: "The German is bleeding but still alive, looks up in shock and fear at Elijah," who "cuts hard into the soldier's solar plexus with a knife, muttering. I can't make out what he says. The man below him writhes and screams. I watch as Elijah plunges his knife once again into the man. I can see the horror in the eyes turn to the dullness of death" (321). This is not the mercy killing or ritual duty of Niska and her father; this is the horror of war, the brutal act of killing that war forces onto its soldiers. What Xavier sees when Elijah turns around compounds the horror: "Elijah turns to me. Blood is smeared across his cheeks. His eyes are wet with tears" (321). The blood on his face seemingly confirms what Xavier has feared for months, that Elijah has become *windigo* and

that he must be killed. When Xavier asks why he killed the soldier, Elijah's response is both a rebuke and the inevitable answer that all soldiers in war must give: "'What do you mean why did I kill him?' Elijah asks calmly. 'Moments ago he was trying to kill me'" (322). There is inevitability to Elijah's transformation in this context, an element of a soldier doing what war demands. He insists, not without persuasive logic, that "'This is war. This is not home. What's mad is them putting us in trenches to begin with. The madness is to tell us to kill and to award those of us who do it well. I only wish to survive'" (322). Boyden suggests the impossibility of resisting the corruption of the *windigo* when all conditions conspire in its creation.

As such, Xavier's failure to save Elijah is not solely a matter of inability. Certainly, Xavier is deficient in his duties as *hookimaw*, having not yet accepted the role from Niska before he enlists. As she observes to her delirious nephew, "Just as I had witnessed it at your age, you had now seen something that you were too young to understand fully" (245). There are, however, immense barriers to Xavier's ability to restore Elijah's health: Elijah's trauma, his addiction, the ongoing racism they both face, the war itself. Moreover, Xavier is isolated from the cultural context that could empower him to accept his role. Xavier tries to preserve a few of the markers of his cultural identity, but he is able to mount only small gestures of resistance: "me, I won't sing their songs. I have my own songs" (15). He rarely speaks with his fellow officers, defying the English language and its conventions of privileging hierarchy, the military culture of discipline and punishment, British/Euro-Canadian cultural norms of etiquette. These gestures serve to isolate him from his fellow soldiers, but are not enough to preserve his cultural identity in the midst of the war. He is mostly able to grasp shreds of himself in retreat. Xavier states that it is his moosehide medicine bundle, not his military ID tags, that anchor his sense of identity: after throwing away his ID tag, he leaves his "medicine bundle about my neck. That alone is who I am" (335).

These gestures are insufficient. The role of the *hookimaw* that *Three Day Road* emphasizes is the duty to carve out the illness which risks harming the community, to take on the responsibility of destroying the thing that could destroy many others if left unchecked. It is to confront horrors like the *windigo* that cannot

be eliminated, only forestalled. It is to confront ghosts, to reckon with the traumas of the past. Xavier's first attempt at fulfilling the role of *hookimaw* is a failed attempt to kill Elijah with an overdose, a redirection of one of Elijah's traumas and not a confrontation with it. It is a placid scene, almost tender: Xavier emphasizes how "gently" he takes Elijah's arm, how "gently" he places the needle's point along a vein, how the "syringe is full of the golden liquid," how "smoothly" the needle "slips in" to Elijah's arm (298). Elijah, already high, wakes up in time to stop Xavier. This is a doubled failure: Xavier cannot cure Elijah – this incident is before the seeming proof of Elijah's cannibalism, the moment that places Elijah as incurably corrupted – nor can he kill him. This paralysis extends even after Elijah murders Grey Eyes and lieutenant Breech. Instead of taking on his duties, recognizing something in Elijah that the other soldiers cannot, Xavier considers a warped version of the talking cure: "Telling a superior about the murder of Grey Eyes and the lieutenant begins to appeal to me. Telling might purify, something that that *matatosowin*, the sweat lodge, can no longer do" (320).

In dramatizing Xavier's failures, Boyden shows his commitment to a more complicated version of healing than strict cultural seclusion and adherence. The novel consistently doubles Xavier and Elijah, demonstrating that a strong foundation in one's culture offers no inoculation to the pervasive destruction of war and colonial hegemony. Boyden employs this doubling several times, particularly in scenes where Elijah's charisma and skill cast him as the better hunter and Xavier as the struggling novice, but perhaps most painfully when Xavier accidentally kills a French woman near Passchendale. Elijah kills the woman's daughter, punching "a red hole" in her chest (283) as Xavier tries to apologize. The moment is a terrible inversion of the *windigo* killing that Niska's father was forced to carry out, and Xavier's agreement to conceal the incident is a tragic distillation of how the *hookimaw*'s sacred responsibility is corrupted. Rather than confronting the past and its injustices, he participates in their silencing.

This doubling is never demonstrated more clearly than when Xavier is mistaken for Elijah by the army. Each man is a monster, and each man a hero. Neta Gordon argues that "Boyden's concurrent representation of Elijah as both a cruel,

morphine-addled killer and a brave and honoured tribute to his people indicates a desire to construct structural and figurative doubles that are not merely oppositional," not creating a situation where the narrative privileges cunning in the bush over tactics in the battlefield, "but rather dialectical, whereby doubled terms must be reconciled within an ethical paradigm, a framework of healing and conscience that makes constructive meaning out of the Aboriginal experience in history" (124). Further, she argues that Boyden's "interest in exploring the differences between Elijah and Xavier, as well as their violent struggle, undermines any sense of a simplistic binary narrative that seeks solely to add" (124) to what Wyile calls the "proliferation of revisionist historical fiction" (*Speculative* 6). This parallels the inherent blurring of the dialectic between oral storytelling and the novel, between fiction and history, that Boyden's engagement with fictional historiography embodies.

The ontological blurring that this doubling applies to the novel puts Xavier's healing attempts in a clearer context. He is not simply failing to fulfill a cultural role, but trying to negotiate productive ways of managing unmanageable trauma. Xavier is only ever able to perform a distorted version of a *windigo* killing and his eventual confrontation with Elijah is made ambiguous by Xavier's increasing deafness. Hiding in a crater near the front, Elijah "says something to me, something I can't make out in the noise" (338). Recalling his recent killing of the young German soldier, Elijah's face is once again streaked with blood – this time likely his own. What Xavier believes Elijah says to him is that "*We both can't … leave*" (339). The scene, as Xavier recalls it, retains enough uncertainty to haunt him:

> Elijah sits up and reaches as if to hug me. When his hands touch me, a cold shock runs the length of my body. I push him back, my wounded arm heavy. Elijah struggles up and reaches to wrap his arms around me again. He's no longer smiling. His mouth is twisted in an angry grimace. (339)

The implication, via focus on his mouth, is that Elijah intends to devour Xavier but Elijah's definitively lethal violence begins only after Xavier pins Elijah in an attempt to strangle him. Xavier is not acting as a *hookimaw* here, but as a soldier where his

struggle to survive echoes the same battle he witnessed Elijah fight with the young German.

There is a final moment of rapprochement between the friends when a shell knocks Xavier off his deadly perch. Elijah mournfully asks "'Are we not best friends, Xavier? […] Are we not best friends and great hunters?'" (339). Xavier notes that, in this moment, Elijah "is my old friend again. I see the hurt child in him now" (339). Xavier acknowledges the trauma that has led Elijah to this point, this potential psychotic break, and finds its roots in the legacy of residential school abuse. It is a telling moment in the text, and one where Boyden makes evident that *Three Day Road* is more concerned with healing than it is with commemoration; it is more interested in Francis Pegahmagabow's injunction to be a conscience than with his recorded kills or his military accomplishments. Elijah's tragedy in becoming *windigo* is not independent of the war, but is not solely a product of the violence of the European front. He does not represent a personal transformation or corruption so much as the power of various historical legacies that Canada must confront. Though Elijah states blankly that "'It has gone too far, hasn't it […] I have gone too far, haven't I'" (339), his lack of interrogation, his statements of fact, indicate an awareness devoid of the power to resist his corrupted incarnation. When Xavier is able to regain the upper hand, "Elijah doesn't struggle any more, just stares up at" Xavier (340). As he crushes his best friend's windpipe, emphasizing the intimacy of Xavier and Elijah's final encounter, Xavier girds his strength by telling himself that "I must finish this. I have become what you are, Niska" (340).

And yet he is not what Niska is: the *windigo* reveals how Xavier's sacred duties to protect his community are, like everything else, corrupted by the inhumanity of the war. Just as Elijah effaced the boundary between hunting and murder, Xavier blurs the line between the duties of the *hookimaw* and those of the soldier. As he notes, "We all fight on two fronts, the one facing the enemy, the one facing what we do to the enemy" (301). That Xavier, who takes Elijah's dog tags after killing him and throwing his own away in disgust, is mistaken for Elijah only further reinforces this ontological destabilizing. Herb Wyile contends what this scene illustrates "is that a certain amount of predation is necessary for survival, especially

in war, but it is ultimately a matter of balance" ("Windigo" 93). This is an entirely reasonable and persuasive reading of the escalating conflict between the two best friends, but it seems to diminish the tragic undertones of the final confrontation. Though the bomb takes his leg, and leads to his hospitalization and the case of mistaken identity, the act of killing Elijah is what leads Xavier deep into the traumas of his own addiction. There is a constant tension in the novel, nowhere more clear than when Elijah accepts his fate at Xavier's hands, between Elijah's success as a soldier and his transformation into a *windigo* – his prowess as the former feeding into his corruption as the latter. This certainly echoes Micah's wife, for whom eating human flesh is the result of the panic of starvation in a hard winter and the desire to protect her baby. Further compounding and complicating Elijah's transformation, however, is his abuse. Where the *windigo* is corrupted by the triumph of his or her own monstrous appetites, Elijah is damned largely by the active persecution of forces outside his control. The immense tragedy of Elijah's death is in the question of what might have been done differently, of how he might have been, if Elijah hadn't have been so horribly abused.

That spectres signal the awareness of near-absolute destructive power – the Great War, systemic racism, residential schools, sexual abuse – is part of Boyden's healing project. These forces cannot be exorcized, cannot be utterly reconciled. That Xavier ultimately welcomes the mistaken identity is a sign of how lost he has become: "there is something calming in the idea that I am Elijah. There is something appealing in being the hero, the one who always does the right thing, says the funny thing. Now I understand his love for the medicine. It takes all of the badness away" (343). The conflation of Xavier and Elijah's addictions and identities, combined with the narrative of colonial disenfranchisement of Aboriginal peoples in Canada, lends a tragic dimension to Xavier's resignation of his role as *hookimaw*. Neta Gordon argues that "Xavier's willingness to assume the identity of the decorated Aboriginal soldier, a model of historical progress, reveals Boyden's suspicions about this time structure, as the model is a sham, a product only of guilt and apathy, of a lack of conscience" (126). Indeed, Niska's observation of the "sadness at the heart of the *windigo*, a sadness so pure that it shriveled the human heart and let something else

grow in its place" (242), suggests the pathos of Elijah's suffering. Rather than the more expected emotions of anger or revenge, Boyden demands a reassessment of the origin of the *windigo* by articulating it as a pathetic subject. The process of healing in which Niska participates is one where that story must be told, where those spectres and their legacies must be confronted in all their complexity.

This particular approach to healing, the role of the *hookimaw* as *Three Day Road* describes it, evokes Derrida's engagement with the past in *Specters of Marx*. Whether we acknowledge it or not, Derrida argues that we constantly resurrect our heritage. Elijah appears as a ghostly presence in the *matatosowin*, what Niska describes as the "other presence" which "isn't threatening. It neither challenges nor calms. The other is pure, and it fills this space. It is a young man I once knew who loved to talk" (349). Xavier asks for forgiveness from this other as he "'had no choice'" but himself "'cannot forgive everything [Elijah] did there'" as "'It is not my place to do so'" (349). He clarifies his relationship to the dead in a very Derridean manner, articulating the limitations of forgiveness: he cannot forgive on behalf of the silenced dead.

For Niska and Xavier, this is not merely an abstract matter but a literal case of life and death. Early in the novel, Niska declares that she is "the second to last in a long line of *windigo* killers. There is still one more" (44). She refers, of course, to Xavier. However, in the brotherhood between Xavier and Elijah, Boyden reminds us of both the openness of Derrida's concept of hospitality toward the not-living and his hope for a better future. The final chapter of *Three Day Road*, following the climax of Xavier's killing of Elijah, depicts the end of the painful process of Xavier's physical and psychic detoxification in the *matatosowin*. Xavier's healing culminates in Niska's vision in the *matatosowin*, a "good vision," of the future and the past simultaneously:

> Children. I see children. They are happy and play games by the bank. The bank of the Great Salt Bay. They are two boys, naked, their brown backs to me as they throw little stones into the water. Their hair is long in the old way and is braided with strips of red cloth. But this isn't the past. It is

> what's still to come. They look to be brothers. Someone else besides me watches them. I sense that he watches to keep them from danger. (350)

Though Niska understands this as a vision of Xavier's sons, her great-nephews that are "still to come," it is also an image of Xavier and Elijah as boys. The genealogical future is also the image of the past; the dialectic between historical time and sacred time is eliminated when healing occurs. This is a movement beyond commemoration: this is a signal to the possibility of redress, of healing. They are in the future, but their hair "is long in the old way." They embody the healing and renewal that *Three Day Road*, itself a vision of the past and the future at once, seeks to embody. Tellingly, there is an unseen and unnamed custodian, the one who "watches to keep them from danger"; this is presumably the next *hookimaw*. That he or she is unnamed suggests that the role need not be a matter of genealogical continuity in the strictest sense of familial relation. It is Xavier, and it is not.

The role of the *hookimaw* is, to paraphrase Derrida, to live not solely in the present but "beyond all living present," aware of and attentive to those already dead as well as those not yet born. As Derrida argues, no justice

> seems possible of thinkable without the principle of some *responsibility*, beyond all living present, within that which disjoins the living present, before the ghosts of those who are not yet born or who are already dead, be they victims of war, political or other kinds of violence, nationalist, racist, colonialist, sexist, or other kinds of exterminations, victims of the oppressions of capitalist imperialism or any of the forms of totalitarianism. (*SM* xix)

Three Day Road's various periphrases of time – the embedded flashbacks within the parallel, circular narratives – do not leave unresolved the history that the novel explores. Xavier and Niska appear to have successfully overcome their traumas, as the poison is forced from his body and soul. Niska's vision does not inaugurate an end to the encroachment of the *wemistikoshiw*, but it does suggest the persistence of the *hookimaw* and, as such, the survival of the Cree culture.

Conclusion

As Xavier explains, there are limits to what the living can accomplish with regards to the dead. After all, he speaks of his inability to forgive Elijah because "'It is not my place to do so'" (349). Though the novel's focus on healing seems interested in laying the past to rest, in "exorcising colonial hauntings" (77) as Sophie McCall suggests, *Three Day Road* is continually haunted. Unlike other hauntings that either summon ghosts to offer approval of the healing project of postcolonial fictional historiography, ghosts that are summoned to assuage settler guilt, ghosts that obscure the past that they are deployed to reveal, or ghosts that are abandoned because their ongoing presence risks deferring healing indefinitely, Boyden's novel articulates the powerful way that ghosts can function in fictional historiography's postcolonial projects. The novel highlights how spectres are effective means by which the past manifests in the present, in all its inalienable difference and unsettling ontological challenges. Boyden negotiates the conservative tendencies of fictional historiography to illustrate the necessity of confronting the past as a means of beginning a long deferred, and possibly unfinishable, work of illuminating the traumas we inherit and effect some measure of healing.

Boyden is careful not to obscure the traumas that *Three Day Road* uses spectres to illustrate, and he refuses to either dismiss the past or present the hope of future healing as already accomplished. The circular structure of the novel serves to forestall the dismissal of the past; in fact, Niska relies on the past as the cure she needs to help Xavier save himself. The past is not laid to rest, for which Xavier's permanently scarred body will attest. Even Niska's vision of the future is a signal of her debt to the not-yet born, a signal of the necessity of acting with awareness of the haunting presence of the not-living. It is not a return to a pre-colonial idyll but evidence that history's tragedies do not foreclose the possibility of recuperation and that time has cyclical dimensions unincorporated in colonial historiography. Boyden constructs the novel to prevent the completion of mourning. The first, unnamed chapter depicts Xavier and Elijah hunting; more specifically, it depicts them *learning* to hunt. It is a scene that the novel belatedly reveals is an education: Elijah, torn from his people, must re-learn his culture. This opening locates the novel in a

didactic mode: it is not a laying of the past to rest but a melancholy gesture to what has been lost and what, as we see with Elijah, is not always regained. The scene reveals the novel's hopeful and tragic desire to similarly articulate, not dismiss, those traces which can be recovered from what has been lost.

The novel's closing images reveal that the past resonates beyond its original moment and cannot be exorcized. After her vision of Xavier's children, Niska thinks of her father:

> Something of him is in those lights, the way they pulse slow and even, like a strong heartbeat. He has been all around me all my life, never really left me. It has taken most of my years to realize this. He is in the sky at night. He walks silently beside me when I stalk moose. He follows me even when I go into that *wemistikoshiw* town that he hated so much, the same place that he was taken to and where he died. (350)

Her father's presence lingers, a reminder and an injunction: the past is never gone. That it is her father, the previous *hookimaw*, indicates both her continuity with the past and emphasizes the tragedy of her losses. There is no closure here; her father's death is a reminder of the ignorant malice that threatens Niska and her family every day. Even the serene, almost sublime, image of peace and tranquility that ends the novel suggests not that the hopeful vision of the future is assured. It is a deferral, a hope for the future that, as Derrida suggests, is itself both empowering and contingent. As Niska notes, "The eastern sky is lightening. It's been a long night" (351). Despite the way that this seems to suggest the end of trauma – the new day that puts the past to rest – it is still embedded in circular and cyclical imagery. The day follows the night, but does not mean the end of all nights. Even this night is not complete as the story ends. The last line of the novel is a comparable gesture to a hopeful future that is not yet arrived: "By tomorrow we'll be home" (351).

Three Day Road is a novel about and of healing: healing of a past filled with unrelieved and undisclosed traumas, healing with the hope of a more just future. One of Boyden's most insightful feats is to deny that the moment of healing has been achieved: though Xavier has forced the poison out, the novel ends not with his full recovery but merely with his freeing himself of his addiction. Boyden thus avoids an

"unremitting referral back to the woundedness of the past" (McCredden 63) that would arguably hold us "in the realm of melancholy where the ego – an individual's, a community's or a nation's – does not even desire its ghosts to haunt the future, but traps them in the past, or anxiously confronts them again and again in a present which can't move forward" (63). Without a gesture, a particularly Derridean gesture, toward the future-to-come, Boyden's novel could suggest such an unremitting referral or enact McCall's worry of historical exorcism. Instead, it is a novel that weaves the past to the future, highlighting their symbiotic relationship, and one that forces a confrontation with history's spectres.

This, Boyden seems to hope, is a task that the novel of fictional historiography can accomplish. Not all similar hauntings are effective at deploying their spectres to negotiate the challenges of their postcolonial projects. *Three Day Road* signals the hauntological confrontation with ghosts in a desire to trouble the living present as well as materialize the immense difficulties of accomplishing such a task. As Derrida suggests, "the specter is the future, it is always to come, it presents itself only as that which could come, or come back" (39). The novel conjures the ghosts of racial violence without conjuring them away. It, rather than distinguishing between the past and the present, demonstrates how the past continues to structure the present. It challenges triumphalist conceptions of colonial history by demystifying and exposing the continuing harmful effects of racial and colonial traumas. It is a novel that haunts.

Conclusion:

Never Present Where You Stand

"Each corner is a secret and your history is a lie." – Jane Urquhart, *Away*

There is a scene in Margaret Atwood's *Alias Grace* where Grace Marks has a dream on the eve of the murder of Thomas Kinnear, the crime for which she will be imprisoned. In her dream, she encounters her dead friend Mary Whitney holding a glass with a firefly inside:

> "then she took her hand from the top of the glass, and the firefly came out and darted about the room; and I knew that this was her soul, and it was trying to find its way out, but the window was shut; and then I could not see where it was gone. Then I woke up, with the tears of sadness running down my face, because Mary was lost to me once more." (312-13)

The reason, the novel suggests, that Grace cannot discover where the firefly/soul has gone is that it has sought refuge inside her. Mary's soul enters Grace's body after her death, and becomes a force for her defense. During a session of hypnosis that might or might not be staged, Mary speaks through Grace to defend her, to explain that Grace is not responsible for the murders for which she has been found guilty. This voice is some form of insulation for Grace, a buttress against the ever-present pressure of her own trauma, jealousy, and rage. The voice, Mary's voice, signals the power that the dead have to speak to history as well as the unsettling nature of any encounter with spectres.

This study began with my desire to explore the archive of historical fiction that, as Herb Wyile recognizes in *Speculative Fictions*, is less overtly postmodern than novels of historiographic metafiction. I hoped to be able to identify some common concerns that could confirm my sense that much of the archive of recent historical fiction was not less politically and socially engaged than the work of writers such as Rudy Wiebe, Daphne Marlatt, and Robert Kroetsch. Given Cynthia Sugars's reading of Aimée Labarge's *Where the River Narrows* as representing "a

return to national history packaged in the guise of an interrogation of that history, whereby it is the historical event itself that provides the allure of national authenticity" ("Past Lives" 34), I worried that a less deconstructive model would confirm Sugars's assessment of the conservative tenor "of many post-1985 historical fictions" (34). Indeed, Sugars's concern bears attention: though Eileen remarks in *Away* that "Each corner is a secret and your history is a lie" (351), this is an ironic statement. Eileen's family is powerfully in tune with their history – often to self-destructive extremes – and there seems little support in Urquhart's novel for the idea that history itself cannot be relied upon. In the novel, history is not a lie – though we might doubt if Mary really met a daemon or merely a dying sailor – and it is, in fact, accessible in the form of the novel itself. Urquhart, like so many writers of historical fiction, evokes the past not to destroy all certainties but rather to nuance and broaden the exclusions in how history has been constructed. Though Sugars's criticism of *Where the River Narrows* is not a broad condemnation of more conservative historical fiction, it suggests that critics must be careful in discussions of historical fiction not to conflate the various iterations and projects of these novels and to be aware of the effects of a more conservative approach to digging up the past.

Nevertheless, the scene of the spectre of her dead friend entering the body of Grace Marks suggests that there is a way for a novel with less postmodern emphasis to do more than provide national authenticity. Atwood's novel – with an organizing metaphor drawn from quilting, numerous epigraphs and heteroglossic textual interventions, unreliable narrators, and a refusal to directly answer the question of whether or not Grace Marks is a murderer – has much in common with novels of historiographic metafiction. It does not, however, suggest that the past is depthless and only available via unreliable sources; rather, it conceives of the past as nearby but spectral and contingent. This is not to say that the polyphony of *Alias Grace* is merely a gesture toward historiographic complexity, but a suggestion that history is a spine in the novel, to paraphrase Michael Crummey, that Margaret Atwood does not fuck with. The historical mysteries of Grace Marks and her madness or villainy or innocence remain preserved. *Alias Grace* provided me with an initial entry point

into the idea that hauntings, in particular, were powerfully meaningful in the context of how historical fiction can function.

As the previous chapters show, writers can use a more conservative approach to history to similar postcolonial ends than more deconstructive novels. I argue that many novels of fictional historiography embrace a more conservative model precisely because it gives them the opportunity to present missing and excluded histories with some ontological certainty. If, as noted in the Introduction, "historical knowledge, at least in the modern west, is founded on the silencing and sublimation of other ways of knowing," then one way to combat that sublimation is to use the tools of that knowledge to combat its limitations. Many novels do just this: they foreground historiography in order to subvert colonial narratives without subverting the possibility of historical knowledge. These novels display reliance upon historical knowledge to identify precisely those silences and sublimations, and a less conservative model would risk undermining the history that they want to reveal.

In combination, spectres and fictional historiography are able to haunt the present with unsettling revisions of the past, speak with the voices of the dead to reveal and to unsettle. When novels such as *Alias Grace* or *Away* summon the dead within a story that summons the dead, they highlight the complex negotiations necessary when using the past in fiction. In other words, they highlight the need to be aware of the inalienable difference that we encounter in such a summoning and the necessarily partial nature of that act. Spectres can unsettle "notions of rational and conscious agency; unified identity; linear and teleological temporality; spatiality; and, finally, reified hierarchies of race, gender, and class that entrench traditional forms of knowledge and power" (Goldman 299). Spectres also, however, highlight our contingent and dynamic relationship with the past. Eileen's lament about history being a lie is also a description of being "away" and its context is more than simple heartbreak: Mary O'Malley, as Eileen learns, suffers a gap in her life from the loss of her culture, and this is a loss that the passage of time makes inevitable. Spectres, Mary Whitney's voice speaking through Grace reminds us, signal that our knowledge of history is inescapably incomplete. The project of so

many novels of fictional historiography is a postcolonial revision of an incomplete or prejudiced narrative, as is the project of so many novels that deploy spectres of history's insufficiently processed traumas. As *When Alice Lay Down With Peter* demonstrates, ghosts can highlight the persistence of historical injustices in ways that prevent them from being foreclosed as past. *The Horseman's Graves* and *Away* signal the power that textual spectres have to illuminate stories that have been ignored by history and its inherent biases. *Fall On Your Knees* demonstrates how a haunted revision of the past can be a gesture toward healing, while *Three Day Road* signals how spectres can be a recuperative force pointing toward a better understanding of the past in hope of creating a more just future. Thus, spectres in fictional historiography can powerfully demonstrate the unfinished business of the past, potentially transforming the present and the future, on both formal and thematic levels.

There is, however, a paradox in this revision, or – at least – a complicated narrative act to accomplish. These novels also demonstrate the ways that ghosts, by their occluding nature, are not always able to illuminate the past that they manifest. The process that Marlene Goldman describes as "simultaneously revealing and concealing" (299) is one that does not consistently draw attention to its own discursivity, in the manner of the polyphony or textual ruptures of historiographic metafiction. As such, it offers a different order of challenge to official narratives of history. It is a gesture of incompleteness, of disruption, accompanied by a hope for the future. It is also, however, potentially a method of obfuscating the past. Without a clear engagement with who or what is being revealed to whom and to what end, there is a risk of reenacting existing and unequal power dynamics. The unfinished business of the past cannot ever be fully completed, the victims of those injustices can never be made whole, and the presence of spectres in a text can obscure that tragic reality in their gestures toward the future. Ghosts can serve to provide legitimacy for an anxious settler culture, can assuage settler guilt over a continual profit from past injustices, can obscure the particulars of the very losses they illuminate, and can foreclose the ongoing nature of the work of healing.

The belief that we benefit from a more complete and compassionate accounting of the past underlies this use of spectres but is not always its effect. The assumption is that daring to learn the truth about oneself and one's world has a salutary effect – as is the promise of psychoanalysis.[24] However, spectres, as Derrida remarks, are disadjusted from the contemporary and point out to us how time is out of joint. Spectres of the past are not merely revenants but spirits of the future as well, comingling inside and outside temporality. They destabilize reductionisms, essentialisms, dichotomies, ontologies, teleologies, and epistemological claims. Albert Braz, arguing about the replacement of Louis Riel the mad villain with Louis Riel the martyred hero, contends that we have not definitively opened up our history to multiple interpretations but have substituted one set of certainties for another: "we do not necessarily have a greater variety of narratives than we did in the past but merely different ones" (40).

Despite the possible obstructions that spectres can initiate, I believe that ghosts in fictional historiography permit writers to confront historical certainties directly. Following Marlene Goldman, I believe that spectres can "open spaces for repressed histories and knowledges that challenge prevailing aesthetic and political assumptions about the nation and its narration" (299). They are a useful trope for writers "not because they grant us transparent access to the other, but, instead, because they prompt readers to engage with the histories and resistance of the other" (300). In the context of fictional historiography, wherein writers foreground the act of writing history and its inherent biases, these spectres enable this ethical engagement precisely with the act of recuperating history. Spectres in fictional historiography allow us to engage with the past not as a distinct epoch, but as a constituent part of the present, as part of our inheritances and debts. Though much fictional historiography is concerned with revising history, it is not, as Braz suggests, concerned with contending the grounds of historiography as such. Ghosts provide a means to do historiography while preventing the replacement of one

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[24] "And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you healthy," according to Sigmund Freud.

history with another and permitting the revision of a narrative that, for instance, sees Louis Riel as an insane criminal.

The desire for recuperative work, what I noted in the introduction that Dionne Brand has called the work of remembering, is powerfully present in much historical writing. The particular strain of historical fiction that I have called fictional historiography is subject to a greater degree than historiographic metafiction to conservative tendencies due to this desire to remember specific and often neglected pasts. Spectres can reveal and assist both the drive of postcolonial fictional historiography toward including marginalized narratives and the unease about ignoring the inevitable biases of such recuperative work. As such, fictional historiography that features spectres can highlight the tendency of some historical writing to exorcize the past rather than to live with its uncertainties. It is because of their unsettling nature, because of their refusal to become objects of ontological stability, that ghosts can function so powerfully in the postcolonial work of fictional historiography. The trope of haunting in fictional historiography is particularly worthy of study not only because of the engagement that Goldman points to, but also because of the paradoxical position that spectres hold. As Derrida suggests, they destabilize our security in the present moment but they also demand an ethical valence to our reading. They open up spaces for revision of historical knowledge – not fully, as the past can never be grasped with firm certainty or entirety – even while pointing to our inability to recapture the past.

What makes the presence of spectres so powerful in fictional historiography is that they materialize and make explicit the common project of much of that archive to use the past to open up spaces for the future. The frequent emphasis on recuperative work – on enabling history to be opened up rather than foreclosed, on highlighting the recurrence of trauma, on considering the debts we inherit from a past that is both inalienable and bound in the present – makes the work that these novels do vital. Hauntings in fictional historiography are deeply engaged with the way that we use the past in the present, and the way that we explain our histories to ourselves. When Niska and Xavier tell their stories in *Three Day Road*, it is a matter of life and death. Even though the healing can never be fully accomplished, the

deferral of its result is not a refusal to engage in the possibility of healing. It is, rather, a signal that the hope of healing these wounds does not erase their scars. It is work that echoes the call of *Specters of Marx* to do the work of mourning. Derrida asserts that mourners are necessary: they are those who heed the injunction to speak to the dead, "the inheritors of all that ensues from the past and in their mourning, they iterate a promise of responsibility for the future" (miller 3-4).

Even textual spectres that are compromised gestures to assuaging guilt or effacing the narratives they reveal are engaged in this complex work of inheritance. As Ambrose Piper demonstrates in *Fall On Your Knees*, the past contains dangerous and disturbing knowledge that forces a reassessment of what we might consider to be true of ourselves at a foundational level. With the plurality of absences that make experiencing the past as a present presence, fictional historiography is always already going to fail if it seeks to restore the past. When we permit ourselves to face such absences, ghosts like those in *The Horseman's Graves* and *Away* – ghosts that indicate the spaces we cannot access but whose effects are ongoing – can confront us. Ghosts can also circumscribe the "historical" embodiments of our past, which are themselves forever haunted by those spectres that informed the thinking of the time, the biases of the historian or chronicler, the legacies that those texts themselves inherited. When Thomas Scott plants a blistering kiss on each daughter of the McCormack clan in *When Alice Lay Down With Peter*, he manifests the effects of these legacies.

Spectres in fictional historiography offer productive avenues to explore the ongoing effects of the past on the present. In a literary context where writers seek to grapple with inherited traumas and injustices, spectres in historical fiction can enable ways of confronting those voices without appropriating them or foreclosing their own inalienable subjectivity. To reckon with the ghost is not to fully recover the secret that will answer all our living questions, or to make those who speak with ghosts inherently moral beings. Mary Whitney's ghost in *Alias Grace* does not offer Grace what she seeks about the true nature of the murders for which she has been charged. When she tells Simon Jordan that "'It would be a great relief to me, to know the whole truth at last'" (320), neither she nor the novel can supply that reprieve. As

Mary's ghost makes plain, the past is not gone. Niska also highlights this while she recounts a "good vision" of Xavier's descendants in a hopeful future: her vision of Xavier's sons depict the boys as almost reincarnations of Xavier and Elijah. The circular patterns of time signal continuity, not distinct historical epochs.

Niska's vision in *Three Day Road* also signals how the traumas of the past are never far. Niska remarks that "Someone else besides me watches them. I sense that he watches to keep them from danger" (350). The presence of another *hookimaw*, of another *windigo* hunter, suggests that the requirement for that role will continue to exist: the *windigo* is not a threat that can be banished or exorcized. Confronting the past, speaking to ghosts, is necessary because they will not disappear. Revision of the past to achieve this kind of "good vision" is the goal of hauntings in fictional historiography. It is a way to confront ethically the presentation of the past and its losses, our inheritances and debts. Xavier will never be made whole, Ambrose will never know his family, Lathias will never rest easily, and Thomas Scott will always oversee the birth of those who are born on this land. The past haunts us: "they are always *there*, spectres, even if they do not exist, even if they are no longer, even if they are not yet. They give us to rethink the 'there' as soon as we open our mouths" (*SM* 221). As Eileen reminds us about being "away," about being swept up in the past, the spectre in fictional historiography reminds us that we are never present where we stand.

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