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Beyond Exclusion: Alienation and Contact in the Poetry of Erín Moure

by

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Abstract

In her writing, Canadian poet Erín Moure combines challenging formal experimentation with keen social and political awareness; Moure, indeed, insists that words and ideas always affect social practices. Accordingly, Moure offers a poetics of protest that reveals and mourns oppression and exclusion. In particular, Moure draws attention to the ways in which social and economic structures—specifically, the structures of capitalism—perpetuate human alienation, obscuring or destroying the dynamic relationships both within and among individuals. After a contextualizing introduction, this thesis explores Moure's depiction of personal and interpersonal alienation in *Empire, York Street*, *The Whisky Vigil*, *Wanted Alive*, and *Domestic Fuel*. The conclusion, further, will begin to examine how this theme develops in Moure's continuing poetic practice. Throughout the thesis, I place Moure's poetic texts in conversation with her extra-poetic writings and with Marxist critical theory, yet I ground my study primarily in a close reading of Moure's poetry.

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Contents

Introduction

The Poetics of Protest

J'imagine qu'il s'agit de cela, d'un indéfinissable bonheur dont
la recherche naît du malheur présent.
– France Théoret, *L'Homme qui peignait Staline*, 135.

In her collection of essays entitled *My Beloved Wager* (2009), Canadian poet Erín Moure, also known as Erin Mouré and Eirin Moure,[1] describes her writing practice as an effort to give voice to "all that can't be ignored, on pain of numbness or loss of consciousness" (11). While Moure has become known especially for her challenging formal experimentation, her poetry manifests a deep social and political awareness: indeed, in an interview, Moure remarks, "I don't see politics and language as separate" ("Acknowledging" 127). From *Empire, York Street* (1979) to *O Resplandor* (2010), Moure's poetry struggles against "the organism's complacency, its complicities with the status quo," by placing on view the oppressions and exclusions perpetuated by dominant hierarchies, including those of gender and sexuality, class, ethnicity, and nation (*My Beloved* 14). According to Moure, "Thought, unwatched, tends to resolve itself in a binary way," producing rigid divisions rather than fluid connections between concepts and, ultimately, between people (*My Beloved* 61). In

[1] Of Moure's thirteen solo volumes of poetry to date, *Empire, York Street* (1979); *Wanted Alive* (1983); *Domestic Fuel* (1985); *Furious* (1988); *WSW (West South West)* (1989); *Sheepish Beauty, Civilian Love* (1992); *Search Procedures* (1996); *A Frame of the Book* (or *The Frame of a Book*) (1999); and *Pillage Laud* (1999) all feature the spelling *Erin Mouré*. Other early publications, including the chapbook *The Whisky Vigil* (1981) and the collection *The Green Word: Selected Poems 1973-1992* (1994), also bear this name. However, *Sheep's Vigil by a Fervent Person* (2001), Moure's translation of Fernando Pessoa's *O guardador de rebanhos*, uses the name *Eirin Moure*—the Portuguese spelling of the poet's name—in a reflection of the heteronyms Pessoa adopts in his own writing practice. Moure has published her most recent work, including *O Cidadán* (2002), *Little Theatres* (2005), *O Cadoiro* (2007), and *O Resplandor* (2010) under the name *Erín Moure*. Thus, while many citations—particularly of critical articles and the poet's previous work—will refer to *Erin Mouré*, I adopt the more recent spelling throughout this thesis. The resulting combination of spellings will, then, also mirror Moure's playful approach to naming and identity.

social and economic life, these conventions of thought separate masculine from feminine, upper class from lower class, indigenous from foreign.

Moure groups the mutually reinforcing structures of patriarchy, heterosexism, capitalism, and ethnocentrism under the term *the Republic*. Because it sorts humans into distinct categories, the Republic offers a measure of security and acceptance to its citizens but violently circumscribes permissible modes of being and expression for many individuals. The Republic urges us to "forget, or repress, or define ourselves in terms acceptable to the order" and, thus, often excludes and represses "women, blacks, First Nations, lesbians, working class, immigrants, combinations of all these" (*My Beloved* 26). In sum, adherence to the norms of the Republic is "necessary to reduce anxiety, and deadly because it involves one's own absence" (*My Beloved* 29). Even as it tears people apart, the Republic anaesthetizes them, forestalling thoughts of resistance. Moure, however, challenges this fatal complacency by offering an anti-anaesthetic, an attentiveness to different forms of oppression and a longing for life "beyond exclusion" (Mouré, "Examining" 10). In particular, my thesis will demonstrate that Moure reveals and mourns the personal and interpersonal alienation of humans under the Republic—and, specifically, under capitalism—in an effort to reshape and redefine existing social and economic structures.

Like many other writers of the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, Moure combines language-centred poetry with social and political consciousness. As literary critics and historians such as Pauline Butling and W.H. New point out, several radical literary movements began to emerge in Canada throughout the late twentieth century, and in these movements linguistic experimentation linked arms with social and political consciousness in protest against repressive power structures, including the hierarchies of gender and sexuality, class, ethnicity, and nation. According to New's *A History of Canadian Literature*, in the period from 1960 to 1985, writers repeatedly contested the status quo: in particular, ethnicity, region, and gender became focal points for "many a resistance movement. All fastened on language as a

means of redefining the parameters of power and the character of available history. They [. . .] shaped the force and direction of political movements" (New 204). Writers and critics drew increasing attention to the connections between language and social conditions, and many new movements employed "processes of linguistic rearrangement which enact or imply the need for social and attitudinal change. As with Daphne Marlatt, 'writing' becomes 'righting'" (New 254). The remainder of the century only deepened these linguistic and political protests against the status quo. The issues of gender and sexuality, especially, became important to many writers as a "challenge to previous notions of social norm," and these texts issued an "implicit invitation to critics and readers to re-examine their own subjectivity" (New 335).

More specifically, in her discussion of radical poetics, Butling argues that critics can best understand experimental literature in the late twentieth century as "a wide-ranging, historiographic project to reconfigure existing domains, reterritorialize colonized spaces, and recuperate suppressed histories" (19). Literary radicality in the late twentieth century offers a *re* poetics, where "*re*defining, *re*writing, *re*claiming, *re*articulating, *re*inventing, *re*territorializing, and *re*formulating are some ways to change historical constructions and social positionings" (Butling 21). Like New, Butling observes an increasing emphasis on diversity and minority positions in these new radical movements. Because official history often ignores or represses minority voices, this *re* poetics "thematizes the problems of oppression, exclusion, and containment as well as disarticulates some tropes and codes that perpetuate those conditions"; a *re* poetics features "an alternative history to reconfigure the present moment" (Butling 23, 22). Language and politics necessarily combine for these radical poetries because marginalized individuals and groups must "change the social formations that relegate them to dependent or outsider positions" in order to speak (Butling 20). Ultimately, this "*re* poetics involves *re*writing cultural scripts and *re*configuring literary/social formations. The goal is to *change*, not conserve, past and present constructions" (Butling 21). Moure's poetics, then, reflects the desire to

rewrite social and political conditions characteristic of this larger network of twentieth-century radical poetries in Canada. Moure's portrayal of alienation becomes potent social commentary, using words to reveal social conditions and, simultaneously, to unsettle them: "Poetry," according to Moure, "is protest, for it opposes, even as it uses, ordinary speech" (*My Beloved* 32). This poetry offers a direct, forceful critique of the status quo kindled by Moure's own experience of marginalization, in which, she insists, existing norms "suppressed both my feelings as a lesbian and my concerns as a woman" (*My Beloved* 64-65).

To proceed in this radical poetry—to find the "points of opening" in Moure's words—the reader must grapple with "points of challenge" (*My Beloved* 85). This reading practice is far from comfortable: it requires the reader to consider different perspectives and possibilities, to take "risks" in thought and, ultimately, in practice (*My Beloved* 13). Moure's protest frequently takes the form of challenging formal experimentation, an approach that has garnered both celebratory and, to borrow Lisa Dickson's phrase, "anxious" responses ("'Signals'" 17). In a positive review of *Sheepish Beauty, Civilian Love*, Richard Vaughan nonetheless warns the reader, "'You're not going to get it. I didn't. And I read the whole book'" (qtd. in Dickson, "'Signals'" 16). John Herbert Cunningham concurs, describing Moure as "probably the most difficult Canadian poet" (105). Certainly, as Dennis Denisoff remarks, "A number of people have criticized Mouré's work [. . .] for being too obscure, too difficult—ultimately, too dangerous" ("Merger" 114). For Moure, however, "reading is potentially a place that brings challenge to old structures [. . .]. To get to this place of curiosity and challenge, one must—I think—confront the difficult and not shy away from it" (*My Beloved* 14). Three overlapping strands of criticism have taken up this dare by addressing Moure's poetic engagement with social issues. More exactly, these critical responses have centred on Moure's resistance to hegemonic structures in language, gender and sexuality, and the body politic.

First, some critics have focussed on Moure's disturbance of linguistic authority, namely the conventions of grammar and literary practice. For instance, Dickson observes in her MA thesis that "Mouré challenges the binary nature of thought and language," while Heather Fitzgerald argues that Moure disrupts grammatical order to reveal the "noise" or disorder within linguistic systems (Dickson, "Sisyphus" iii; H. Fitzgerald 27). More specifically, Steven Scobie's deconstructive approach shows that the play between text and supplement in Moure's footnoted poems "maintain[s] a dialogue of origins, which by its very duality denies the possibility of synthesis, or of any single, transcendental origin" (Scobie 67). Critics such as Christopher Swail, Melissa Jacques, Dickson, and Jamie Dopp particularly notice Moure's habit of discomforting readers and reading practices. Swail describes Moure's work as a "paranoid poetics" that "troubles the surface of signification and gets under people's skin," disturbing "the overriding logic of the symbolic order" and, more exactly, "the seamlessness with which the language of Realism is able to depict society" (106, 111). Jacques asserts that "Mouré launches a critique of the activity of representation" by portraying the railway accident at Seebe and, simultaneously, challenging that representation, pointing out "its constraints, which also indicate openings" (Jacques 75; Moure, *My Beloved* 148). Similarly, in her article "'Signals Across Boundaries,'" Dickson argues that Moure challenges traditional "exegetical authority and comfort" because she places on view the ways in which both writer and reader produce meaning in a text; thus, Moure creates a "poetics of discomfort" that challenges both writerly and readerly discourses of authority (30, 19). For Dopp, "Mouré's work teaches the importance of being as receptive as possible to discomfort" because this discomfort marks the decentering of authoritative discourses and, thus, permits "other meanings (other possibilities, other realities) to leak out" (262, 283).

Second, practitioners of feminist and queer criticism have combined concern for language with attention to Moure's feminist and lesbian politics. As Susan Rudy

notes, "Since *Furious*, Mouré has made use of formal innovation for the purposes of feminist critique" (207). Susan Glickman argues that Moure subverts patriarchal structures that have either silenced women or represented them "only negatively, as the absence or contrary of whatever is believed to be masculine and valuable" (n. pag.). In *Domestic Fuel*, especially, Moure brings "her rage at the abuse of political power, and her frustration with the corruption of language, together in a coherent, feminist analysis of society" (Glickman n. pag.). Similarly, Karen Press suggests that both Moure and Lola Lemire Tostevin misinterpret and reorient religious themes, language, and imagery to subvert what Press sees as the "religious and linguistic oppression of women and of us all" (Press 145). More recently, Heather Fitzgerald, Rudy, and Marie Carrière have discussed Moure's feminist and lesbian poetics. Heather Fitzgerald identifies the motif of asthma in Moure's poetry as "the ideal metaphor to represent those desires and experiences that conventional uses and structures of the English language cannot"; thus, asthma aptly figures the poet's "relationship—as a woman and as a lesbian—with the language in and through which she works" (11). According to Rudy, Moure "writes in excess of signification" to displace—even if only for a moment—the hegemony of patriarchal language (205). Carrière, who helpfully positions Moure within the Canadian movement of writing in the feminine, finds in Moure's work—and, especially in its representation of the mother-daughter relationship—a "feminist ethics" that attempts, though not wholly successfully, to balance "[i]dentification with and differentiation from the other" (*Writing* 4, 208).

Third, a smaller number of critics have focused on issues of the body politic, offering discussions of ethnicity, citizenship, and nationality. Jacques' analysis of "Seebe" fits into this third category, as well, for Jacques' reflections on language and power take a postcolonial turn: at the core of this argument lies a discussion of the subaltern and a recognition of Moure's longing for linguistic and social justice for the Canadian First Nations. Lianne Moyes and Miriam Nichols, additionally, address the

topics of nation, borders, and cosmopolitanism. According to Moyes, Mouré's *O Cidadán* (2002) "resists the codes that routinely produce the subjects we call 'citizens' and regulate the institutions of citizenship" by contesting "prevailing codes of intelligibility" and offering "a possibility for an alternative 'citizen'" ("Acts" 112). In a second essay, Moyes discusses place—namely, Montreal—in the poetry of Moure, Robyn Sarah, and Mary di Michele. Again, Moyes emphasizes Moure's attention to community, politics, and citizenship in *Sheepish Beauty, Civilian Love* (1992) and in *O Cidadán*, insisting that Moure troubles "the border between Quebec and the 'wider world'" and "invite[s] readers to conceive of Montreal as a global city" ("Global" 255). In her own discussion of *O Cidadán*, Nichols argues that through the tropes of "sense without sense; the fraction; and giving face," Moure offers "a poetics of receptivity" where one becomes a citizen and even a self only in exposure and openness to the other (150).

These three types of criticism share an underlying interest in Moure's engagement with existing social and political structures. They acknowledge that, as Moure insists, "writing is always and forever a social practice. You can't pretend that discourse doesn't affect you or that it exists severed from you—*out there*. [. . .] Writing must be, always is, engaged in some way" (*My Beloved* 86). As these critics rightly demonstrate, the longing for "a collective struggle toward human rights and social justice" undergirds Moure's poetics (Moyes, "Acts" 117). This critical trajectory provides an important starting point for further explorations and new directions in Moure's poetry. Although these critics have ably explicated Moure's protest against hegemonic structures in language and gender and sexuality, they have given less attention to Moure's critique of the body politic—and, especially, of capitalism. A few commentators have noted that Moure engages with social and economic themes, inviting a Marxist perspective. Heather Fitzgerald remarks in passing on "Mouré's political involvement in [. . .] socialist [. . .] communities" (134). Kent Lewis supplies a bit more detail, observing that "Mouré's poetry interrogates abuses of power,

privilege, politics, patriarchy, and capitalism, usually from a feminist position" (761). Similarly, Carrière notes Moure's affinity with Marxist thought by observing that the poet understands patriarchal and capitalist oppression as mutually reinforcing: as Carrière points out, Moure "conflates the master discourses of science, capitalism and medicine with a patriarchal religious imperialism" ("Poetics" 144).

In an exciting development, the emerging third strand of criticism has begun to discuss the body politic in Moure's works, and Moyes and Nichols offer insightful discussions of Moure's protest against conventional Western understandings of the state. Nichols even discusses community in terms of economics, mentioning both labour and exchange, and considers the social consequences of capitalism in the context of world citizenship. These important studies, however, provide only glimpses into Moure's recent works, especially *O Cidadán*, and have yet to trace themes of the body politic and, more specifically, the economy, in Moure's poetry as a whole. This thesis, accordingly, aims to extend research on Moure's protest against the social and economic structures of the Republic by discussing the development of these themes in Moure's early poetry. Specifically, I will argue that Moure's political concern for both the individual and the community displays—and mourns—human alienation to create an ache for relationality, a dynamic experience of connection within and among individuals. I will draw upon the Marxist ideas of alienation and, in a complementary fashion, reification to argue that Moure's poetry places on view both personal and interpersonal alienation.

Moure's own understanding of society has a telling resemblance to Marxist thought, and the following paragraphs will begin to sketch the congruities between Moure's analysis and Marxist theory. For Moure, relationality defines both individuals and communities. Moure characterizes the human self as fundamentally relational, both physically and mentally. She follows Baruch Spinoza in describing the physical self as "an infinite number of particles in motion or at rest, thus defined not by forms but by velocities" (*My Beloved* 97). As an assemblage of particles in motion

and in contact with one another, the body is, in essence, relational. Moure also understands the human mind as a network of dynamic connections, observing that "Whatever the brain 'knows' is relational, web-like" (*My Beloved* 75). Consequently, "we are a jumble of memories, connections, and relations that remake themselves and alter constantly in us, because they exist only as relations and not as things" (*My Beloved* 53). For Moure, "we are shimmers, coalescences, coalitional, relational," and "[t]he creation of ourselves as subjects takes place continually, is part of a continual *actactact*" (*My Beloved* 225, 108).

For Moure, this personal relationality—the open-ended connections among one's cells and thoughts—is continuous with interpersonal relationality, the ongoing links between self and other. A biological image may help, here: as the human embryo develops into a gastrula, the outer surface of the organism differentiates into three dermal layers. These layers give rise to both the inner surfaces of the body—including the connective tissues, blood and lymphatic vessels, muscles, and bones—and the outer surfaces of the body—the lungs, pharynx, gastrointestinal tract, and epidermis. Inner and outer surfaces, that is, develop from the same cells. In Mark Taylor's words, "'the body is, in effect, nothing but strata of skin" that connect the parts of the organism not only to one another but also to the external world (Taylor 12). In short, it is relationships all the way in—and all the way out. Accordingly, Moure remarks that "the notion of identity contains a preceding notion of *community*," for "much of selfness comes from contextualization with or through the other" (*My Beloved* 62, 105). As several critics point out, then, Moure's poetry "privilege[es] both a relational and differential intersubjectivity" (Carrière, *Writing* 7). Like the connections between neurons, the connections between people shift and develop in a "continual gesture of *establishing*" (*My Beloved* 122).

However, for Moure, the social and economic conditions of the Republic threaten to halt movement and sever relationships within and among individuals. For instance, Moure comments on the "links we have to each other, so well buried by the

social constraints built into our speech and perception," and she believes that "[i]f you damage or conceal the links," the results "are grave" (*My Beloved* 18). In an interview with Janice Williamson, Moure appeals directly to a Marxist notion of objectification to describe the deterioration of dynamic relationships, arguing that

> even the structure of the language divides objects and processes, makes distinctions in thought that aren't *there*, really. You end up objectifying things like space and time. I mean time is a noun. Objectified! Phase is a name. But is it an object? Touch is a name. But touch is an *action* [. . .]. Using language unthinkingly, then, maintains its hierarchial [*sic*] power. Its power to close off and isolate *relationships* as *things*. Separate. Individual, again! ("My Existence" 208)

In this passage, notably, Moure focuses on the power of normative language to stop movement and close off connection, replacing a dynamic network with static, detached objects. The Republic, which Moure identifies as "the coalescence of falling apart," ruptures personal and interpersonal relationships in an attempt to "constitute us as separate, clearly bordered, self-enclosed" (*My Beloved* 33, 90). Moure explicitly attributes this loss of dynamic relationality to capitalist society, for "[t]he dream of the individual really buys into patriarchal capitalism, as consumption, and so we should get rid of it. [. . .] Because it prevents people from speaking out" ("My Existence" 206). Moure, in addition, conceptually and intertextually evokes "reification" or "reified," terms used by Marxist critic Georg Lukács to denote the disintegration of human connections under capitalism (Mouré, "Crossings" 5; *My Beloved* 158). In this way, Moure articulates and laments the isolation and objectification of the self and of the community.

The Marxist concept of alienation, or estrangement, similarly describes how individuals and communities lose their dynamic relationality under capitalism. Marxism, as Will Kymlicka notes, describes ongoing praxis—"freely creative cooperative production"—as the human nature or essence (190). In production,

human faculties, both physical and mental, work together, allowing workers to reach their full potential as free, creative beings. Accordingly, for Karl Marx, "the productive life is the life of the species. It is life-engendering life" (*Economic* 113). Because Marx considers production the foundation of social life, he also sees it as essential to relationships between humans: communism, as the organized manifestation of free, creative labour, will restore "man to himself as a *social* (i.e., human) being" (*Economic* 135). In the work published as *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*, however, Marx argues that capitalism perpetuates alienation rather than relationship. According to Mark Milligan and Struik, *to alienate*, which renders the German verb *entäussern*, contains "the ideas of 'losing' something which nevertheless remains in existence over-against one, of something passing from one's own into another's hands, as a result of one's own act, with the idea of 'selling' something" (58). In short, alienation occurs when the self perceives something intimately connected to it—especially a product or a part of the self—as detached and external to itself. Marx borrows, here, from the German philosophers Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel and Ludwig Feuerbach, yet Marx focuses on alienation in social and economic life, arguing that capitalism, specifically, breaks down the relationships within and between individuals. Because, as Lawrence H. Simon points out, the life of the individual depends upon an "understanding of one's self in relation to one's social world," these two forms of alienation interrelate (731). This Marxist theory of alienation echoes Moure's own concerns about the destruction of relationality within capitalist society and, thus, proves an apt tool to explicate Moure's poetry.

My thesis will, accordingly, explore Moure's depiction of personal and interpersonal alienation, particularly in the context of Moure's early works: *Empire, York Street* (1979), *The Whisky Vigil* (1981), *Wanted Alive* (1983), and *Domestic Fuel* (1985). Chapters one and two will trace the critique of the Republic—and, especially, capitalism—that emerges in Moure's early poetry by exploring, respectively, themes

of personal and interpersonal alienation. With this foundation in place, my conclusion will begin to examine how the theme of alienation develops in Moure's continuing poetic practice. To this end, I will analyze selected poems from *Search Procedures* (1996) and *Expeditions of a Chimæra* (2009; with Oana Avasilichioaei) that reflect on Moure's poetic response to alienation, her longing for "*The sense of 'with'-ness, 'joint'-ness that conveys no hierarchy of terms*. Which is how our community can and must exist. 'Among-many'" (*My Beloved* 62). Throughout my thesis, I will place Moure's poetic texts in conversation with both her extra-poetic writings and with Marxism, a project that necessitates the careful application of critical theory. Nevertheless, I ground my study primarily in a close reading of Moure's early poetry with the desire to "open the work" to other readers (Mouré, "Acknowledging" 130). I offer this critical analysis as a possible approach to Moure's oeuvre rather than as an authoritative reading; after all, Moure seeks always "to place both readers and writers at risk" (Dickson, "'Signals'" 18). This reading practice, then, becomes a "risk" or "wager," for, as Moure aptly writes, "I am a being open to reading, and this is the most inviting way of being of all" (*My Beloved* 15).

Chapter One

Half Life: Personal Alienation

> [W]e blanch cotton, and strengthen steel, and refine sugar, and shape pottery; but to brighten, to strengthen, to refine, or to form a single living spirit, never enters into our estimate of advantages.
> – John Ruskin, *The Stones of Venice*, Vol. 2, Ch. 6, § 16.

Throughout her poetic and extra-poetic writings, Moure consistently voices a faith in "Humanness" (Mouré, Untitled Statement 80). She "expose[s] the normalizing tendencies of dominant humanist models" and critiques the static, cohesive "I of the (liberal humanist) individual," and, in this respect, her work "draws directly on deconstructive philosophy's critique of Enlightenment thought" (*My Beloved* 31; Carrière, *Writing* 103). Nevertheless, Moure's work retains, according to Denisoff, "a belief in the value and dignity of humans, and the systems of social contingency that support this value and dignity" ("Merger" 119). Moure places great value on justice, and this ethics underlies her critique of late capitalism. In an interview with Robert Billings, she remarks,

> I started out with a sense of social justice, that things weren't fair, and the capitalist system only works if the mechanisms of production are renewed—factories rebuilt, machines changed. That only happens in capitalism if some people can make a lot of money. When some people make a lot of money, some other people are working for nothing. I just couldn't see how this was fair. (Mouré, "Changes" 43)

Within late capitalism, according to Moure, both production and consumption tear individuals apart: she argues that, even in North America, "by our consuming lives and means of production we consent to every kind of inhuman abomination"

(Untitled Statement 80). In her poetry, then, Moure questions the social and economic structures of capitalism, showing how they break down the ongoing relationships that constitute the human self. Accordingly, Moure displays and grieves personal alienation—the physical and mental disintegration of the self—to create a longing for relationality.

The Marxist tradition has similarly drawn attention to the ways in which capitalist class society alienates the human self. Certainly, Marx at times portrays the human self as stable and unitary. As Dirk J. Struik remarks, Marx is "a humanist, moreover, a socialist humanist; and Marxism is socialist humanism, if nothing else" (55). That said, more often than not, Marx is a humanist primarily in the broad sense: his theory flows out of his "deeply ethical" concern for human beings (Struik 55). More, the theme of relationality resonates throughout his writings and Marxist theory, more generally. Lukács's discussion of reification, for example, rests on the premise that both individuals and communities exist in a "dialectical process of becoming" (Lukács 193). Consequently, although Moure rejects the autonomous, static self advanced by liberal humanism, she shares the dedication to human welfare and justice evidenced by Marx's socialist humanism. At the centre of the Marxist project lies a vision of the human as "a free and creative being of praxis," G. Petrović notes (125). However, Marx argues that class societies produce "subordination, alienation and misery" for most people, denying them the freedom and creativity he sees as fundamentally human (Simon 733). Although Marx does not deny that alienation existed prior to capitalism, he asserts that capitalist social and economic conditions have generalized alienation, making it ever more pervasive (Petrović 124). Specifically, for Marx, *Entäusserung* and *Entfremdung*, translated as *alienation* and *estrangement*, result from "conditions of social existence," particularly wage labour, "labor leveled down, parceled" (Simon 731, Marx, *Economic* 132). In capitalism, wage labour, which exists in a mutually reinforcing relationship with private property, becomes the prevailing economic mode, underlying both

production and consumption. These social and economic conditions, Marx says, rupture human relationships.

Lukács, a Hungarian Marxist literary critic and philosopher working in the generation after Marx and Friedrich Engels, clarifies and expands this theory of alienation by portraying the ossification of relationships under capitalism. Lukács's seminal *History and Class Consciousness*, originally published as *Geschichte und Klassenbewusstsein* (1923), first drew attention to Marx's theme of alienation, placing Marx in the context of the Hegelian tradition. The volume's central essay—"Reification and the Consciousness of the Proletariat"—relies heavily on both Marx and Hegel in its discussion of alienation. Lukács, like Marx, attributes this alienation to capitalism and, specifically, to the capitalist commodity structure. Although every society exchanges commodities to some degree, the "dominant commodity form" of capitalism permeates and moulds the entire society, producing what Lukács terms reification, both objective and subjective (84). Here, Lukács uses the terms *alienation* and *reification* "synonymously" (Lukács xxv). In German, the word *Verdinglichung*—rendered as *reification*—has close ties both to the concept of a thing and to labour and exchange, for, while the noun *Ding* means *thing*, the verb *dingen* means "to hire out" or "to bind or fix through a contract or agreement." At its root, the English term means, to put it lightly, *thingification*, for *reification* comes from the Latin for *thing* and *to make*. In reification, then, a dynamic process becomes a static thing. In short, while Marx's analysis of alienation discusses division, Lukács's description of reification accentuates stasis. Together, Marx and Lukács usefully present alienation as a process of severing and ossifying the ongoing relationality of humans.

Throughout his work, Marx identifies several different categories and subcategories of alienation, and, as a result, Marxist scholars discuss alienation in slightly varying terms. Petrović, though, offers a helpful analysis by distinguishing the alienation of things from the alienation of humans. Within this latter category, Petrović identifies "alienation from something else or somebody else and alienation

from oneself" (123). First, Marx describes the alienation of humans from things. In wage labour, the product no longer belongs to the worker, but, rather, the worker belongs to it: the worker "receives *work*" and, thereby, the "*means of subsistence*" through the object, which, as a result, has power over the worker "as a *worker*" and even "as a *physical subject*" (Marx, *Economic* 109). Thus, the commodity, as wielded by the capitalist, appears as "an alien object exercising power over" the worker (*Economic* 111). This form of estrangement, which Marx later terms commodity fetishism and Lukács calls objective reification, occurs when "man alienates from himself the products of his own activity and makes of them a separate, independent, and powerful world of objects toward which he is related as a slave, powerless and dependent" (Petrović 121). Second, "this fragmentation of the object of production necessarily entails the fragmentation of its subject," so workers also become alienated from humans, both themselves and others (Lukács 89). In this alienation from humans—which Lukács terms subjective reification—the worker's personal faculties and interpersonal relationships become objectified. Thus, while objects take on relational attributes, humans become ossified, isolated objects.

On the personal level, capitalism estranges the self from its own productive capacities and human attributes. Labour itself becomes "an alien activity" for the worker, "an activity which is turned against him, independent of him and not belonging to him" (Marx, *Economic* 111-112). In Lukács's words, "a man's activity becomes estranged from himself, [*sic*] it turns into a commodity which [. . .] must go its own way independently of man just like any consumer article" (Lukács 87). Similarly, the worker's species being—the group of attributes that, to Marx, constitute the worker's identity as a "*human* being"—becomes alien to the worker (Marx, *Economic* 114). In the Marxist tradition, a "nonalienated man would be a man who really is a man, a man who fulfills himself as a free, creative being of praxis"; alternately, the self-alienated person becomes dehumanized, someone who does not realize "his historically created human possibilities" (Petrović 121, 124). This

personal alienation leads to interpersonal alienation, the ruptured and ossified relationships between individuals and, even, societies. In brief, "a relation between people takes on the character of a thing" and, ultimately, hides "every trace of its fundamental nature: the relation between people" (Lukács 83). Together, personal and interpersonal alienation describe the "economic process whereby, under capitalism, human social relations or actions take on the appearance of relations or actions among objects or things," in the words of Ross King (619).

Lukács's discussion of reification has continuing importance because it nuances Marx's theory of alienation and applies the theory to later developments in capitalism. Although *History and Class Consciousness* received considerable censure from orthodox Soviet Marxism, it soon "became the classic text of Western Marxism," as Neil McInnes writes (603). As such, it has become the basis for further discussions of alienation, such as those by Guy Debord, Giorgio Agamben, Frederic Jameson, and Slavoj Žižek. Although Lukács—under the pressure of communist critics who pronounced the book "'deviationist'"—publicly repudiated *History and Class Consciousness*, his "Preface to the New Edition (1967)" does not so much critique the concept of reification as provide key clarifications (McInnes 602). Here, Lukács insists that, to some degree, humans must objectify their attributes in everyday practice: to speak, one "objectifies human thoughts and feelings" (Lukács xxiv). This practice "can be either a positive or a negative fact," and "only when man's nature is subjugated, deformed and crippled can we speak of an objective societal condition of alienation and, as an inexorable consequence, of all the subjective marks of an internal alienation" (Lukács xxxvi, xxiv). Like the commodity structure itself, the transformation of human attributes and selves into isolated objects becomes harmful only when it dominates and replaces other, more organic, social relations. Lukács's work also has particular value because it carefully extends Marx's theory of alienation to a more recent form of capitalism, where mental rather than physical labour predominates. For Lukács, even in societies where few people

engage directly in traditional mechanical production, subjective reification, or alienation, persists. In bureaucratic labour, Lukács argues, "not every mental faculty is suppressed by mechanisation," yet "one faculty (or complex of faculties) is detached from the whole personality and placed in opposition to it, becoming a thing, a commodity" (99). For Lukács, whether in mechanical production or in office work, capitalism conceals and damages human relationality.

This theory of alienation—especially alienation from humans, both the self and the other—provides an apt reading strategy for Moure's poetry, moving "forward or sideways in what the book itself essays" (*My Beloved* 15). By emphasizing Moure's critique of capitalism, I hope to provide a complement to other discussions of Moure's poetics, for Moure consistently joins together themes of language, gender and sexuality, and politics. As Roger Gottlieb notices, Marxism has historically provided many of the "basic concepts (the critique of ideology, the analysis of capitalism) still essential to socially critical perspectives such as postmodernism and feminism" (742). Indeed, "it is now virtually impossible [. . .] to say where Marxism ends and other left perspectives begin" (Gottlieb 742). Hence, throughout this thesis, I will draw upon Marxist theory to demonstrate the ways in which Moure places on view both personal and interpersonal alienation. To pursue this project, I will offer a close reading of four early collections, *Empire, York Street*, *The Whisky Vigil*, *Wanted Alive*, and *Domestic Fuel*, focusing on key poems in each volume. This chapter will discuss personal alienation in two overlapping aspects: physical and mental. This chapter will, thus, provide a foundation for the second chapter, where I will discuss interpersonal alienation.

"severed in the body": Physical Alienation

Throughout her early poetry, Moure reveals personal alienation through the ossification or division of the body. For Moure, "the body is, or can be, simply a reification of accepted notions of where bodies begin and end. A tool can be part of

the body. A coat is part of the body. The body accepts these as part of the body" ("Crossings" 5). As Moure herself observes, "The view of the body most akin to mine is Spinoza's, which I first encountered via Gilles Deleuze" (*My Beloved* 97). As explicated by Erin Manning, these cultural theorists insist that bodies "move toward the world in excess of [their] organs' organization" (xix). "Bodies cannot be measured solely by adding their parts (their organs)" together because bodies always extend out into the world (Manning xx). In this approach, the body is always the "becoming-body," with its particles continually in motion and in contact (Manning xix). However, because existing economic and social structures often depend on a discrete, clearly defined notion of the individual, this dynamic, relational body threatens the status quo; thus, as Manning argues, the existence of the modern state requires "control mechanisms to hold a body in (its) place" (xxii). Throughout her poetic and extrapoetic writings, then, Moure attests that "our bodies themselves are alienated" under the status quo (Mouré, "I'll Start" 14).

Although Moure's account of the body differs from the classical Marxist account, both perspectives insist on the importance of dynamic relationships within the self and share a concern for the destruction of those relationships. Marx, specifically, notes that in capitalist labour the worker's body and "spiritual essence" become simply commodities for sale as physical and mental labour (*Economic* 114). In this way, "[t]o the man who is nothing more than a *worker*—and to him as a worker—his human qualities exist only in so far as they exist for capital *alien* to him" (*Economic* 120). The worker becomes "a *mentally* and physically *dehumanized* being" (*Economic* 121). In the same way, for many of Moure's characters, capitalist class society produces a disconnected or ossified body. As Jacques points out, Moure "litters her work with the detritus of Western post-industrial existence" (73). Among the many images of disintegration, waste, and violence—including "slaughtered deer, battered cars, pop-guns, garbage, television sets, photon scanners, trains, hospital hallways, fruit, intestines, toques, drugstores, truck parts, trailers, and guns"—Moure

places emphasis on the human body and, particularly, the female body (Jacques 73). She shows the ways in which the social and economic conditions of late capitalism contribute to the destruction of the female body, arguing that "[e]ven if we do not recognize these standard social representations, they will still try to represent us. For women, they can mean an erasure of ourselves, of our bodies" (*My Beloved* 31). Like Marx, Moure insists that current social and economic norms—the structures of the Republic—are "processes of falling apart"; under this oppression, "the human body," too, disintegrates (*My Beloved* 33).

In early works such as *Empire, York Street* (1979), *The Whisky Vigil* (1981), *Wanted Alive* (1983), and *Domestic Fuel* (1985), Moure's understanding of the body as dynamic and relational only accentuates the stasis and fragmentation of "what we reify as 'body'" ("Crossings" 5). Moure first came to critical attention as a work poet, and some of her earliest published poems occur in Tom Wayman's collection *A Government Job at Last: An anthology of working poems, mainly Canadian*, which appeared in the middle of the 1970s. In his 1976 anthology *Storm Warning 2*, Al Purdy includes a wider thematic range of Moure's early poems, yet, in addition to the highly political poem "Riel: In the Season of His Birth" and the more personal poem "Incantation," Purdy's selection highlights the work poem "Trusting the Song." A quick glance at the table of contents for *Empire, York Street* confirms Moure's interest in the conditions of labour. Some titles, such as "hazard of the occupation" and "alta. granite marble & stone co. Edmonton," signal explicit working poems, while other titles introduce people known simply by their roles within working society, specifically, the railway: the station agent in "what the station agent never says" and the train waitress in "waitress in a foreign film." Throughout her earliest work, Moure explores the connections between labour and alienation. Pam Tranfield's review of Moure's *Empire, York Street*, *The Whisky Vigil*, *Wanted Alive*, and *Domestic Fuel*—notably entitled "Voyeur on the VIA Line: Erin Mouré's Work Poetry"—focuses on "Mouré's concern for the working person" and gestures toward the ways

in which labour can "free, or strangle," the worker in these poems (186, 188). Further, in *Empire, York Street*, Moure associates labour with empire, presenting it as a key form of oppression and exclusion. Even the poems that do not mention traditional forms of labour contribute to this critique because, "[f]or Mouré, [. . .] work poetry is not simply poetry that focuses on one's job but poetry that acknowledges the influence of the contemporary capitalist system on how one perceives oneself" (Denisoff, "Erin" 234). Thus, as Tranfield's review hints, Moure's early work poetry powerfully demonstrates the physical alienation of the self under capitalism.

In one of Moure's earliest published poems, "rules for the stillborn," physical fragmentation accompanies wage labour. Tellingly, Wayman included an early version of this poem in *A Government Job at Last*, which he dedicated solely to working poems: though this poem does not immediately identify itself as a work poem, it describes the "rules" and routines that govern the workday (*Empire* 20, l. 11). The poetic subject rises, drinks coffee, smokes a cigarette, and prepares to leave the house, presumably for work. Images of fragmentation, importantly, accompany the preparations. Moure focuses in on pieces of the human body, substituting discrete appendages—such as "your limbs"—for the individual's entire identity (l. 4). The reader sees "fingers," "limbs," and "hands" as independent objects, not as related parts of a living body (ll. 2, 4, 16). More, the poem's imagery of violence threatens further physical fragmentation. Moure opens the poem with a sentence fragment that serves much as a secondary heading or subtitle for the poem: the poem states, "what you do w/ a life" and then begins to describe how the subject lives (l. 1). Specifically, the subsequent statement describes this life as a "raw gamble caught in your fingers / like a knife," where the terminal word of line three, "knife," recalls the terminal word of line one, "life" (ll. 2-3). This aural and visual connection between *life* and *knife* compares the character's working life to a bodily wound, insistently presenting labour as a physical rupture.

The theme of physical alienation recurs in the subsequent poem, "hazard of the occupation." Images of severed limbs pervade the poem, which begins,

> what is said about the earth is
> only that it breaks
> apart. the child severed
> from one arm in a laundromat
> is sutured to the limb; it refuses to
> belong: does he know where his arm
> goes? (*Empire* 21, ll. 1-7)

In these opening lines, Moure supplements the image of the child's detached arm—a physical fragmentation of the self—with formal techniques that further emphasize the child's shattered body: line breaks follow the words "breaks" and "severed," visually separating "the child" from "one arm." Moreover, the space between "it refuses to / belong" and "does he know where his arm / goes?" manifests the rupture on the page. In these opening lines, Moure underscores the child's fragmentation by dividing an infinitive, a complete grammatical unit, over the line break: "it refuses to / belong." Significantly, Moure sets this stanza in a Laundromat, providing an example of automated, self-service capitalism that tears a child to pieces. This first stanza explores a single instance of physical alienation, but the final lines of the stanza explain that alienation permeates society. That is, in the phrase "this is how easily a man breaks apart," Moure generalizes the alienation of the wounded child (l. 8).

The remaining stanzas of "hazard of the occupation" continue to place on view physical alienation, further underscoring its pervasiveness. With the word *occupation*, the title immediately positions the poem within the context of the state and the workplace, for *occupation* can refer to the military seizure of a territory or, more simply, to employment. This political and economic context resonates through "hazard of the occupation," which, nevertheless, occurs largely inside a house.

Additionally, the poet's chosen point of view extends the experience of personal alienation to include the reader: by using the second-person pronoun "you," Moure addresses not only the main character of the poem but also the reader (l. 12). With this shift to the second person, the poem turns to another example of physical alienation, describing a character who, like the child, experiences the body as an alien object, for "your legs glare from the corner" as if detached from the body; she can even "argue" with them as with a stranger (ll. 26, 12). Additionally, the subject's limbs seem to abandon her, for her "muscles ache from / the places they go in the night" and her "legs dodge down / the road," leaving the conscious self behind (ll. 10-11, 32-33). Although Moure acknowledges that the subject "cannot forsake [her] arms" completely, the poem acknowledges the body's internal conflicts, for the subject's limbs "want / divorce" (ll. 14, 27-28). This "argument over particulars" extends throughout the poem, which displays an ossified and disconnected body (l. 28). Imagery of "guns" and "explosions" especially feature in the final stanza, further indicating the violent disintegration of the body (ll. 30, 33). In this poem, as Marx predicts, labour turns the human body into disarranged particles and "splinters" (l. 21), and this alienation of the self creates, "for the worker, deformity" (*Economic* 110).

Likewise, "sung poem" combines allusions to economic exploitation with references to a social and sexual relationship, providing a combined Marxist and feminist critique of corporeal alienation. The poem gives few details about its main character, whom the speaker describes in the second person; instead, the reader knows "you" only as an assortment of scattered body parts, a "mouth," a "molar," a "head / & throat," and a "tongue" (*Empire* 14, ll. 17, 2, 6, 9-10, 15). The poem describes individual parts of the body that, though intimately connected, do not function together and even appear disabled and dysfunctional: the mouth, usually an expressive organ, "cannot even sing," and the molars become "bruised w/ tar / & excavations" (ll. 3, 4-5). While, in one sense, the tar simply refers to tobacco use and the excavations to dentistry, these words also allude to the oil and gas industry,

specifically the extraction of crude from oil sands; accordingly, the character becomes, in a metaphorical sense, a resource exploited for commercial profit, and her mouth becomes a commodity detached from her body.

Overall, the poem represents the main character as physically dismembered:

> the bribery of his body
> keeps you always in hock:
> the parts of you he takes
> away in pockets
> locked in an unlaundered coat w/ lint & last week's
> spent matches. (ll. 21-26)

This final stanza has particular importance, for in it, the unnamed man compartmentalizes the subject and reduces her to a waste product, trash left among "lint & last week's / spent matches." While Moure does not specifically identify the dismembered character as female, she does associate this violent fragmentation with an oppressive sexual relationship, for the character longs "to be / the one who leaves" but feels "locked" in an unwilling act of sexual intercourse (ll. 17-18, 25). The imbalance of social power combines with economic disparity, for the word "bribery" connotes the man's economic advantage. Additionally, "in hock" suggests that the man uses a financial incentive to control the poetic subject and then pawns her for ready cash. Here, alienation goes to an extreme: a human body becomes merely lint or, at best, a bauble for economic exchange.

Images of physical alienation recur throughout *Empire, York Street* and appear periodically in *The Whisky Vigil*, where "stood-up knives" fill the character's room, threatening to tear into her body (*Whisky* 12, l. 23), and where "People appear handless" because their "fists are bottles" (*Whisky* 28, ll. 4, 6). *Wanted Alive* especially focuses on corporeal alienation, offering many images of the ossified or fragmented body. "Tonight My Body" draws attention to the physical distance that separates the first-person speaker and her body: the body "huddles naked three blocks away" and

"won't come home to me" (*Wanted* 75, ll. 4, 2). It "shudders" and "won't /hug me at all," while the speaker "cringe[s]," both fragments pulling away in discomfort, disgust, or fear (ll. 26, 2-3, 25). The two aspects of the self lose not only physical but also verbal contact, for the poem foregrounds unsuccessful attempts at communication: at the outset of the poem, the skin "howl[s]" and "fizzes" unintelligibly (ll. 7, 8), and, by the end, the speaker becomes "inarticulate" as she "cries for" her estranged skin (Dickson, "Sisyphus" 52; *Wanted* 75, l. 30). Dickson sees the "the objectified and alienated body" in this poem as an image of "feminine bodily experience, as it is expressed in patriarchal discourses" ("Sisyphus 50-51, 37). Certainly, the comment "My insides are smeared with warm sperm" hints at a gendered context (*Wanted* 75, l. 15). However, Moure extends her critique of alienation beyond patriarchy to include capitalism. Like "Tonight My Body," "If You Find It" establishes a discontinuity between the main character, addressed as "you," and "your skin" (*Wanted* 19, ll. 4, 1). The skin, here, has a separate existence and voice, with which it "argues on & on," and it "go[es] upstairs" alone (ll. 1, 25). This poem, though, does not gender its main character, permitting both masculine and feminine identifications of the *you*; instead, it provides a political and economic context for the experience of physical alienation: purchases, compensation, elections, and citizens. Consequently, in this portrayal of physical alienation, Moure offers a critique not only of patriarchy but also of the Republic's broader social and economic structures.

Further, the poems "Shot" and "Kisses Not Whisky" use images of violence and war to show that the social and economic status quo tears holes in the body's network of connections. In "Shot," the speaker begins with the comment that "enough of my body is shot away" for another person to "recognize me again," suggesting that physical alienation has become normal or, even, the basis of the status quo (*Wanted* 39, ll. 2, 4). This image of the ruptured body continues in the poem's final line with the words "The body is shot to holes" (l. 19). By the end of

the poem, then, "my body" has become simply "The body" (ll. 2, 19). The speaker cannot even voice the first-person pronoun, unable to recognize the fragments of her own body. "Kisses Not Whisky" further explores the physical alienation of the self. Importantly, the first three stanzas of this poem focus on the self and occur, metaphorically, within the first-person speaker's body. The speaker experiences "an emptiness huge / as a bottle of whisky, / hard & glass, caught inside me" and refers to an "empty gulp that won't fill" (*Wanted* 26, ll. 1-3, 19). In both cases, the emptiness marks a break in the relational network of the body, a fragmentation that the speaker experiences as violence. Accordingly, the "bottle of whisky" becomes, at times, "a Molotov" cocktail, an improvised explosive used in the Winter War between Finland and the USSR (ll. 2, 7). This weapon threatens to "chok[e]" and, ultimately, to destroy the speaker (l. 9). Consequently, the image of the Molotov aptly symbolizes the alienated self, a self about to explode, violently breaking into shards.

"When He Speaks," likewise, uses imagery of violent fragmentation to convey the theme of corporeal alienation. Interestingly, a dead chicken serves as the key image of the poem, symbolizing the division and ossification of the family that gathers around it. Throughout the poem, as Moure narrates the death of the bird and describes its broken neck and severed wings, she increasingly employs sentence fragments—such as "How the sky took the breath out of the bird / as he pulled it / down to his mother"—to emphasize brokenness (*Wanted* 49, ll. 11-13). The poem's concluding lines, importantly, return to the image of "the chicken in mid-air, before the oven, / before / the child, before the neck snapped," using line breaks and blank space to accentuate the rupture (ll. 31-33). This central image informs the poem's characterization of the family, especially the father. In the third stanza, for example, the father speaks explicitly of workplace conditions and those

> who work beside him, sparks of metal
> eaten thru their ribs
> & lungs,

the doors to a new age hinged thru their hands,
Chevrolet, Exxon, United Steel. (ll. 21-25)

Here, labour burns holes in the bodies of the workers, and Moure's specific references to the workers' wounds mirror the bird's lacerations: the workers' singed ribs recall the bird's cooked, severed wings; the workers' damaged lungs echo the bird's suffocation. To underscore this physical alienation, Moure describes it in another sentence fragment. Additionally, Moure compares the workers' bodies, specifically their hands, to hinges in "the doors to a new age" of "Chevrolet, Exxon, United Steel." The bodies of the workers become mere mechanisms, and their human attributes disappear; in contrast, Chevrolet, Exxon, and United Steel—representing three pillars of late capitalism: transportation, energy, and architecture—become independent forces; in Marx's terms, the worker's labour power as represented in this poem "exists *outside him*, independently, as something alien to him, and [. . .] it becomes a power on its own confronting him" (*Economic* 108). "When He Speaks," with its images of corporeal fragmentation and, indeed, thingification, demonstrates the ways in which "[t]he worker puts his life into the object; but now his life no longer belongs to him but to the object" (Marx, *Economic* 108).

Moure offers a further example of physical alienation in "Radiare," a poem describing nuclear warfare as a product of destructive American "commerce" (*Wanted* 91-92, l. 9). Indeed, in her extra-poetic writings, Moure associates the imperialistic expansion of global capitalism with self-alienation: the "language of commodities" "separates human beings from themselves" (Untitled Statement 80). For Moure, the language of commodities "is silent on paid maternity leave, equal pay and opportunity for advancement, support for parenting; it talks of human rights but is willing to permit nuclear arms and their use 'defensively'" (Untitled Statement 80). Accordingly, nuclear weapons become one expression of the economic and social oppression that "separates human beings from themselves" (Untitled Statement 80). In "Radiare," formal fragmentation first suggests the destruction of the body as a

dynamic, relational whole. Sentence fragments pervade the poem, especially in the opening stanza, which details the effects of nuclear chemistry on the self:

> Slow wheels of fear tearing sideways
> in your dreams
> Your hand caught as if
> reaching for someone, after the wall's crumbled
> Stunned & unable. (ll. 1-5)

Here, the three brief sentence fragments, and especially the abrupt phrase "Stunned & unable," convey a sense of panic, while words such as "tearing" and "crumbled" describe the human beings and their surroundings falling apart.

This formal fragmentation introduces the thematic separation that pervades the poem, which emphasizes the ways in which "the nucleus, dark / & split," severs the relationality of the human body (ll. 16-17). At first glance, the experiment simply "pushes / the walls of chemistry," but these impersonal walls soon become the human "cell wall" about to rupture (ll. 18-19, 25). In the phrase "Chemistry mills the body into finer cells," Moure uses the industrial connotations of *mill* to demonstrate the ways in which nuclear warfare symbolizes the height of physical alienation under capitalism (l. 6). Chemistry grinds the body into tiny pieces that no longer have dynamic relationships with one another. Moure also shows how the language of commodities dominates the scientific discourse, reducing the body to nonhuman abstraction. By focusing in on each individual "cell wall," this discourse evades the thought of the body as a dynamic, relational organism; most appropriately, then, the speaker asks, "Will anyone admit them as human?" (ll. 25, 23). A similar fragmentation of the body occurs at the level of grammar. Many of the poem's sentences have impersonal subjects, including "Chemistry" and "The experiment," or vague pronouns, such as the "they" who write the magazines (ll. 6, 18, 11). These nonhuman or impersonal forces take active verbs such as "mills" and "pushes," becoming the primary acting subjects of the poem (ll. 6, 18). In contrast, the poem

portrays the body only in detached pieces—"hand," "muscle," "lungs" (ll. 3, 8) and "eyes"—that consistently occur as the object of the sentence (l. 10). For example, the lungs do not have agency in their contraction; rather, chemistry "tightens your lungs" (l. 10). Thus, the poem shows how, under these chemical rays, the humans lose their active, connective characteristics, while human activity—in this case, scientific inquiry—takes on its own life and "confronts [them] as something hostile and alien" (Marx, *Economic* 108). In "Radiare," as in "When He Speaks," bodies become things.

Domestic Fuel, Moure's third full-length collection, further displays the disintegration of the human body under the Republic. The volume contains a strong feminist voice, calling attention to the exploitation of women, in particular; this critique combines with a protest against capitalist class society. For example, the political and military resonance of the title "Shock Troop" informs a poem about a spousal relationship. Likewise, the power of the male doctor over his female patient in "Public Health" has a clearly economic aspect, for Moure describes the medical profession as "enterprise" (*Domestic* 29). Accordingly, the volume draws parallels between patriarchal and capitalist oppression and between violence in private and public spaces. The book's epigraph indicates Moure's concern about these forms of injustice and introduces the theme of physical alienation. Significantly, Moure chooses a quotation from the Peruvian poet and political activist César Vallejo, who takes an explicitly Marxist perspective on social injustice. In his poetry, Vallejo often reveals "the inability of human beings to achieve their potential because of social oppression and injustice" ("Vallejo" n. pag.).

Specifically, Moure's selection—which she translates as "*Someone cleans a rifle in his kitchen. / How dare one speak about the beyond?*"—comes from Vallejo's collection *Poemas Humanos* (1939; translated as *Human Poems*), which "presents an apocalyptic vision of an industrial society in crisis and unable to advance beyond a state of mass evil, alienation, and despair" (*Domestic Fuel* 9, "Vallejo" n. pag.). "[A man walks by with a baguette on his shoulder]," the poem from which Moure quotes, consists of a

series of couplets, each containing, first, a statement and, second, a question. In each case, the first line describes a person who suffers or produces suffering, while the second line exposes what Efraín Kristal calls "the outrageous discrepancy" between this horrific pain and the passive introspection of the privileged (16). Through this parallel structure, Vallejo links the economic injustices revealed in the phrases "A merchant cheats a customer out of a gram" and "A banker falsifies his balance sheet" with the deformity and violence implied in the phrases "An outcast sleeps with his foot behind his back" and "Someone cleans a rifle in his kitchen" (Vallejo 517). Rather than averting their eyes and looking to "*the beyond*," Vallejo and Moure insistently draw attention to the destruction of the dynamic, relational human body.

"Spirit Catcher" follows through on this theme, foregrounding somatic alienation. The poem begins with the words "What I am is," and the first stanza completes that sentence in various ways (*Domestic* 44, l. 1). These lines contain moments of beauty, "ecstasy," and "grace" (ll. 10, 11) that the speaker finds in relationship with her "Love," and the speaker refers to herself as a "veined-blue iris," a phrase that evokes the beautiful, delicate colour-patterning of not only the horticultural but also the anatomical iris (l. 4). The reference to veins, moreover, associates the iris with interconnected, organic life. In the end, however, the speaker acknowledges the fleeting nature of these beauties and joys, for she refers to her ecstasy "*as if* it were [. . .] usual" (l. 11; emphasis mine). The alienation of the body, instead, is usual: "when you clench fists," the iris "break[s] over nothing" (ll. 5, 6). Moreover, the speaker concludes her self-description with the assertion that "My body is the thing you see that's slowly / dying," thus acknowledging that the other person perceives her as an object and, more exactly, an object about to disintegrate (ll. 12-13). "True to form," as Judith Fitzgerald points out, "'Spirit-Catcher' offers its message in broken lines," only accentuating the physical alienation of the speaker (30).

In this poem, furthermore, the speaker notes that her body "won't focus cleanly in the hemisphere we're in / / where women are hungry & the dead are pushed full of bread / & sewn" (ll. 16-18). Although the speaker sees "An excess in the mouths of presidents," the citizens, especially women, remain physically empty and broken: the fact that someone fills and patches the dead bodies, as if to conceal the cause of death, reveals that these bodies have gaping holes (l. 19). The conclusion of the poem returns to the speaker's body and, specifically, to the speaker's sense of detachment from her body. The poem's title, "Spirit-Catcher," provides necessary context, here, for it refers to the belief—particularly among the Pacific Northwest First Nations—that the spirit can leave the body, causing sickness, and that a medicine man can retrieve the spirit using a hollowed bone. Thus, the title suggests alienation—a physical separation between spirit and body—and a longing for restoration. This desire pervades the poem, yet, at the conclusion, the speaker admits that "I drink, to get out of my body" (l. 23). Just a few lines later, the phrase "The maps of my body fail me" reinforces the speaker's inability to navigate or connect with her own body (l. 27). In its specifically physiological senses, the phrase "maps of my body" may refer either to sensory maps—which describe areas of the central nervous system that respond to physical stimuli in specific areas of the body—or to genetic mapping, the study of the order and structure of chromosomal material. The breakdown in these maps, then, may indicate that the speaker's nerves or, even, her chromosomes have become disconnected. Although the speaker tries to reconnect the fragments of her body, "a sheer bulk" intervenes, "stopping transmission / closing shop" (ll. 27, 28-29). Ultimately, then, the speaker in this poem demonstrates the destruction of the dynamic, relational human body under the Republic.

Near the close of the volume, "Toxicity" places this physical alienation specifically in the context of global political and economic oppression. Moure's reference to Nicaragua, specifically "the mining this week of the ports / of Nicaragua, Corinto & Puerto Sandino," alludes to American interventions in

Nicaragua to undermine the Sandinista government, which had communist allegiances (*Domestic Fuel* 99, ll. 4-5). Played out against the background of the Cold War and the "long history of US economic interaction and at times hegemony in Central America," this conflict had high political and economic stakes for the United States (Ryan 116). President Ronald Reagan, indeed, insisted that the Sandinista government endangered American "security and prosperity," presenting Central America as "our lifeline to the outside world" (Reagan 4, 1). To protect its own political and economic interests, then, the American government funded the counterrevolutionary Contras throughout the 1980s, both above and below the table. The Reagan administration even offered military support to the guerrilla forces, and, in 1983 and 1984, in particular, the Contras launched "various attacks directed by the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency to sabotage the port and oil refinery" of Corinto, Nicaragua's main port, which handles the majority of foreign trade ("Corinto" n. pag.). Puerto Sandino, another major port targeted by Contra forces, also symbolizes American military and economic interventions in Nicaragua during these years.

While Moure's poem does not voice support for the Sandinista government, it presents the violence of the Contras and the American military as a destruction of the body, which Moure portrays as "poisoned by underwater mines" (l. 10). Moure further connects the political and economic conflict to physical fragmentation by referring to the "Nicaragua of the liver & the pancreas, / Nicaragua of the heart" (ll. 6-7). Here, the political poison becomes a bodily poison. This comparison presents the body's vital organs as fragmented or "risking explosion," paralleling the political situation in Nicaragua during the 1980s (l. 13). Indeed, the "sadness of the liver" and the "small cells of the kidneys teeming" indicate the body struggling to filter and to excrete vast amounts of toxic substances, but the body fails to eliminate the poison: the toxin remains "blocked" in the intestine (ll. 14, 8, 15). Here, as elsewhere in *Domestic Fuel*, Moure displays what Dennis Cooley describes as "a reduction of bodies to parts": broken connections occur throughout the body, from the "blocked space

in the liver" to "[t]he cords of energy severed in the body" (Cooley 63; *Domestic* 99, ll. 21, 9). Consequently, "Toxicity" depicts the ways in which the political and economic oppression of individuals and, even, whole nations produces physical alienation. In "Toxicity," as in many of Moure's early poems, the body becomes a broken, static thing.

"faced / with yourself": Mental Alienation

Moure also, more specifically, depicts the alienation of the human mind, describing the ways in which the Republic abstracts the self's mental faculties from its physical cells and, further, divides and objectifies consciousness itself. For Moure, the mind participates in the overall assemblage of ongoing relationships and movements that constitute the self. Following Spinoza, Moure insists that "our internal velocities, and affects or relationships with other bodies, mean the boundaries of selfhood are always in process" (*My Beloved* 114). "The creation of ourselves as subjects takes place continually, is part of a continual *actactact*," she argues (*My Beloved* 108). Everyday experience supports this notion, for mental processes are "relational, web-like" (*My Beloved* 75). Yet, especially in her early poetry, Moure shows how, under the status quo, thoughts and emotions become stagnant and fragmentary rather than processual and relational. Moure admits that "institutions are necessary; they provide a framework for many people. They are instruments for sharing, interacting, encountering, discovering, but they are risky as well," for they can serve as "*dispositifs de control*, control mechanisms" that confine or repress different ways of thinking and feeling (*My Beloved* 301). Accordingly, in the interests of ongoing movement and relationality, Moure shows her readers how current social and economic conditions hide or, even, destroy the intricate connections that form human consciousness. She understands the Republic as the "coalescence of falling apart," so she attempts to "to reveal its brokenness" and, ultimately, turn from alienation to connection (*My Beloved* 33, 64).

Although classical Marxism does not discuss consciousness in Spinoza's terms, it, like Moure, champions a model of processual, relational subjectivity. Just as Moure defines thinking as "an act, a process," Engels insists that "the world is not to be comprehended as a complex of ready-made *things*, but as a complex of *processes*" (Mouré, "A Chance" 75; Engels, *Ludwig* 44). However, for the Marxist tradition, capitalism produces the "reification of work and hence also of the consciousness of the worker" (Lukács 91). Marx notes the disintegration of the human being, both physically and mentally, stating that

> labor produces for the rich wonderful things—but for the worker it produces privation. It produces palaces—but for the worker, hovels. It produces beauty—but for the worker, deformity. It replaces labor by machines, but it throws a section of the workers back to a barbarian type of labor, and it turns the other workers into machines. It produces intelligence—but for the worker stupidity. (*Economic* 110)

In this passage, Marx aligns economic oppression with not only physical but also mental alienation.

According to Marx, in capitalist labour, the worker "does not affirm himself but denies himself, does not feel content but unhappy, does not develop freely his physical and mental energy but mortifies his body and ruins his mind" (*Economic* 110). Marx describes how labour splits workers "into at least two parts that have become alien to each other" by dividing their mental capacities from their physical labour (Petrović 123). Lukács furthers this analysis by placing special emphasis on the ways in which capitalism's "rational mechanisation" reifies the human mind (Lukács 88). For the manual labourer, the work demands much physical activity but little mental activity, so "his psychological attributes are separated from his total personality and placed in opposition to it" (Lukács 88). Likewise, even in what Lukács terms bureaucratic labour, where "not every mental faculty is suppressed by mechanisation," often "one faculty (or complex of faculties) is detached from the

whole personality and placed in opposition to it, becoming a thing, a commodity" (99). In this way, the commodity structure pervades all areas of life, even fragmenting and ossifying the human mind. In other words, the Republic yields the disintegration of consciousness: it breaks down thought and emotion, especially reifying intelligence and creativity.

Beginning with her first collection, *Empire, York Street*, Moure depicts mental alienation, thus offering a critique of capitalism and a longing for change. Critic Jamie Dopp sees a "sense of a voice in the early poems, a speaking I and accompanying narrative manner that seem to ground what the poems witness in some integrity of the self," suggesting that Moure's early poetry becomes unwittingly caught up in the notion of coherent, unitary selfhood that Moure so frequently contests (267). Certainly, in comparison to the fluid identities that populate recent volumes such as *O Cadoiro* (2007) and *O Resplandor* (2010), the characters in Moure's early poetry seem, at times, somewhat unitary and stable. Importantly, though, Moure does not accept or condone this form of consciousness; instead, she consistently expresses her discontent, presenting these characters as examples of mental alienation. Throughout a variety of poems—working poems and otherwise—*Empire, York Street* "documents the dehumanizing effects of modern industrialization," Lewis aptly observes (761). More exactly, in this volume, Moure reveals that the Republic perpetuates psycho-emotional alienation. [2]

In "rules for the stillborn," for instance, Moure demonstrates the disintegration of the subject's consciousness. Here, as in Marx's theory, "the more the worker spends himself, [. . .] the poorer he himself—his inner world—becomes, the less belongs to him as his own" (*Economic* 108). In this poem, the *I*, the identity of the poetic subject appears only tentatively, insecurely poised in the midst of the poem's closing questions. Because these lines indicate the subject's sense of lack, they connote the alienation of consciousness: "What is it I'm missing? / What do I

[2] I use the term *psycho-emotional* to avoid artificially separating cognition from emotion. Rather, I wish to acknowledge the intertwining of cognitive and emotive faculties in the human mind.

need?," the subject asks (*Empire* 20, ll. 17-18). No answer comes.[3] Moure associates this loss with the imagery of empty pockets. Pockets pervade the first section of *Empire, York Street*, appearing not only in "rules for the stillborn" but also in the previous poems "stalemate" and "sung poem." In "stalemate," the speaker places her heart in her pocket and then attempts to defend it from another person's "counter- / attack" (*Empire* 13, ll. 16-17). "sung poem" similarly refers to "the parts of you he takes / away in pockets / locked" (*Empire* 14, ll. 23-25). In light of these two previous poems, where pockets hold severed, compartmentalized pieces of the self, "rules for the stillborn" suggests that some part of the self has become severed and gone missing from the character's empty pockets.

Moure reinforces this image of alienated consciousness on both thematic and formal levels. Thematically, the "half-crazed" subject struggles to perform even simple tasks: she drops coffee on the floor and steps in it, and she "cannot hold or keep" the objects she grasps (*Empire* 20, ll. 7, 9). *Craze*, which originally denoted something cracked or broken, here portrays the subject's mind in the process of falling apart. Additionally, the speaker describes the subject's life as a "raw gamble caught in your fingers" (l. 2). In this comparison, *gamble* conveys risk and uncertainty, while *raw* connotes exposure to cold and suffering: in this painful, dangerous risk, the subject might win the bet but, more likely than not, will lose her life. Formally, the poem's broken sentences and irregular structures support its depiction of fragmented, disintegrating identity. As John Lennard observes in his discussion of form, irregular form often indicates irregular content, as, in some cases, "metrical oddity suggests mental oddity" in the poem's speaker (7). Significantly, then, "rules

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[3] Interestingly, the version of this poem published in *A Government Job at Last* ends with the lines

> w/ hands, muttering: Now
> What do I need?
> what you need
> is to need no
> longer (p. 59; l. 17-21).

The revisions instituted for the subsequent *Empire, York Street* serve to accentuate uncertainty, adding an additional question that focuses on the emptiness and brokenness the self experiences. Additionally, Moure eliminates the speaker's original response, ending the poem with questions rather than assertions.

for the stillborn" has irregular lineation and metre; moreover, it begins with two sentence fragments, and the elliptical phrase beginning the first full sentence—"morning, you free your limbs" rather than *in the morning, you free your limbs*—remains incomplete, lacking (*Empire* 20, l. 4). In its suggestion and subsequent rejection of sound-patterning, the poem further disintegrates. That is, the terminal rhymes "life" and "knife" in the first and third lines hint that alternating rhymes may follow (ll. 1, 3); however, although rhyme characteristically helps "to organise the relation of words" both visually and aurally, Moure pointedly fails to sustain this order, creating a poem that, like its main figure, falls apart (Lennard 189).

Moure's early work poetry contains some of her most direct protests against the Republic, but the poet's analysis of alienation also recognizes the subtle ways in which the commodity structure "stamps its imprint upon the whole consciousness of man" (Lukács 100). Mental alienation, for Moure, affects both labour and leisure, both production and consumption. The poem "margins" demonstrates that this mental alienation pervades even personal life and romantic relationships. Notably, "margins" occurs at night, after "the day's / work making plywood," and describes a sexual encounter between two people (*Empire* 17, ll. 5-6). However, even here, in the most intimate and personal of experiences, alienation persists, for the first-person speaker begins the poem with the words "Nights when I am no longer / available, even to myself"; this phrase—like the opening fragment of "rules for the stillborn"—functions as a heading for all of the action that follows (ll. 1-2). The structure of this initial statement establishes the poem as a critique of psycho-emotional alienation. If one reads the fragment without a pause, the adverbial phrase *no longer* applies to the adjective *available*, stating simply that the person has no time for herself. However, the lineation creates an aural and visual break after *no longer*, inviting the reader to see the first line as a distinct unit. In this reading, *no longer* applies not to the adjective *available* but to the verb *am*: consequently, the line break invites the reader to understand that the speaker herself does not exist any longer. In

this poem, then, the speaker experiences not only economic but also social—even sexual—experience as alienating. Here, as in the rest of *Empire, York Street*, Moure places on view the severed thoughts and emotions of the alienated mind.

Likewise, in "abrupt messages," Moure reveals the division and ossification of the human mind in all aspects of life, from the suburbs to the office. The poem reflects on the ways in which broad political actions affect everyday domestic life, for men, specifically, construct cities upon violence: "men break other men," and "when it is over, they build a heritage / in the suburbs" (*Empire* 72, ll. 16, 17-18). Also, while the opening line sets the poem in a house, the first-person speaker's activities resemble administrative office duties: the speaker can "smoke, wait, take messages" (l. 7). In all of these contexts, the Republic ruptures and ossifies the ongoing processes of thought and emotion. In Lukács's discussion of reification, he specifically notes that "what we are wont to call 'facts' consists of processes" but that capitalism often attributes "theoretical primacy" to individual facts, separating knowledge into discrete pieces and ignoring the connections between those pieces (184). The alienated consciousness, for Lukács, focuses on "the parts, the *aspects* of the total process that have been broken off, artificially isolated and ossified," but fails to see the relational network that connects facts into genuine thought (184). In "abrupt messages," Moure depicts the reified consciousness of her characters, specifically in "the minds of certain / men," for whom "the sun still orbits / the earth, the galaxy a myth / for philosophers only" (*Empire* 72, ll. 11-12, 12-14).

Significantly, in this passage, the men place emphasis on the earth as an individual object. They do admit that the earth has some relationship with the sun, but even this relationship remains minimal and geocentric. The men fully reject the notion of the galaxy, an image of millions of parts existing in complex interrelations, and they refuse to discuss human social relations, the reasons "why / men break other men" (ll. 15-16). As a result, the poem represents these men as mentally alienated, unable to understand the universe "as a system of dynamically changing

relations" (Lukács 185). Although the speaker criticizes these men, her habits suggest that she, too, experiences psycho-emotional alienation. Throughout the poem, the speaker remains stagnant: as she "wait[s], take[s] messages," she "drink[s] coffee from rimed cups," where *rime* denotes hoar frost or, more simply, a thin layer or film on a surface (*Empire* 72, ll. 7, 8). The word *rimed*, accordingly, evokes images of cold coffee in dirty mugs. The possible association between *rimed* and *rimmed* reinforces this image, calling to mind coffee stains around the rims of unwashed cups. In short, this image implies staleness or stagnancy, implicating the speaker, like the men, in reified thought. In the second stanza, furthermore, Moure characterizes the house itself as stagnant because it features "mould" and reruns of "old comedy" (ll. 28, 30). Accordingly, the speaker's actions and surroundings present her own consciousness as alienated, much like the "minds of certain / men" that she describes (ll. 11-12).

In "hazard of the occupation," Moure also highlights psycho-emotional alienation and, specifically, the destruction of creativity under capitalism. This theme, too, has roots in Marxist theory. In ideal conditions, Marxists believe, "all would be free to pursue truly human and creative activities that allowed each individual to fully realize himself or herself," but Marx and Lukács argue that capitalist production and consumption reduce creative potential in human beings (Simon 734). Because of the capitalist commodity structure, humans become alienated from their own productive capacities: "the worker, far from being able to buy everything, must sell himself and his human identity" in wage labour (Marx, *Economic* 70). Indeed, for Lukács, capitalism imposes specialized, rationalized standards that make "the human qualities and idiosyncrasies of the worker appear increasingly as *mere sources of error*"; capitalist labour often values uniformity rather than creativity (Lukács 89). Accordingly, within her representation of alienated consciousness, Moure focuses on the human mind's diminished capacity for creative thought and action. "hazard of the occupation," in particular, interweaves descriptions of the alienated body, with its severed limbs and aching muscles, with portrayals of the alienated creative mind. "[T]he word /

ascends" in the subject's throat, signifying poetic voice, and, because of what Michael Ferber describes as the frequent "identification of poets with songbirds," the hummingbird symbolizes poetic inspiration (*Empire* 21, l. 34-35; Ferber 26). However, the poem records not the fulfillment but the undermining of poetic voice. On a formal level, Moure initially establishes a roughly iambic rhythm—"whāt īs sáid ābóut thē eárth īs / ónlȳ thát īt bréaks / āpárt"—that manifests the poet's conscious ability to place words in relationship to one another; in contrast, though, the sound patterning falls to pieces as it approaches the word "séverēd," a trochee, which reverses the rising rhythm (*Empire* 21, ll. 1-3, 3). While Moure occasionally returns to iambic metre, as in "āccúse yōu, shóut ābóut ābúse," the poem's metre disturbs the rising, often iambic, rhythm of speech (l. 24).

On a thematic level, the failure of the poet's creative faculties also appears in the separation between poet and bird-muse. The aspiring poet, unable to move from the bed, lies inside the house, powerless to reach the hummingbird, which "refuses to / land on the roof" (ll. 15-16). Finally, "the hummingbird lands," but Moure does not indicate where the bird sets down or hint at any contact between poet and bird (l. 25). The poem's spatial arrangement, then, with the poet motionless inside and the bird hovering outside, gestures toward the failure of creative voice. Therefore, the speaker remarks, "there is no word for what happens" (l. 19). Throughout the poem, Moure demonstrates the ways in which physical and mental alienation reinforce one another: in an interview, she states, "Words, even verb tenses, are physical presences and markers of physicality. You can move something closer or further away by using different verb tenses" ("Sexing" 118). This poem reveals that, under the social and economic conditions of the Republic, creativity, like the body, becomes fragile: "this is how easily a man breaks apart. / flesh as thin as words" (*Empire* 21, ll. 8-9). Although the poem's concluding lines seem redemptive, combating bodily fragmentation with an assertion of poetic voice, Moure accompanies this poetic voice with images of violence and destruction: the means of creative production, the

printing presses, "are / bolted into guns," and, as "the word / ascends," its "wings break / against your tongue" (ll. 29-30, 34-35, 35-36). The negative valence of "guns" and "break / against" disturbs the apparent resolution: the guns threaten further physical fragmentation, and the preposition *against* suggests antagonism rather than unity, undermining the hopeful phrase "the word / ascends." Rather, the speaker experiences creativity as a somatic fragmentation, for the utterance "break[s]" at the tongue, the locus of articulation.

Moure's subsequent work, *The Whisky Vigil*, appeared as a chapbook two years after the publication of *Empire, York Street*. In these poems, Moure also demonstrates personal alienation, particularly psycho-emotional alienation. As Andrew Parkin notes, many of these poems feature "a drunken woman and the fractured selves she bears within her" (263). Early in the collection, the poem "Never Too Much" hints at the estrangement of the self by paralleling two people, one, the primary subject of the poem, addressed in the second person and the other, her "friend," in the third person (*Whisky* 9, l. 4). Throughout the poem, Moure uses similar phrases to characterize each of the people. In the first stanza, the poet mentions the "Whisky stains on your arms, the dark / shirt of your friend" (ll. 3-4). This sentence fragment lends itself to two coexisting readings: one reading sees the two phrases as distinct items in a list, while the other reading views the preposition *on* as applying to both "your arms" and "the dark / shirt of your friend," so that whisky stains mark both the subject and her friend. Further parallelism occurs in the similarity between the subject's "silly tufted / head" and the friend's "messy head" (ll. 9-10, 16) and between the speaker's repeated references to the subject as a "fool" (ll. 2, 11) and the comment about the friend walking "foolishly" (l. 14).

In the final stanzas of the poem, this comparison becomes pointed and presents the two people as, possibly, alienated aspects of the same self. Early in the poem, the speaker implies the subject's failure to recognize herself in the mirror by asking, "Can you see yourself / in the mirror at the grocery" and "Can you see, can

you, fool" (ll. 8-9, 11). Neither sentence ends with a question mark, so the lines become, instead, jeering statements of the subject's failure to recognize herself in the mirror. At the conclusion of the poem, Moure states that the subject would "recognize her [the friend] anywhere, now. / / Even in mirrors" (ll. 25-26). The visual and aural hesitation before *now* places emphasis on the adverb and hints that—at a prior time—the subject did not recognize her friend in a mirror; this implication returns the reader to the previous image of the subject unable to see herself in the mirror at the grocery store, suggesting that her failure to recognize the friend is, simultaneously, a failure to recognize herself. The final line of the poem solidifies this connection between subject and friend by describing the friend shoplifting "Just like you" (l. 29). This explicit connection further hints that the two people are, indeed, fragments of the self; the subject experiences her own thoughts and actions as the attributes and behaviours of another person. Accordingly, this poem displays the alienation of consciousness, where the human mind breaks into separate, disconnected pieces.

Likewise, the poem "It Happens Only" describes a person whose "psychological attributes are separated from [her] total personality and placed in opposition to it"; as Lukács remarks, "the personality can do no more than look on helplessly while its own existence is reduced to an isolated particle and fed into an alien system" (Lukács 88, 90). "It Happens Only" begins simply by describing the encounter between two characters, "you" and "her" (*Whisky* 11, l. 2). Near the end of the poem, though, the speaker remarks, "She's you," revealing that the two characters truly represent two pieces of the self that have become broken and alienated from one another (l. 23). At parties, the two come into achingly close proximity, but the poem ultimately accentuates the physical distance maintained between the two fragments of the self: they only see one another "across the room" (l. 2). Mentally, too, the main character does not seem to recognize this alienated self. The two pieces of the self give varying accounts of one of these parties: the main

character talks about "staying later just to see" the other woman, but the other woman insists that "she left the party a long time ago" (ll. 13, 23). These alternate stories make even more evident the separation of the two selves. Significantly, too, the poem ends with "fights"—presumably arguments between the character and her estranged self—and these disputes reinforce the division within consciousness (l. 26).

More, the poem hints that, perhaps, the encounter between the character and her alienated self did not occur at all. Throughout the poem, Moure uses vague and indefinite pronouns to describe the party, making it seem unclear and uncertain. In the opening phrase, "It happens only once or twice a life," the pronoun *it* has no suitable antecedent nearby, and, in the second line, *it* serves as an impersonal subject meaning *it is the case that* (l. 1). Moure also uses indefinite pronouns such as "anybody," "Nobody," and "something" to make the poem's account of the meeting even more tentative (ll. 3, 16, 7). Near the close of the poem, the speaker finally admits that "The party was an empty room, a few books / tumbled off its tables, empty bottles, syringes, clutter" (ll. 19-20). While this description could refer to the end of the party, after everyone has gone home, Moure insists that the party *was*, not the party *left*, an empty room and empty bottles. Accordingly, although a party usually suggests connection, this description foregrounds isolation, further undermining the possibility of any encounter between the character and her alienated self. The reference to syringes further adumbrates mental alienation, for, at a party, syringes imply non-medicinal drug use and, thus, a further detachment from the normal conscious self. Moure, then, represents the party not as a possible site of contact between the women but as a collection of vacant and detached objects; in short, the party itself becomes a symbol of the psycho-emotional alienation of the self under the Republic.

"Fantastic World's End," the next poem in the chapbook, further examines alienated consciousness, drawing attention to the mind's estrangement from its own thoughts and emotions. In the first lines of the poem—"What else can you do, faced

/ with yourself'—Moure subtly sets the main character apart from and against a part of herself (*Whisky* 12, ll. 1-2). The second stanza follows up on this image, describing not a person but a "damaged brain" dislocated from its face, which subsequently "falls down" (ll. 8, 9). Further, although the poetic subject remains conscious—"sentient"—her perceptions and feelings become limited to negative experiences and emotions (l. 17). This alienated self can still experience "hate" and "fear," but it can no longer perceive or, even, dream (ll. 18, 19): the "windows of your body" become "stopped" up (l. 28) so that the subject cannot see out, and "the dream shuts it [*sic*] face / & goes away" (ll. 29-30). The subject's heart—the metaphorical seat of the emotions—becomes a "motor," and the chest becomes an "engine"; in both cases, these comparisons transform a living, dynamic organism into one of the "inanimate beings, motorized personalities," that populate poems such as "Fantastic World's End," as Rita Donovan perceptively points out (l. 21; Donovan, Rev. of *Wanted* 30). The subject's organic heartbeat, which signifies both life and emotion, becomes a rigid, mechanical thing. The "force, whatever it is," that brings humans to "the fantastic world's end" produces "civil, empty-headed, sentient beings"; this line associates psycho-emotional alienation explicitly with civic life (*Whisky* 12, l. 17).[4] Indeed, "personal conflict is shown to have socio-political origins" (Denisoff, "Erin" 255). In this passage, the visual and aural space before the word *beings* creates a sense of hesitation, as if the speaker no longer knows if she can call "us" living humans, thus further indicating the dehumanization of human beings under capitalism

[4] In her later writings, as Denisoff rightly points out, "Mouré frequently uses the word 'civic' in a negative sense, as part of 'the Law,'" and in her extra-poetic writings, *civic order* often serves as a synonym for the oppressive social and economic structures Moure terms the Republic (Denisoff, "Merger" 119). In contrast, Moure deploys the term *civilian* "in a positive sense" to express "people's willing acknowledgement of their interdependence and their longings for each other" ("Merger" 119). *Civil* plays a less clearly-defined role in Moure's thought, but in the poem "Timisoara" in *Sheepish Beauty, Civilian Love*, Moure associates the government of Romanian Communist leader Nicolae Ceauşescu with "civil / breakdown" and the 1989 anti-government demonstrations with "civilian beauty," in contrast (*Sheepish* 62). The gloomy overall tone of "Fantastic World's End" combines with Moure's use of the term *civil* in "Timisoara" to suggest that one can read *civil* as, like *civic*, a description of the repressive status quo.

(*Whisky* 12, l. 17). For Moure, then, the Republic perpetuates mental alienation, the objectification and disintegration of human consciousness.

Moure's representation of psycho-emotional estrangement persists in *Wanted Alive*. For instance, in "If You Find It," the self becomes broken into two pieces, one identified as "you" and the other as "your skin," and the self experiences this alienation as a failure of its mental faculties (*Wanted* 19, ll. 4, 1). Moure links this internal division with the Republic and, specifically, aligns the skin with the social and economic status quo. The skin demands that the main character "pick up apartments on the way home, / go to the polls, & buy / a pound of sausage at the butcher" (ll. 4-6). The statement follows the pattern of one person reminding another to bring home the items necessary for a household task, usually for making dinner; here, though, the ingredients necessary to sustain everyday life include elections and real estate. By including "the polls" in this shopping list, Moure figures this political duty as merely another form of consumption, not as a means of actual social change. The phrase "pick up apartments on the way home" also stands out as unusual. Because the main character likely does not need multiple "apartments" for personal use, this purchase suggests an investment in the capitalist economy. Overall, the skin acquiesces to the Republic, viewing participation in the current political and economic structures as necessary. In contrast, the poem's main character remains excluded, "miscalculated, a bad reading, out / of line with the architecture" of the social and economic norms (ll. 21-22). She, contrary to the skin's wishes, associates with people who "don't vote in elections" (l. 23). The contrast between these two fragments of the self, one subjected to the status quo and one excluded by it, evidences the psycho-emotional alienation produced by capitalism.

Throughout the poem, Moure focuses on the mental alienation of a single person, but, at the conclusion of the poem, she generalizes this state of brokenness by alluding to "so many other figures" who, likewise, have alienated skins (l. 29). Accordingly, Moure presents the skins as "silly"; this adjective denotes, in general,

something foolish or trivial, but it bears the connotations of illogicality or stupidity (l. 29). It describes the failure of sensible cognition or action, hinting that, thus divided, the self loses its capacity for dynamic, relational thought. Additionally, "If You Find It" notes the disintegration of the self's creative faculties. As Lukács argues, capitalism "dehumanises [the worker] and cripples and atrophies his 'soul'" so that the creative and spiritual faculties of the person's psyche disintegrate (172). Indeed, the human "'creative' element" can only occur when capitalism's "contemplative stance is repudiated" (Lukács 98). In particular, dreams often represent possibility, imagination, and aspiration, so, in this poem, the skin "pulling the dream away" represents the reification of the mind's creative faculties (*Wanted* 19, l. 2). The skin's voice "sings around your head like a dome," combining images of musical and architectural creativity; however, upon closer inspection, the dome remains "barren of frescoes" (ll. 7, 8). The close cultural association of domes—stately, ornamented buildings—and frescoes—mural paintings often adorning the plaster walls or ceilings of public buildings—highlights the failure of creativity precisely where it should appear. The skin's singing voice, then, suggests not so much art as the poignant detachment and absence of art. In "If You Find It," then, Moure especially points out the ways in which social and economic norms destroy or obscure the intelligence and creativity of the self.

Domestic Fuel also places emphasis on the alienated consciousness, particularly in poems such as "Shock Troop." This poem begins with several brief phrases that thematize violence:

> Shock troop
>
> shock exercise
>
> Knife is a verb
>
> Bayonet a verb
>
> Coat a verb
>
> Absolute is a conjunction. (*Domestic* 17, ll. 1-6)

On a formal level, Moure chooses short, somewhat fragmentary phrases, and lines four and five both lack verbs. These broken phrases at first have little context, but Moure slowly reveals that they represent the self-talk of a man who struggles to "make a sentence, fool" (l. 8). The idea of violence permeates these lines, for, in addition to the list of weapons, Moure references shock troops, military personnel trained to surprise and disorient the opponent in strategic assaults; these lines, accordingly, indicate mental conflict and confusion. Moure associates this "incomprehensible" thought with both repressive state force—"shock troops blowing the door in / & taking the TV"—and with the commodity structure of capitalism, which has penetrated the man's mind so completely that he thinks he must "pay for the coffee" made by his spouse (ll. 11, 12-13, 7). In short, "Shock Troop" offers a disturbing picture of alienated human consciousness.

Throughout these early collections, Moure foregrounds the alienated self, displaying the ways in which the social and economic structures of the Republic—and especially the structures of capitalism—break down the relational and dynamic character of the human body and mind. She concludes that these oppressive structures can result in the complete dehumanization and death of the individual: "This lack of correspondence, this alienation, is what is killing us all" ("I'll Start" 16). Significantly, then, death emerges as a common theme in these poems. For instance, in *Empire, York Street*, the poem "rules for the stillborn" associates alienation with the speaker's own "stillborn / day" (*Empire* 20, ll. 11-12). Likewise, "abrupt messages" links mental alienation to emptiness and death. The speaker in this poem associates the men's stagnant, broken thought with "death, theirs / & mine" (*Empire* 72, ll. 22-23). The final stanza furthers this emphasis on the fatal consequences of alienation, for Moure provides a setting of "pestilence" and "mould" that presents the speaker as diseased and decaying (l. 28). Moure continues by noting that

in the minds of certain
birds, the sun still revolves
around the backyard tree, shorn
of leaves & drenched
in this age, the dead
of winter. (ll. 31-36)

In the phrase "the minds of certain birds" and in the reference to a circular revolution, this passage immediately recalls the "minds of certain / men" who believe that "the sun still orbits / the earth," so this final stanza creates a parallel between the men and the birds (ll. 11-12, 12-13). Importantly, then, the object of the birds' focus—the tree—appears dead, "shorn / of leaves." By implying the likeness between the men and the birds, Moure demonstrates that the men's alienated minds, too, revolve around death. Accordingly, the "dark / age" (ll. 1-2) referred to in the opening lines of the poem becomes in the final lines "this age, the dead / of winter." In "abrupt messages," personal alienation ultimately produces death.

In "Radiare" and "Toxicity" Moure also links estrangement and death closely. "Radiare" stands out in *Wanted Alive* as one of Moure's most potent critiques of alienation, especially physical alienation. Throughout the poem, Moure presents alienation as not life but death. Chemistry "devastates" the body and breaks it into "lustrous" cells (*Wanted* 91-92, ll. 20, 21). Though *lustrous* usually has positive associations, in the context of nuclear chemistry, the adjective takes on more sinister connotations, insinuating, perhaps, the glowing light of a radioactive substance exposed to fluors. Significantly, the final stanza of "Radiare" returns to this image of radioactivity, for Moure refers to the subject's life as merely "a half-life, an orbit of fear" (l. 33). In a general sense, *half-life* denotes a shortened or unsatisfactory life; in a more scientific sense, *half-life* alludes to a measurement of the time required for half of a particular amount of radioactive material to break down. The combination of these two senses—one referring to a toxic substance and the other to the devaluation

of human life—reveals that, under "the American experiment," people become dehumanized and, ultimately, deadened (l. 12). In *Domestic Fuel*, "Toxicity" repeatedly emphasizes the fear of "explosion" and portrays "the body poisoned," thus reinforcing the connection between alienation and death (*Domestic* 99, ll. 13, 10). The poem also draws connections between the "*toxicity*" that threatens the speaker and the "words of politic" that destroy Nicaragua, revealing that the destructive forces of alienation affect both everyday life and political history, both individuals standing near a "sink" and people in "the ports / of Nicaragua" (ll. 18, 4, 19, 4-5).

Most importantly, "Toxicity" reveals the desire that underlies Moure's representations of alienation as death. Throughout the poem, the speaker longs to "be cured," and she asks repeatedly, "can acupuncture cure the sadness of the liver, now?" (ll. 22, 14). Insistent questions pervade "Toxicity": in this short poem of thirty-three lines, nine questions occur, and each question asks about the possibility of healing. Consequently, this poem marks the discontent undergirding Moure's early work. Following in the Marxist tradition, Moure's poetry evinces a desire for dealienation, in which one could begin to "see the reified forms as processes between men" and women once more (Lukács 197). For Marx and Lukács, dealienation can only occur through "critique—philosophical analysis that reveals the nature and sources of the alienation" and, consequently, teaches the people to recognize and to contest their oppression (Simon 731). Moure, then, offers her poetry as "an *anti-anæsthetic*" that enables "productive openings toward an *elsewhere*" (*My Beloved* 161), toward an "emancipation" in which the "senses and attributes have become, subjectively and objectively, *human*" (Marx, *Economic* 139). In this "protest" against the alienated death of human bodies and minds, Moure's poetry encourages desire, a longing for relational, dynamic human life (*My Beloved* 32).

Chapter Two

"no tomorrow": Interpersonal Alienation

For me, what is always fundamental is (the thread that links language to justice)… –Erín Moure, *My Beloved Wager*, 303.

For Moure, "the body's sense[s] of individuality and community [. . .] are intertwined" (*My Beloved* 62). Indeed, individuals understand themselves in relation to their communities and their communities in relation to themselves. Because she recognizes "*community*—broadly speaking, all other beings we are in contact with—as an indispensable part of our definition of who we are as individuals," Moure discusses in her poetic and extra-poetic writings not only personal but also interpersonal relationships (*My Beloved* 97). In this analysis, Moure makes it clear that personal and interpersonal alienation enable and reinforce one another. For example, according to Moure, "Our alienation from the body [. . .] gives us racism, sexism, homophobia, among other things. It makes war possible as a 'logical' action" ("I'll Start" 14). The Republic, in its habit of categorizing and containing people, divides humans from themselves and from others. In her early poetry, then, Moure unveils the ways in which the Republic—the social and economic status quo—produces alienation not only within the individual but also between individuals. Moure depicts this interpersonal estrangement through the failure of physical, psycho-emotional, and linguistic contact between individuals.

As Swail demonstrates, Moure understands humans as "interdependently social" but believes that present economic and social conditions foreground the individual, obscuring the vital interrelations between people (106). In Swail's words, Moure argues that "Liberal humanism [. . .] reifies the individual as self contained [*sic*], downplaying the importance of the collective aspects of symbolic signification":

in short, as the self becomes thing-like, it loses its dynamic relation to others (108). Swail's use of the word *reify* is telling: this usage gestures toward an explicitly Marxist reading, one that Moure's own writings invite. In her interviews and essays, Moure consistently denounces the "whole concept of the individual that the western world promotes all the time" because it obscures or breaks down the relationships between individuals; furthermore, Moure explicitly connects this interpersonal alienation to capitalism, specifically to "entrepreneurship, and all those things that have to do with individuals" ("Changes" 43). Interpersonal alienation, for Moure, ultimately supports the status quo and maintains the "civic, and administrative, borders" that shut out and oppress humans ("Crossings" 4). She concludes, "it is in the interest of the capitalist state to maintain the dream of the individual because people connecting their sensations, removing them from the realm of the personal, and analyzing their oppression, threatens the state" ("To Speak" 133-134).

In her critique of the broken and ossified relationships between individuals, Moure furthers the Marxist discussion of interpersonal alienation. As I described in the previous chapter, the Marxist tradition argues that capitalist wage labour alienates workers from production, and, as a result, from their own physical and mental faculties. At the same time, Marx claims, capitalist commodity structure destroys interpersonal relations. Lukács concurs, noting that "the relations between men that lie hidden in the immediate commodity relation [. . .] have faded to the point where they can be neither recognised nor even perceived" (93). Indeed, for Marx, this interpersonal alienation occurs as a direct result of personal alienation: "An immediate consequence of the fact that man is estranged from the product of his labor, from his life activity, from his species being is the *estrangement of man* from *man*" (*Economic* 114). That is, in the wage-labour relationship, the worker "finds himself treated as a means, a tool," and begins to understand the self as a mere thing (Struik 47). "[E]ach man views the other in accordance with the standard and the relationship in which he finds himself as a worker," so the worker projects his or her

own personal alienation onto others, treating them as objects rather than humans (Marx, *Economic* 115). Accordingly, "man is alienated from his fellow man, since he treats him also as a means, a tool" (Struik 47).

As Lukács states, "the mechanical disintegration of the process of production into its components also destroys those bonds that had bound individuals to a community in the days when production was still 'organic.' In this respect, too, mechanisation makes of them isolated abstract atoms whose work no longer brings them together directly and organically" (90). This interpersonal alienation has particularly potent expression in class divisions. Engels rightly notes that the classes remain necessarily interdependent, yet capitalism maintains an illusion of this "impossible separation" of humans into "capitalists and workers—a division which daily becomes ever more acute" ("Outlines" 211). Further, capitalism artificially divides each class into unconnected, even hostile, individuals: in the proletariat, for example, each worker must secure labour to survive, so the workers compete against—rather than cooperate with—one another. "In other words," Engels states, "because private property isolates everyone in his own crude solitariness, and because, nevertheless, everyone has the same interest as his neighbor, one landowner stands antagonistically confronted by another, one capitalist by another, one worker by another" ("Outlines" 212-213). In sum, the Marxist concept of interpersonal alienation shows how capitalist wage labour "transforms men into isolated individuals" (Struik 21). Moure, "in her efforts to expose the politics of daily life," attempts to reveal this interpersonal alienation and, ultimately, to undermine it (Denisoff, "Erin" 264).

"the impossible / margin between us": Physical and Mental Alienation

In her author profile, Beverley Daurio quotes Moure as saying, "'What is important is that people can be truly present to themselves. For this you need others, a web of others, of impulses, touches, glances, words, emotions, pulls, telluric forces,

symptoms, atoms, fuel explosions, inferences, motions, and laughter'" (Daurio 28). This statement, notably, has two key elements. First, by using the relational concept of the web, this statement observes that the individual constitutes himself or herself in ongoing relation to others, so Moure conceives of the individual and the community as interconnected and interdependent. Second, in this remark, Moure lists conditions for establishing these vital relationships between individuals. Nearly all of these conditions refer to forms of connection between individuals. The word *contact*, perhaps, best characterizes the interpersonal links that Moure describes, for this word combines physical, psycho-emotional, and linguistic forms of connection. *Contact*, which comes from the Latin for *touching*, has a strong sensory element, expressing the relationality of physical touch; it also, however, has strong transferred and figurative senses that include psycho-emotional and linguistic relationships. At a physical level, sensory contact, especially touch, sight, and hearing, has an important place in Moure's list of necessary conditions for human relationships. Notably, then, Moure elsewhere remarks that "Our relationship is gestural" and describes subjectivity as "approach," foregrounding the sensory aspect of interpersonal connection (*My Beloved* 169, 180). The list quoted by Daurio also names, at a psycho-emotional level, impulses, emotions, inferences, and laughter and, at a linguistic level, words. The three forms of connection often occur together and frequently serve as metaphors for one another. For example, the adjective *touching* refers not only to sensation but also to affect, and the common phrases *in touch* and *out of touch* use sensation figuratively to represent communication. Metaphors of physical connection, as these examples show, permeate references to psycho-emotional and linguistic connection, and these forms of contact work together to establish and to support dynamic relationships between individuals.

If contact, especially sensory contact, marks authentic interpersonal connection, the loss of contact indicates the rupture of bonds between individuals. Significantly, in an interview, Moure mentions the loss of sensation in her fingers,

and this topic leads the poet to a reflection on the necessity of contact in relationships: she comments, "When I lost the feeling in those fingers I burned, I realised just how much our relationships to people depend on touch. The crossing of physical boundaries. We need that sense" (Mouré, "A Chance" 79). In her discussion of the final section of *WSW (West South West)*, Margaret Christakos notes that the speaker attempts to cross the gap between herself and the other woman, "but there remains distance"; notably, Moure represents the psycho-emotional distance between the two women in the poem as a physical gap "between the breastbone and the palm. Women's arms. So vital, because when Mouré almost dies with asthma, she gives herself injections in the arm's veins, or ends up in hospital revived by the intravenal cure. This is the site of life or death, [. . .] this is serious" (Christakos 64). As Christakos reveals, for Moure, the loss of contact, in all of its forms, marks interpersonal alienation, not only threatening relationships but also, ultimately, dehumanizing people. Throughout *Empire, York Street*, *The Whisky Vigil*, *Wanted Alive*, and *Domestic Fuel*, Moure places on view broken and ossified interpersonal connections, relationships that have fallen out of touch physically, psycho-emotionally, and linguistically. This chapter will, for the most part, discuss these elements of contact in conjunction. Language will come up occasionally in my general discussion of contact, but, because Moure places such strong emphasis on language and communication in her poetry, I will devote an additional section to this topic.

In an early review of *Empire, York Street*, A.F. Moritz notes that Moure uses "sharply observed images of urban and industrial life," for although she sometimes sets her poems in rural areas, "her poetic eye more often lights on garage roofs of corrugated iron; 40-watt bulbs in the halls of cheap apartment buildings; a shipment of tungsten; electrical wiring; railway switch-yards; 'a certain amount of equipment / assembled on the floor'" (16-17). These images highlight labour, production, and commodities, making capitalism a strong theme throughout the collection. Further,

Moritz rightly observes that, in this context of urban capitalism, "These poems set out to acknowledge the full dehumanizing weight of the world" (16). Indeed, Moure places on view the ways in which current economic and social structures destroy humans by severing or ossifying the bonds between them. Early in the volume, "margins" represents interpersonal estrangement through images of a physical gap or barrier between lovers. The poem's reference to plywood hints at one such barrier, for plywood has the primary function of partitioning space. Interior floors, ceilings, and panels and exterior walls often have plywood construction, so in the reference to "the day's / work making plywood," plywood synecdochically represents physical partitions (*Empire* 17, ll. 5-6). Significantly, then, the speaker continues, "i stand / alone in the shrunken coat," where the tight coat serves to constrain the speaker's movement and to insulate her from her surroundings (ll. 6-7). The predominant image of the poem—the margin—also denotes an edge, a blank space, or a gap. In a general sense, *margin* means a boundary demarcating a limit. In other, more specific, senses, *margin* refers to a blank space intervening between the print and the edge of the page or denotes the gap between expected and actual outcomes. In each case, *margin* marks a gap or limit, a space or line separating one thing from another. Accordingly, in the poem's two explicit references to margins—"the impossible / margin between us" and "the margin / gaped between my arms"—the margin acts as a physical partition symbolizing interpersonal separation (ll. 22-23, 33-34).

The poem's formal structure also places emphasis on the gaps between individuals by accentuating the blank spaces of the page. In the references to "the impossible / margin" and "the margin / gaped between my arms," a line break divides each phrase into fragments, highlighting the distance of the lover from the speaker. Even more significantly, a blank space follows each mention of a margin: a gap follows the title on the page, and each of the above quotations occurs at the end of a stanza. These blank spaces on the page, then, become textual markers of physical separation. Additionally, while Parkin rightly points out that Moure's early

work characteristically "favors the short free-verse line," this poem has especially short, regular lines (263). Although many poems in this collection have a low average line length, this poem has an average of 5.2 words and 22.0 characters per line, making its lines extremely short. Unlike poems such as "Incantation" and "Descent"—the surrounding poems—"margins" has no mid-line blank spaces, and few lines deviate notably from the average. As a result, the poem lies in two narrow, compact blocks on the page, and the *mise-en-page* draws attention to the blank space of the page, especially the large right margin. One line in the poem appears markedly longer than the others. This line, importantly, portrays the lover's attempt to "reach to embrace" the speaker, and the "hand," a limb especially important for touch, extends out at the end of the line, as if to reach through the margin (*Empire* 17, l. 10). However, the line breaks off before the verb, "gropes," so the hand dangles at the end of the line without reaching the speaker (l. 11). Overall, the poem formally manifests the physical gap between lover and speaker through the blank spaces of the page.

The literal content of the poem also emphasizes the failure of the two characters to touch. In a single long sentence from lines three to twelve, Moure describes the lover's failed attempts to make contact with the speaker:

> You climb the long blur
> of stairs to my door & speak
> like a tourist of the day's
> work making plywood; i stand
> alone in the shrunken coat
> of my skin, map future
> escape thru ribs & tendons:
> when you reach to embrace, your hand
> gropes thru my breast, embeds
> within the wall. (ll. 3-12)

The first and third independent clauses show the lover reaching out verbally or physically to the speaker; however, in the middle clause, between the semicolon and the colon, the speaker remains isolated, untouched and untouchable. The pauses and grammatical shifts announced by these two main punctuation marks separate the speaker from the lover, despite the lover's efforts to make contact.

Here and throughout the poem, the lover's attempts to caress the speaker fail, further demonstrating interpersonal estrangement. In this context, the verb *gropes* leads the reader to expect that the hand will fondle the speaker's breast, but, instead, the hand violently penetrates the speaker's body and sinks into the wall. A few lines later, the speaker also reports, "you thrust / thru my body & enter / rusted coils of mattress" (ll. 15-17). In both images, the lover attempts to establish intimate touch, but each character remains isolated. At the end of the first stanza, the lover lies on the mattress calling out to the speaker, while the speaker stands in the "corners" of the room (ll. 21). The lover turns away from the speaker toward the floor and begins discussing "how to win at electric tennis," where *electric tennis* possibly refers to a single player hitting balls shot from an electric machine (ll. 27). If so, this reference, too, indicates an isolated activity, one in which a mechanical thing has replaced a human relationship. In any case, by turning away from the speaker toward the floor, the lover rejects contact. The speaker also finds herself alone. She responds to the lover's "absence" by declaring her own absence: she looks for "alibis," a phrase that comes from the Latin word meaning *elsewhere* (ll. 28, 29). Finally, the speaker's arms remain empty at the end of the poem; rather than reaching to embrace, she stands with "the margin / gaped between my arms" (l. 33-34). Consequently, the imagery, form, and narrative of "margins" reveal the loss of dynamic interpersonal contact.

Also in *Empire, York Street*, the poem "responsibility for shoes" displays interpersonal alienation by highlighting the physical distance that separates the speaker and her friend, the second-person addressee. Indeed, Moure constructs this poem around the relationship between the "you" and the "i" (*Empire* 73, ll. 10, 5).

However, in each stanza, the poem draws attention to the physical gap between these characters. In the first stanza, "too many miles" intervene between the speaker and the friend (6). "[N]o chance" of relational contact exists (l. 7). The second stanza of the poem continues the theme of alienation, for it describes the addressee turning "the wrong way down York" (l. 12). Although the poem later reveals that the friend heard the speaker calling and turned around, this stanza presents the physical gap between the characters as an actual rather than a potential situation: she shows the friend "walking all the miles / back to the Lakehead" without finding the speaker (ll. 16-17). The third stanza begins by acknowledging that the friend "turned & walked up the steps & stayed / four days, left your shoes, returned for them, left again" (ll. 23-24). Even here, though, the speaker's anxiety about interpersonal alienation overshadows the visit, for this moment of connection occupies only three lines in the thirty-two lines of the poem. The final stanza returns to the image of "that picture, the one where you keep walking, / the wrong way down York Street" (ll. 28-29). Structurally, then, the poem accentuates not the moment of connection but the ongoing condition of disconnection, of physical and metaphorical separation.

In this poem, the interplay of movement and stasis has a prominent role in depicting the estrangement of speaker and addressee. Under the Republic, just as consciousness becomes "isolated and ossified," relationships become divided and static (Lukács 184). For Moure, capitalism continually undermines the possibility of dynamic relationality because it belongs to the set of "systems that perpetuate stasis": "Capitalism, above all, appears to favour signs, stases, signifieds" ("Changes" 44, "Crossings" 14). Although "people are still moving" ("Crossings" 14), the Republic "supports easily the hegemony of 'singleness', 'individual power,'" by putting "thingness before [. . .] motion" (*Furious* 98). In "responsibility for shoes," tellingly, Moure's syntax prominently portrays stasis rather than movement, imitating the speaker's inability to reach her friend. While the middle section of the poem contains fewer caesurae and more connective ampersands, Moure fills the opening and closing

stanzas with terse sentences. The first stanza, which offers "no chance" of connection, features six periods and one ampersand (*Empire* 73, l. 7). In the second stanza, the speaker longs for connection, and the stanza thus holds three ampersands and only one period. The beginning of the third stanza continues the more fluid style of the second, and the ampersands and commas cluster in the second and third lines, when the two people briefly make contact. The remainder of the stanza, however, returns to the short, anxious style of the first stanza. In total, the third stanza has five periods but only two ampersands. Aurally and visually, while the ampersands enable tentative movements between words and between people, the periods and caesurae break the lines into fragments, manifesting the rupture between the speaker and addressee. Additionally, the question mark appears more prominently in the opening and closing paragraphs, undermining the certainty of relationship and further inhibiting syntactical movement. In short, on the formal level, "responsibility for shoes" foregrounds stasis rather than "approach" (*My Beloved* 180).

Likewise, "responsibility for shoes" manifests the disintegration of interpersonal contact in its portrayal of immobility and distance. The poem opens with a reference to "a certain / hardness, stored in the heart. / impossible to move around it" (*Empire* 73, ll. 1-3). Although, in the second stanza, the speaker "step[s] from the house," she remains unable to run after her friend, "unable / to move the boulder" that separates them (ll. 13, 18-19). Significantly, Moure concludes the poem with the phrase, "Stopped like a boulder in my heart," followed by a full stop (l. 32). The repeated reference to the stone adumbrates the mythological story of Sisyphus, who, Jenny March notes, "was set an eternal punishment of perpetually rolling a great stone to the top of a hill, only to have it roll down again" just as it neared the top (706). Known as the "great trickster" for escaping death twice, Sisyphus finally succumbs to stasis, for he cannot move the stone out of the way (March 704). In this story, then, although the stone moves up and down the hill, the endless repetition of the task creates a kind of stasis that underscores interpersonal estrangement.

Throughout Moure's poem, these references to "hardness" (*Empire* 73, l. 2) and the "boulder" (ll. 19, 32) reinforce the difficulty of establishing physical—and psycho-emotional—contact between individuals. Additionally, the images of the picture and the shoes undermine dynamic contact. In the final stanza, all movement—even movement "the wrong way down York Street"—becomes reified into a frozen, static "picture" (ll. 29, 28). Here, a still image—an object—takes the place of a moving relationship. In the same way, the speaker substitutes a commodity for the failed relationship: by titling the poem "responsibility for shoes," the speaker displaces her anxiety about interpersonal relationship onto these objects. As foot attire, shoes represent movement and, thus, the possibility of contact; however, the poem presents the shoes as detached from the body and, thus, unable to move. Simply put, immobile things replace dynamic relationships. In this poem, as in *Empire, York Street* as a whole, Moure formally and thematically places on view the failure of contact between individuals.

The Whisky Vigil continues these themes, only here, as Cooley observes, "[t]he world grows more violent too, more susceptible to depletion and exhaustion" (64). Glickman offers a similar view, describing *The Whisky Vigil* as:

> implicitly a microcosm of the interactions of men and women throughout history. The world's savagery forces its bewildered citizens to withdraw into personal relationships, which ultimately, reproduce political injustice. Disappointed in love, they then retreat further into isolation, drunkenness, or even madness. (n. pag.)

Glickman hits upon a key point in this statement, for, indeed, *The Whisky Vigil* shows how political and economic oppression works itself out in personal relationships, especially those between lovers. In particular, this collection demonstrates that capitalism ruptures and ossifies the connections between individuals. For instance, in "Fantastic World's End," Moure reveals that the same "force, whatever it is," that "makes us civil, empty-headed, sentient beings" also "halts the hand's caress,"

preventing the physical relationality of touch (*Whisky* 12, ll. 15, 17, 16). A typographical space intimates the subject's physical isolation: she remains unable to close the gap that holds her "armslength from any other" (l. 26). The poem "Whisky" also emphasizes the failure of physical contact and, thus, thematizes interpersonal estrangement. Because it occurs partly on the train, this poem evokes VIA Rail, where Moure herself worked; further, the speaker calls the passengers "voyageurs," employees of the fur companies who transported goods to and from trading posts (*Whisky* 10, l. 24). This workplace context informs the poem, placing the discussion of alienation firmly in the context of capitalist structures.

Tactile imagery, interestingly, has a prominent role in this poem: "gestures," "fingers" on "skin," and "kiss[es]" have a notable presence, yet, despite these images of contact between bodies, the poem has a strongly negative tone (ll. 2, 7, 8). *Gesture* denotes a manner of moving the body to express emotion or thought, but the physical movements in this poem fail to establish contact: Moure describes them as "Your same old gestures played to strangers like a film" (l. 2). The repetition of the words *old* and of *nagging* in the first two stanzas contributes to a sense of monotony or fatigue. The movements have become stagnant—the "same old"—and the audience remains unknown, a group of "strangers." In this context, Debord's analysis of alienation has particular relevance: Debord argues that, in late capitalism, alienation takes an even deeper form, as human relationships become not so much things as images, mere representations of lived experience. He terms this phenomenon the spectacle. For Debord, "The entire life of societies in which modern conditions of production reign announces itself as an immense accumulation of *spectacles*. Everything that was directly lived has moved away into a representation" (Debord par. 1). Like the classical forms of alienation, the spectacle distances people from their own lives and from one another, destroying their dynamic relationality. Agamben rightly comments, "the spectacle is nothing but the pure form of separation" where capitalism finally achieves "the alienation of human sociality itself"

(Agamben 79). With these analyses of late capitalism in mind, the poem's comparison of gestures to a film becomes especially important. In "Whisky," a performance, a representation, a spectacle, replaces genuine human contact.

In the same poem, other images of contact reveal, in the final analysis, interpersonal estrangement. In the second stanza, "the old habit [. . .] wrings wet / fingers across your skin, / kissing your sore joints" (*Whisky* 10, ll. 6-8). Marx becomes especially pertinent here, for he notes that, due to capitalist commodity structure, "a definite social relation between men [. . .] assumes, in their eyes, the fantastic form of a relation between things" (*Capital* I 72). In this passage, by personifying the "old habit," Moure shows how the poetic subject has foregone interpersonal contact for a relationship with an abstraction—alcoholism. In contrast, the humans in this poem lose their active, relational attributes: while the old habit gets the active verbs "chooses" and "wrings," the poetic subject gets few verbs at all (*Whisky* 10, l. 6). Even the one verb granted to the subject—which appears in the phrase "the one you can't have"—occurs only in a subordinate clause in a syntactic unit where alcoholism performs the main action (l. 9). Further, Moure qualifies this verb with a negative, so it expresses a prohibition. In this poem, then, genuine human relationships fade as abstract concepts take on relational qualities. The old habit's caresses, then, do not establish interpersonal contact, and Moure makes this touch clearly detrimental: the phrase *wet fingers* hints at a cold, uncomfortable touch, while *wring* suggests forceful manipulation or, even, violence. Moreover, although drinking initially gives the speaker "a bright camaraderie," the third drink "is a love even for furniture, for dumb / / chairs" (ll. 19, 20-21). Once again, connections with things—chairs without consciousness and voice—replace human relationships, further evincing the subject's estrangement from other humans. Disturbingly, the phrase "No life outside this," linked by an ampersand to the love for chairs, hints that no human relationships remain for the subject, demonstrating the complete isolation of the self (l. 23).

"Proceedings of the Wars," likewise, places on view the rupture between self and other, attributing this alienation directly to the social and economic status quo. Moure argues that the Republic manifests itself as "order" but "is actually a continual process of decay" or disintegration that breaks down individuals and their interconnections (*My Beloved* 60). In this poem, the speaker notes that, as she and her friends have aged, their ideals of justice have faded to aspirations for *"average*" and "ordinary life" (*Whisky* 24-25, ll. 17, 10). Accordingly, adjectives and adverbs such as "neat," "polite" (ll. 4, 24), "well-spent," "sensible & articulate," and "orderly" describe the aging characters (ll. 32, 33, 34). This surrender to the Republic has strong economic and political resonances, for Moure contrasts the friends' former concern with "civilization & the slums" to their present "cars," "houses," and "paycheques" (ll. 7, 9, 10, 32). Additionally, surrender brings with it children "like flags" and a "parade of ourselves," declaring loyalty to an official, even mainstream, political position (ll. 11, 30). The poem's title further describes the friends' lives as *proceedings*, a word that suggests a formal, official documentation of events. Revealingly, when the friends tell their children "what our fathers knew," the emphasis on the father as giver of knowledge hints that, just as the friends have given in to capitalism, they have turned back to patriarchy (l. 12). In short, all of "the old revolts are / shaken into rows, laughable, curious, depleted" (ll. 13-14).

Significantly, the poem also reveals that the so-called order of the status quo results in interpersonal alienation. In the title, the word *wars* associates the status quo with violence and, specifically, the destruction of interpersonal bonds. The remainder of the poem prominently displays this loss of contact—especially touch—between individuals. Moure expresses the alienation between the friends and other people with a physical separation: "Now it is our own backs / turning from the young" (ll. 27-28). A sensory gap divides even the friends from one another, for Paul, Randy, John, and the speaker also feel the reifying effects of the status quo tearing them apart. As they "essay to be ordinary," their physical and metaphorical contact fails:

"The old touch made strange" (ll. 10, 23). Also, along with his "neat hair," Paul adopts an attitude of "far-off / anger," with the description *far-off* indicating a rupture between him and the speaker, at whom he "stares" without seeing (ll. 4, 3-4). This poem, consequently, reveals the ways in which social and political norms produce interpersonal alienation, leaving "Our lives diminished, *real* we say" (l. 16).

Much of *The Whisky Vigil* thematizes a troubled conjugal relationship, and the closing poem, "Divorce from You," further evidences the disintegration and ossification of interpersonal connections. Distance features strongly in the poem, with not one but both characters "going off" in separate directions (*Whisky* 28, l. 16). The poem ends with the speaker glimpsing her spouse from a distance—"Far off a tiny light glows in a Legion bar" (l. 25)—where the "smokeful air" impedes visual contact and the spouse sits "cut off from all gesture," all physical contact (l. 28). To reinforce the distance between the speaker's viewpoint and the bar, Moure inserts a blank space in the line. "Divorce from You," however, does not limit its analysis of alienation to the sexual or marital relationship. Beyond the common conjugal sense of the term, *divorce* refers to the division of any people or things that are or ought to be joined. Importantly, then, the poem describes not only the disintegration of a marriage but also the failure of other relationships. The poem, although it narrates the separation of "you from me," does not begin with the marital relationship (l. 11). The first stanza, rather, shows unnamed "People" (l. 4) standing

> in doorways,
> their fists are bottles, drugged
> with no more gestures.
> Are these your friends? (ll. 5-8)

The unanswered question—"Are these your friends?—dangles at the end of the stanza, implying uncertainty about the identity and the value of the so-called friends. No mutual recognition occurs. Additionally, Moure positions the visitors at the doorway, on the threshold of connection, but she never shows the people crossing

over to the speaker. Gesture, communicative movement or touch, also fails here, for the visitors have "no more gestures" (l. 7). Physical and social disconnection abound in "Divorce from You," revealing the pervasiveness of interpersonal alienation.

In *Wanted Alive*, Moure also places on view interpersonal estrangement, especially the failure of sensory contact. Moure thematizes in these poems "the demons of alcoholism, the mother sacrificed to family, [and] suburban and urban poverty and despair," as Hilda Kirkwood observes (83). Moure's attention to class—and to the connections between class and gender—builds upon the critique of alienation launched in *Empire, York Street* and *The Whisky Vigil* to form a highly political volume. In the poem "If You Find It," the subject's alienation from her own skin demonstrates not only personal but also interpersonal alienation. In this poem, Moure keenly describes the subject's relationship with own her skin as, simultaneously, a relationship between an individual and a community. She represents the skin as a "hallway," a place where rooms and pathways join, and she places this hallway in the context of a neighbourhood, a larger network of connections between individuals (*Wanted* 19, l. 9). The skin then, offers the possibility of dynamic contact between people. Importantly, Moure encourages her reader to confuse tenor and vehicle in this figure of speech: does the internal relationship of self and skin resemble the external relationship of self and other? Or does the external relationship resemble the internal one? In short, Moure invites her reader to see personal and interpersonal existence as metaphors for each other and, thus, deeply entwined.

In both cases, however, "If You Find It" undermines the occurrence of dynamic relationality. Moure concludes her comparison of the skin to a hallway by insisting that no congregation ever gathers, so no connection happens: "Your skin is the hallway in which / no service is ever held" (ll. 9-10). Although the skin becomes a neighbourhood—and the neighbourhood a skin—Moure shows these spaces vacant of people and of connections, for "no one comes to fix / your lawn on

Tuesday" (ll. 16-17). Similarly, "even the hallelujahs" move away, in a phrase that mournfully expresses the loss of community and, with it, the loss of celebration (l. 14). Moure also hints at a rupture within the community by emphasizing the discomfort of the skin's "citizens" in public space: they "twitch & fidget & wait outside for the pub" as if they do not belong (ll. 22, 24). Even the allusion to Tipperary probably refers to the 1912 song "It's a Long Way to Tipperary" by Jack Judge and Harry J. Williams and, thus, tells of the physical separation of an Irishman from his beloved. In this way, "If You Find It" presents the body and the neighbourhood as potential sites of contact but, in fact, sites of separation for individuals and communities.

Likewise, "Kisses Not Whisky," which opens with imagery of personal alienation—the Molotov "ignited and thrown" in the speaker's body—concludes with an exploration of interpersonal alienation (*Wanted* 26, l. 10). Throughout the poem, the speaker longs for "love of the world" and "kisses, not whisky," indicating a desire for physical contact with others (ll. 4, 12). The beginning of the fourth stanza seems to fulfill that longing, as "You lean your head on me," but this touch remains anxious and tentative (l. 13). Fear of contact becomes apparent when the speaker compares the dusk to "a dead woman come home, afraid to enter," for a barrier separates outside from inside and an individual from her family (l. 17). Throughout the poem, fear increasingly inhibits touch by spatially dividing and immobilizing the characters. While the lover touches the speaker for a moment in stanza four, a sticky door separates the speaker from "a woman tossed in damp bedsheets" in stanza six (l. 28). Each character remains "unable to reach" the other (l. 29). Whereas stanza four features a second-person addressee, stanza six focuses on an unnamed third-person character, giving neither an introduction to the new character nor an explanation of the old character's disappearance. This shift leaves the reader to wonder if the two stanzas, in fact, refer to the same person. This ambiguity hints that

the speaker fails not only to touch but also to recognize her lover by the end of the poem.

The final statement, because it involves fear—especially a fear of crossing the threshold—reveals that the speaker herself has become the dead woman afraid to make contact, "Too frightened to open" (l. 30). Because stanza six describes the door between the two characters, the reader expects *open* to take a direct object—most obviously, the door—but Moure chooses to leave the phrase unfinished. Two plausible reasons for omitting the direct object come to mind. First, by using *open* intransitively, Moure hints that the implied direct object—the thing the speaker at once longs and fears to open to the woman—is not simply the door but, rather, the speaker's self, her perspective and experience. This reading emphasizes psycho-emotional estrangement. Second, one can interpret the implied direct object as something the speaker cannot quite voice under the Republic. In particular, *open*—especially in the context of the "woman tossed in damp bedsheets"—has sexual connotations. By connecting her to the dead woman, the poem positions the speaker as a woman but shows her desiring another woman. The final phrase, then, could refer to an opening of the body to homosexual intercourse, a possibility repressed by heteronormative society. In this way, Moure portrays a sexual alienation that challenges both heterosexism and interpersonal alienation. Also, the war metaphor that pervades the early stanzas of the poem reappears in the last stanza, for Moure associates the physical gap between speaker and woman with "shock-troops" in the body (l. 25). Here, the shock troops signify the violent rupture between self and other, the breakdown of dynamic relationality. In this poem, accordingly, interpersonal touch occurs, but it remains tentative and temporary in the face of divisions created by fear and violence.

In "Lenore," Moure further investigates the loss of interpersonal contact in a lower-class woman's life, both inside and outside of the workplace. Moure shows the ways in which money—a thing, an abstract representation of value—takes on

relational qualities while humans become separated from one another. From the outset of the poem, Moure depicts money as an active subject hurting and then "walking away from" Lenore (*Wanted* 28-29, l. 3). This economic oppression affects Lenore's social relationships, for "the woman hurt all her life / by money" finds herself isolated and lonely (ll. 1-2). The main character's name evokes "the lost Lenore" in Edgar Allan Poe's "The Raven," where the speaker mourns the death of his beloved (Poe l. 10). In Poe's poem, the speaker becomes estranged not only from his beloved but also from himself, namely, from "that shadow that lies floating on the floor" (Poe l. 107). Thus, the reference to "The Raven" foreshadows Lenore's alienation both from herself and from others. Interpersonal estrangement particularly appears when Lenore comments "Rose has money, Bob has money, this & that one / fade into the haze of happy strangers, / alive with money," for the haze prevents Lenore from seeing and relating to the people around her, who become increasingly indistinct: the description shifts from named characters to people identified only by demonstrative pronouns; next, it shifts to strangers (*Wanted* 28-29, ll. 14-16). Later in the poem, Moure also reveals that Lenore experiences alienation in her sexual relationships. Although the poem refers to "the men she held / to relieve the quiet urge of her body," Lenore's "loneliness" remains "unconquered" (ll. 30-31, 29, 30). The absence of "the love she'd need" and "the breakdown of caring" also feature strongly in the poem, showing the destruction of psycho-emotional contact (ll. 32, 35). Interestingly, the penultimate line includes the first reference to a community of "us" that includes Lenore, the writer, and the reader, but this community consists of people who are "lost," geographically and metaphorically separated from others (l. 37). This statement, appropriately phrased in a sentence fragment, presents Lenore's interpersonal alienation as a general condition experienced as well by reader and writer.

"Tricks With Poinsettias" offers a memorable image of interpersonal alienation in a romantic relationship between the speaker and a second-person

addressee. As the poem progresses, the reader learns that a physical gap separates the two characters, for Moure mentions in multiple places that the speaker stands "in the kitchen" (*Wanted* 74, l. 18) while the addressee stays in "the next room" (ll. 10, 24). Separated by the intervening space and by walls, the two characters do not touch or see one another, coming into contact only through the poinsettias "you hurled from the next room / toward me" (ll. 10-11). Interestingly, the lover chooses for a projectile a flower that crumbles "into red sepals in my arms" and "splatter[s] wet against the cupboard doors," so the physical destruction of the living plant mirrors the breakdown of the relationship (l. 13, 16). The speaker, throughout the poem, demonstrates a desire to establish intimate contact with the lover or, indirectly, with the thrown poinsettias. Even this minimal effort at relationship, however, fails. The speaker attempts "to kiss" the poinsettias, but the word "struggled," with its connotations of difficulty and, even, violence, contradicts this act (l. 12). Describing herself as "too clumsy / for your tricks with poinsettias," where *clumsy* hints at awkward movement or stiffness, the speaker notes her own inability to catch the poinsettias and to approach the lover (ll. 14-15). Indeed, only destructive contact remains: in the phrase "huge poinsettias, / the ones you hurled," *hurl* denotes forceful or violent movement, and Moure later describes the poinsettias as "tough," that is, hard, stiff, or violent (l. 26). Likewise, the speaker mentions her "sore fingers" (l. 17). Consequently, "Tricks With Poinsettias" places on view a loss of contact—especially touch—that signifies interpersonal alienation.

"Radiare," like many of the poems in *Wanted Alive*, explicitly investigates the ways in which the economics and politics of capitalism destroy dynamic interpersonal relationships. An image of an outstretched hand opens the poem, suggesting a desire to make contact between self and other, but the blast that leaves the wall "crumbled" also breaks down interpersonal relationships (*Wanted* 91-92, l. 4). The words "Stunned & unable" follow the phrase "Your hand caught as if / reaching for someone," so *caught*, *stunned*, and *unable* all indicate that the blast has left

the hand immobile, unable to touch (ll. 5, 3-4). Moreover, *as if* expresses a conditional, contingent state of affairs, questioning the possibility of reaching out to someone in the first place. Moure juxtaposes this powerful image of physical disconnection between people—one that evokes Hiroshima's shadows on stone left by vaporized humans—with the journalistic perception of this event as something shared, cooperative: "*The common field of human endeavour*, they say" (l. 13). Moure associates this endeavour with "Its coloured radiative cloud," however, a phrase that immediately evokes a mushroom cloud, indexing the destruction caused by nuclear weapons at Hiroshima and Nagasaki (l. 14). The bombings of August 1945 produced physical destruction and death for individuals, but they also perpetuated social estrangement: that is, they developed out of the international conflict of the Second World War, and they produced further divisions between people, fragmenting and destroying families and cities. Accordingly, the phrase "*common field of human endeavour*" becomes disturbingly ironic, serving only to emphasize interpersonal alienation.

In addition, the poem's verbs reveal violence: "Radiare," which has very little passive voice, foregrounds active verbs, particularly verbs with negative connotations. For instance, the verb *push* has an especially prominent role, appearing three times in this brief poem. Significantly, while pushing implies contact, it denotes the application of force to shift another body away; it, thus, indicates a rejection of relationship and proximity in favour of estrangement and distance. Here, as in the image of the outstretched hand, interpersonal contact fails. Tellingly, Moure returns to the image of the hand reaching out without touching in the final lines of the poem when she mentions "the hand searching for you / before the Cities blew" (ll. 36-37). This rhyme—the only full terminal rhyme in the poem and one of only a few in Moure's early poetry—links one person's experience of separation from others to a larger condition of social fragmentation. Thus, in this poem, Moure emphasizes the rupturing of self from others at individual, municipal, and, ultimately, global levels.

In "Radiare," and, indeed, in *Wanted Alive*, nuclear war becomes one symptom of the global spread of interpersonal alienation.

Moure's next collection, *Domestic Fuel*, continues the poet's analysis of interpersonal alienation in all aspects of life. As its title suggests, *Domestic Fuel* takes up the theme of domestic violence, a thread running through many of the poems in *The Whisky Vigil* and some of the poems in *Wanted Alive*. Here, the tensions between couples in "Shock Troop" and "Fusillade" escalate into divorce in "Amore" and "Thaw" and domestic violence in "Groceries." These unhappy marriages and divorces certainly manifest the oppression of women under patriarchy, evincing Moure's concern about what David Manicom calls "the continuing pervasive submersion of women in the male-dominated structures of society" (184). However, Moure testifies that she sees the structures of the Republic "failing every day! Not just for women, but for everybody" (Mouré, "In Conversation" 17). "Public Health," for example, insists that the inequities of the current social system oppress both the woman with a broken leg and the desperately poor drunk calling out "*I'm gonna die*" (*Domestic* 29). In both cases, "the cold / daydream" of justice "shuts its mouth, again," unable to make itself heard (*Domestic* 29). In short, Moure "extends her understanding of injustice into more than one category. Social class figures as prominently as gender in these poems" (Cooley 67). Indeed, the speaker of one poem declares outright that she is "sick of putting your sperm in me like money!," revealing the connection of Moure's feminist and Marxist projects (*Domestic* 34). This volume combines explicitly political themes such as the military, public health, labour, and international relations with investigations of gender, the home, and everyday life. *Domestic Fuel* provides a suitable title for these related inquiries because *domestic* can refer not only to the home but also to the internal social and economic state of a nation. In all of these areas, *Domestic Fuel* aptly demonstrates the ways in which the Republic hides or breaks down interpersonal relationships.

Throughout *Domestic Fuel*, Moure employs imagery of disconnection and violence to reveal the physical and psycho-emotional alienation of human relationships. A quick survey of the poems highlights images of war and violence. In the first section alone, "Shock Troop," "Five Miles From Detonation," and "Fusillade" feature military and political themes, overtly indicating interpersonal alienation. "Shock Troop," which uses a military metaphor to signify estrangement between spouses, alludes to Moure's earlier "Kisses Not Whisky," which uses "shock-troops" to represent the physical division and, indeed, conflict between two characters (*Wanted* 26, l. 25). In the later poem, because these words evoke violence, especially military conflict, "Shock troop," "Knife," and "Bayonet" place on view interpersonal alienation (*Domestic* 17, ll. 1, 3, 4). Also, the poem describes the man's relationship to the woman in economic, rather than spousal, terms: the man's intends to "get up & pay for the coffee" (l. 7). The tip, historically given to an inferior such as a servant, also presupposes an economic relationship that disregards the woman's human qualities. In this poem, military conflict and economic detachment replace authentic psycho-emotional and sexual relationship. Additionally, the phrase "Coat a verb" adumbrates the physical separation of the two characters: although, at first glance, the reference to *coat* seems not to fit with the verbs that accompany it—*knife* and *bayonet—coat* denotes a protective layer or covering, so it forms a barrier between the two characters, cutting off the possibility of sensory contact (l. 5). Together, these images of disconnection and violence reveal interpersonal alienation even in the intimacy of marriage.

"Fusillade" lays out a similar scenario, displaying the estrangement of self from other in romantic relationships. Here, although she uses ample tactile imagery, Moure emphasizes not connection but disconnection. The speaker describes how she "wore your heart in my chest / stubbornly," using an image of touch to symbolize psycho-emotional connection (*Domestic* 26, ll. 9-10). However, this image of interpersonal contact proves deceptive: it has its foundation in a "ruse" that

"pretend[s] the heart / a palpable organ" (ll. 4-5). As the speaker discovers, the lover's heart is *not* palpable, not available for tactile—and, by extension, psycho-emotional—contact even though she carries it inside her chest. Rather, while wearing the lover's heart, the speaker has a wound that pours her "own blood thru it into the air," so the heart not only denies contact but also destroys the speaker's body (l. 11). Similarly, by exclaiming that the heart is "not a grenade!," the speaker makes an implicit comparison between the two objects, admitting that the lover's heart has been used or perceived as a fragmentation bomb (l. 24). In response, the speaker becomes "delicate, touchy" (l. 12). *Delicate* characterizes the speaker as vulnerable and easily damaged, while *touchy* associates itself aurally with the idea of touch but actually expresses the opposite: the speaker cannot bear to be touched. By the end of the poem, the speaker re-establishes firm boundaries between self and other, insisting, "The heart is yours, I'll shovel it out of me. / I'd rather depend on my own" (ll. 16-17). The title's allusion to a fusillade, a number of shots discharged simultaneously or in close succession, further positions the two characters on opposite sides of hostile lines. The poem, as it proceeds, formally mimics these hostilities, becoming increasingly filled with brief, exclamatory end-stopped lines. In sum, "Fusillade" "uses the harsh imagery of the modern world to render the violence in personal relationships," emphasizing not touch but withdrawal into war zones (Parkin 264).

The two middle sections of *Domestic Fuel* offer a slight reprieve from the violence and disconnection thematized in the first section, yet even here Moure reveals the difficulty of establishing physical or psycho-emotional contact between individuals under the social and economic status quo. The poem "Secret Kisses," like many others in the sections "Speaking In Tongues" and "Thaw," offers the possibility of dynamic connection while admitting the obstacles set up by the Republic. This poem nicely represents the emerging positive strand in Moure's work, where people reach across divisions toward one another. The references to intimate touch—kisses—in the title and first line hold out the possibility of authentic and

dynamic relationality, particularly in a homosexual relationship, but this contact remains clandestine and forbidden by social norms: the "co-workers watching" and the plain, orderly "brown corridors" of the world (*Domestic* 43, ll. 21, 15). According to Moure, the rigidly structured definitions of "natural" and "crooked" supported by the Republic make homosexual love impossible "in real places" (ll. 25, 26, 2). Homosexual love, therefore, remains marred by alienation. Moure associates homosexual love with "the rough nerve of alcohol" and "the rough sniper of clothing, caught in the wall's shadow" (ll. 3, 4). Here, the adjective *rough* indicates that people can attain the conditions for homosexual love only through harsh or violent effort. Also, clothing separates the two characters in the simple sense of forming a barrier to touch; moreover, with the comparison of clothing to a "rough sniper," this phrase hints at hostility. Consequently, while the poem does offer a form of connection between people, it, too, admits the power of societal conditions to destroy interpersonal relationships, turning them into violent conflicts.

The final section of the volume, entitled "Domestic Fuel," has several poems with positive implications but also features a return to ominous titles such as "Toxicity," "Domestic Fuel," and "Blindness," thus reinforcing the loss of interpersonal contact that prevails in the volume. In particular, the poem that gives its name to the section and to the volume thematizes the "argument" between lovers over "Who did what, / who was responsible, exactly" (*Domestic* 88, ll. 1, 10-11). As the speaker recounts the argument, she describes herself and her lover as "angry" and "silent" and observes that "We are all bleak, bleak beings" (ll. 16, 20, 5). Despite this dismal estrangement, when the lover lights himself on fire, the speaker reports that "I jumped on you, put it out with embraces, / pushed you into the garden" (ll. 18-19). Significantly, this passage presents touch—contact—as life-saving; nevertheless, the characters cannot sustain this vital connection, and the encounter ends in one character pushing the other away, restablishing the division between the two figures. In "Domestic Fuel," this rupture goes beyond the romantic or conjugal

relationship, indicating a broader condition of social estrangement evidenced in the lovers' relationship with their neighbour. Front lawns, though sometimes marked with a fence or hedge, often lie open, immediately adjoining the lawns of neighbouring yards. They, thus, can mark a place of contact, where the precise line between properties blurs and where relationships become evident.

However, in this poem, "the neighbour mows a safety strip across the lawn" in an attempt to draw an artificial boundary; this action emphasizes interpersonal separation rather than connection (l. 8). In the tradition of capitalism, the neighbour understands the "individual as self contained [*sic*]" and distinct and, thus, attempts to detach himself from contact with the lovers (Swail 108). In this final section of the volume, then, the conflicts and divisions in romantic relationships exemplify the pervasive loss of physical and psycho-emotional contact between individuals in the Republic. Throughout *Domestic Fuel*, Moure draws her readers' attention to instances of interpersonal separation and violence in a variety of overlapping fields, from the workplace to the home; considered in all of these forms, "This violence [. . .] is indicative of a greater malaise" (Donovan, Rev. of *Domestic* 97). Moure identifies the destructive forces—what Andrew Vaisius calls the "flames"—"already present in contemporary life. She is defining the fuel" (117). In her depiction of the structures that isolate and ossify human relationships, Moure advances a critique of and protest against "the depersonalizing forces in our culture" (Donovan, Rev. of *Domestic* 97).

"the stopped air": Linguistic Alienation

As many critics have noted, Moure "champions what TESSERA has helped to popularize as 'language-centred writing,' which takes its starting point as the interrogation of language and seeks, as Marlatt puts it, to generate 'thought through new uses of language'" (Dopp 262-263); this theme gains additional force in Moure's later publications, beginning with *Domestic Fuel* (1985) and *Furious* (1988), but even in her earliest poetic and extra-poetic writings, Moure emphasizes language and

communication. Words and alphabets feature even in *Empire, York Street* in poems like "abrupt messages," "negotiation of silence," and "coda for an ancient alphabet." This emphasis on language continues throughout *The Whisky Vigil*, *Wanted Alive*, and *Domestic Fuel*, while other signifying systems—including semaphore in "It Was Always a Country" (*Whisky*) and subliminal messages in "Subliminal Code" (*Domestic*)—also appear occasionally. In short, communication constitutes one of Moure's primary themes right from her first collection. Throughout that lengthy discussion, Moure consistently ties language to relationships between people, viewing the voice, for instance, "not just as articulation of a 'self' but as link with those others who inhabit us and whom we inhabit" ("A Chance" 78). That is, communication participates in the ongoing relationships between individuals; linguistic contact manifests and enables interpersonal connection.

For Moure, language can—at best—underscore the vital connections between individuals, but the Republic often inhibits effective communication, leaving humans "Separate. Individual, again!" (Mouré, "My Existence" 208). Under the social and economic structures of capitalism, Moure believes, language becomes increasingly commodified and fragmented: "the surface of our words has been damaged, by commerce, by exchange," resulting in "the languages of commerce and politics" that no longer attest to the dynamic relationality of humans ("Examining" 10). Accordingly, Moure distinguishes between "True language," which "speaks to human beings of shared life," and the "language of commodities," which, in contrast, "separates human beings from themselves" (Untitled Statement 80). Language, under the Republic, becomes an "accessible commodity," as Dickson explains, "a thematic 'product' for consumption" that promotes the economic and social conditions of the Republic at the expense of human relationships ("'Signals'" 17). This language of commodities "is silent on paid maternity leave, equal pay and opportunity for advancement, support for parenting; it talks of human rights but is willing to permit nuclear arms and their use 'defensively'" (Mouré, Untitled Statement 80). It

reinforces inequalities and permits violence, separating people from one another. This ossification and disintegration of linguistic contact ultimately results in silence. "If we are not perceiving the audible, the sound of the Dneiper, the sound of the womb," Moure remarks, "we are anæsthetized; we become citizens of the Republic" (*My Beloved* 29). Here, the failure of hearing becomes political; it marks disconnection from the mother, figured as the womb, and, by extension, from other people. Moure, throughout her poetry, demonstrates linguistic alienation through "silencing, preventing people from using language," which "is a common form of violent oppression" (Press 129). Consequently, for Moure, the Republic replaces a language of relationships with a language of things or, simply, with silence.

Recently, Marxist theorists have come to similar conclusions in their discussion of alienation in late capitalism, so Moure's work benefits from consideration alongside texts such as Agamben's *The Coming Community* (1993). In a discussion of Debord, Agamben argues that the spectacle, "the pure form of separation" and ultimate form of alienation, is "the alienation of language itself, of the very linguistic and communicative nature of humans" (Agamben 79, 80). In a remark that brings to mind Moure's own perspective, Agamben writes, "What hampers communication is communicability itself; humans are separated by what unites them" (82). Beneath the representations and images that mark the surface of late capitalism, true "language (the linguistic nature of humans) remains once again hidden and separated" (Agamben 82). Moure writes in this vein, placing on view the ways in which the "language of commodities" prevents true communication and, thus, obscures or destroys the "shared life" of humans (Untitled Statement 80). Throughout her poetry, Moure "writes to expose the failure of signification," which "is precisely the failure of language to narrate the stories, the connections, the relations between parts of speech, parts of bodies, parts of society. She exposes systems of language, specifically systems of grammar, as taxonomies: the means of dividing and classifying, not the means of bridging and connecting" (H. Fitzgerald

67). Moure's early poems, especially, use the brokenness and ossification of conventional language to place on view interpersonal alienation.

In *Empire, York Street* Moure observes that current social and economic norms rigidly separate humans from one another, leaving them in "the solitary confinement of syntax" ("I'll Start" 14). In particular, "sung poem," which explores the relationship between the speaker's mouth and a man's body, displays linguistic alienation. The mouth, the primary organ of language production, features heavily in this poem, yet it undermines not only physical but also linguistic contact between the two bodies. The "mouth that opens to enclose / cock" bruises the penis, replacing sexual intimacy with violence, and this experience leads directly into the mouth's desire to "be / the one who leaves," breaking off the relationship entirely (*Empire* 14, ll. 14-15, 17-18). Moure mirrors this physical gap at the linguistic level, emphasizing from the outset that the mouth "cannot even sing" (l. 3). The strong lyricism of the poem—ironically entitled "sung poem"—emerges in the prevailing iambic rhythm, the occasional internal rhymes, and the repetition of the invocation *O*. However, the mouth prefers "anger, any excuse for bizarre & stubborn / silence" (ll. 12-13). In this respect, Glickman rightly observes that the characters of *Empire, York Street* are "deprived of speech by the world in which they live" (n. pag.). Linguistic contact, like physical contact, fails in this poem, manifesting interpersonal alienation.

Similarly, "margins," with its representation of physical and psycho-emotional disconnection, also describes the disintegration of communication between individuals. In this poem, speech becomes ineffective or, indeed, deceitful. Moure describes the lover's "mouth wasted / w/ syllables" (*Empire* 17, ll. 14-15). *Wasted*, here, applies to both nouns, describing the mouth as useless or devastated and revealing that the lover's syllables go unheard by the speaker. Later in the poem, Moure reinforces this image of failed communication when the speaker, in turn, attempts to make linguistic contact with the lover. The speaker forms "words," but they occur only in the "impossible / margin between us"; they never move across the

division—itself emphasized by the line break—to reach the lover on the other side (ll. 22-23). The second stanza continues the theme of ineffective communication, for it features the speaker "mumbling / all the unnecessary / prerequisites to love" (ll. 29-31). Here, because *mumble* denotes unclear communication, Moure represents the language of the status quo as a hindrance to love, to interpersonal connection. Furthermore, at the end of the poem, the characters turn away from one another as they speak, physically inhibiting the passage of words between them: the lover talks to "the floor," while the speaker mutters "lies to the walls" (ll. 26, 32). These futile attempts to speak culminate in the speaker's admission that she "lies," purposefully preventing communication. In sum, untruths and ineffective words fill the margins, erecting a linguistic as well as a physical barrier between speaker and lover.

The poem "responsibility for shoes" also describes how, under the Republic, linguistic contact disintegrates. In the first stanza, the second-person addressee remains pointedly silent, forestalling genuine dialogue and forcing the speaker, too, into silence: "your silence means it is difficult / to know any word, what can I say then?" (*Empire* 73, ll. 4-5). Notably, Moure surrounds the speaker's assertion with the interrogative adverb *how* and a question, putting the possibility of meaningful speech into doubt. The next image—"too many miles, telephones ringing in empty rooms"—depicts the futility of any attempt at contact, for Moure shows neither caller nor receiver picking up the phone (l. 6). This disturbing estrangement gives the speaker "no chance. / or one chance in two years" to reach out to the friend with words (ll. 7-8). Even during these rare opportunities to communicate, though, the speaker "hold[s] all / the wrong words, & say[s] them twice," while the friend responds "quizzically," with puzzlement (ll. 8-9, 10). The message, in short, fails. In the second stanza, the speaker's shouting, like the ringing phone, receives no answer because it cannot pass through the "stopped air" (l. 19). While the friend eventually hears the yelling speaker, the third stanza returns to the speaker's anxiety over broken communication. Question marks appear with increasing frequency in the last

lines of the poem, producing a tentative tone: the speaker anxiously questions but receives no response. In the end, the phrase "Stopped like a boulder in my heart" recalls the "the boulder, the stopped air," that prevents the speaker's "yelling" from reaching the friend (ll. 32, 19, 18). Thus, the final boulder in the heart adumbrates the cessation of voice (l. 32). The disintegration of communication lies, indeed, at the heart of the alienation between the speaker and addressee in "responsibility for shoes" and throughout *Empire, York Street*.

"Moure's 'dangerous' interrogation of the power politics of language" continues in the chapbook *The Whisky Vigil*, where she carries on, though perhaps less overtly, with the theme of communicative estrangement between people (Denisoff, "Merger" 114). In "Fantastic World's End," broken, ossified communication participates in a loss of interpersonal contact. Here, Moure connects "the force [. . .] / that halts the hand's caress" to "the gravity that nails the tongue shut like a shoe" (*Whisky* 12, ll. 15-16, 14). In the reference to the tongue, Moure suggests not only the flap of material used for fastening a shoe but also the human tongue, which has a major function in speech production. With the anatomical tongue fastened in place, as suggested here, the mouth would produce only inarticulate sounds. The loss of dynamic relationality in this poem, then, includes the loss of communication. Importantly, as interpersonal contact fails, the poetic subject tries to communicate with things rather than people: "Out of bottles you pour

the sad / huzzahs of strangers" (ll. 5-6). *Huzzah* signifies an affirmative exclamation, usually a cheer, but, poured out of a bottle, it comes from strangers and, therefore, fails to produce genuine contact with others. Additionally, the adjective *sad* contradicts the exultation of *huzzah*, suggesting that the sound the drinker hears is not a true huzzah at all. Consequently, through the immobilized tongue and the sad huzzah, "Fantastic World's End" uses communicative failure to indicate interpersonal estrangement.

Wanted Alive, too, addresses the rigid linguistic separation between individuals. For example, in "When He Speaks," the father, whom Moure associates closely with his reifying labour, can speak only "of machine-parts, bolts, the others / no one sees" (*Wanted* 49, ll. 19-20). Although he speaks, the father speaks the language of things rather than human relationships, and when he does mention people—"the others"—he refers to unnamed people that "no one sees." Moure associates this commodified speech with the ossification and fragmentation that mark interpersonal alienation. At the workplace, for example, the sparks that bite into the workers' "ribs / & lungs" inhibit breath and, thus, speech, so, by the end of the poem, the father's capacity for linguistic contact breaks down (ll. 22-23). Moure explicitly compares the broken words to the broken chicken, connecting the startling fragmentation of the bird not only to bodies but also to language: "when the father talks / the words are torn around his head like / the chicken" (ll. 29-31). In "Tricks With Poinsettias," likewise, physical estrangement becomes a linguistic estrangement between individuals. Tellingly, Moure represents the poinsettias as both physical missiles and linguistic acts, so "Catching poinsettias" becomes catching—that is, hearing or apprehending—"your tough messages" (*Wanted* 74, ll. 1, 26). At the linguistic level as well as the physical level, the poinsettias—the messages—break to pieces before the speaker can understand them. Although the speaker claims, "I still hear," she can perceive only the plant-messages that "break as they fly" (ll. 23, 27). On the page, a blank line intervenes between the speaker and the plant-messages, further marking a barrier to communication. Similarly, the adjective *tough* implies not only physical but also linguistic alienation: the messages strive against interpretation and "break" before they reach the auditor (l. 27). Finally, because *trick* means, most fundamentally, a fraudulent or treacherous act, the title phrase, "Tricks With Poinsettias," hints at deceit or falseness. Thus*, tricks* suggests that the plant-messages confound true communication. In "Tricks With Poinsettias," communication fails, leaving individuals separated from one another.

"Asleep Among Us" also emphasizes the failure of linguistic contact under capitalist society. Here, as elsewhere in *Wanted Alive*, Moure attends closely to "suburban and urban poverty and despair" (Kirkwood 83). This poem, in particular, describes a village community becoming a suburb with its "headlights turned" to the city (*Wanted* 57-58, l. 35). As this transition occurs, the community becomes increasingly characterized by static, isolated things rather than dynamic, relational people: the women long for "feasibility studies, refrigerators," without "knowing for whom they planned," without recognizing the people around them (ll. 29, 30). Moure especially conveys this lack of interpersonal contact through the silence that permeates the poem. At the beginning, Moure describes the suburb not in reference to human beings but in reference to "truckloads of refrigerators / that refuse speaking" (ll. 2-3). In this description, Moure draws attention to the replacement of relationships with things and, similarly, to the exchange of communication for silence. Building on this description, Moure portrays the piano playing "soundlessly" behind glass, for the window breaks the sound waves, preventing them from reaching the speaker (l. 6). Here, music—a system that, though not strictly linguistic, communicates thoughts and emotions—gives way to silence, manifesting interpersonal estrangement, the "beat of unseen years between you" (l. 9). *Beat* connotes both disconnection and violence, for it can refer to a physical blow or, in music, to the pulsing sound when two notes of slightly different pitch occur simultaneously. Thus, *beat* indicates the slight, transparent barrier that, nevertheless, severs the speaker from her brother. By the end of the poem, even the soundless piano music ceases entirely, for the narrator observes that "Now the piano has stopped / & become furniture" (ll. 11-12). The mothers in "Asleep Among Us" also demonstrate linguistic estrangement in their conflict and mistrust of each other: they "argued the future, their voices / suspicious" (ll. 27-28). Ultimately, the people in "Asleep Among Us" lack communicative contact and, therefore, become isolated, "never knowing" each other "or who might be / asleep among us" (ll. 30, 31-32).

Domestic Fuel also depicts interpersonal estrangement through the disintegration of linguistic contact. In this collection, "Shock Troop," notably, associates the loss of authentic communication with the destruction of genuine relationships. The man and woman in this poem demonstrate not only physical and psycho-emotional alienation but also linguistic alienation. In this poem, the man struggles to "make a sentence," manifesting the difficulty of speaking in a society where violence—"shock troops blowing the door in"—rather than connection becomes the norm (*Domestic* 17, ll. 8, 12). The man's sentence—"*She knife, she coat, absolute she bayonet*"—marks the failure of communication through its misconjugation of verbs and its third-person perspective (l. 9). That is, *knife*, *coat*, and *bayonet* all serve as both nouns and verbs, but, in this sentence, they do not make sense in either role: by position, they function as verbs, but they resemble nouns because the man does not conjugate them correctly. The man also uses the misconjugated verbs intransitively, so they do not connect the woman, the subject of the sentence, with anything. She remains isolated. Furthermore, the man maintains a detached, third-person perspective, as if to deny his involvement and relationship with the woman: thus, the man addresses the woman as *she* rather than *you*, presenting her as someone unrelated to him. Rather than facilitating contact between the spouses, the sentence stays "incomprehensible"; it impedes rather than enables communication and, thus, reveals interpersonal alienation (l. 11).

"Secret Kisses" also features Moure's concern with the rupture of communication, though it gestures, at least, toward the possibility of a more dynamic, relational kind of language. *Domestic Fuel* offers at times a more optimistic picture of interpersonal relationships than the earlier volumes, and, although it insists on the difficulty of making physical, psycho-emotional, and linguistic connections between people, it attempts to establish contact, nonetheless. "Secret Kisses" has a highly lyrical style, especially at the end of the first stanza, where the speaker uses the vocative case in "Oh ache," "Oh alphabet," and "Oh agony" (*Domestic* 43, ll. 9, 10,

11). This eloquent, passionate use of language aligns with the speaker's declaration that the alphabet's "secret nest is harboured in my tongue," a statement that proclaims the possibility of true communication (l. 10). The anaphora, both here and in the repetition of "I want" at the end of the poem, likewise expresses an insistent desire for physical and linguistic connection (ll. 22-24). However, the speaker surrounds her claim to language with qualifications: *secret* and *harboured* indicate that connective language remains a fugitive, forbidden and excluded by the current social and economic structure. Consequently, although "Secret Kisses" opens space for the speaker to reclaim language as an instrument of connection, the poem admits that the Republic works to prevent what Moure terms "True language" from establishing and upholding "shared life" (Mouré, Untitled Statement 80).

Throughout these early volumes, Moure uses the disintegration of physical, psycho-emotional, and linguistic contact to display interpersonal alienation. For Moure, as for the Marxist tradition, the capitalist "social order, or rather disorder," destroys dynamic relationality between individuals just as it tears down the ongoing connections within the individual (Engels, "Outlines" 224). Because these structures break down human relationality, they "perpetuate stasis, perpetuate racism, sexism, homophobia" (Mouré, "Changes" 44). They "reproduce oppression," obscuring the possibility of change (*My Beloved* 33). Indeed, poems such as "Proceedings of the Wars," "When He Speaks," "Lenore," and "Divorce From You" testify that the Republic leaves individuals and communities broken and, even worse, numbs their hopes for a better future. "Proceedings of the Wars," for example, shows the gradual anaesthetization of the speaker and her friends. Here, the speaker reflects on "[t]he generation we were, wanting to change all this, / wanting to end:" (*Whisky* 24-25, ll. 25-26). This statement professes hope and desire for change, and even the reference to an end bespeaks possibility: the "end" indicates the termination of present norms,

while the colon hints at something yet to come. The yearning of these young people, however, fades into complacency, as they "essay to be ordinary" (l. 10).

Likewise, the image of the broken chicken that pervades "When He Speaks" suggests the loss of possibility. Whereas bird flight usually signifies freedom and the potential of escape, here, the bird swings in the air by a string, performing an unsettling mockery of flight. Possibility disappears as the chicken breaks "from / its wings" and neck (*Wanted* 49, ll. 17-18). Like the chicken, the family members lack wings to fly. Although they turn their heads upward to the hopeful image of the sun "spinning in the tree like a wing," they stand with "their eyes shut to it," unable to see the possibility of change that it suggests (ll. 1, 3). In "Lenore," too, the woman's social and political conditions leave her broken with no possibility of a cure, for the poem shows "Lenore with no money, the future eaten out of her / & the past aching" (*Wanted* 28-29, ll. 22-23). "Divorce from You" also insists that "As long as you're drinking, there's no *forever & / ever*, there's not even tomorrow, / & some days there is no afternoon" (*Whisky* 28, ll. 1-3). The happy ending of "*forever & / ever*," in short, becomes impossible for citizens of the Republic. Instead, the status quo leaves them so "empty that no one can live" (l. 20). Frighteningly, Moure observes, "the deadening order of commerce" becomes a norm, remaining largely unnoticed and uncontested ("A Chance" 81). Like the alcohol that results in "no tomorrow," the status quo promotes comfort and alleviates anxiety, encouraging its citizens to "forget, or repress, or define ourselves in terms acceptable to the order" (*Whisky* 28, l. 29; *My Beloved* 26). Ultimately, though, this "tendency to the centre, to stasis or anæsthesia, [. . .] destroys the organism" (*My Beloved* 34).

Moure's poetry, by displaying the ossification and disintegration of interpersonal connections, offers an anti-anaesthetic that, although painful, moves toward authentic relationality, true "connection to the tangible wor(l)d" (H. Fitzgerald 129). As Dickson writes, Moure believes that "[t]he dominant order, be that patriarchy or capitalism or heterosexism [. . .] is by no means inevitable. It is a

trajectory that can be changed if its inertia, its appeal to 'truth' and 'common sense,' can be overcome" ("Sisyphus" 65). In this effort "to decentre the 'thing', unmask the relation" (Mouré, *Furious* 98), Moure offers what Dickson terms a "poetics of discomfort" that rejects "conventional notions of individuality, replacing them with a reformulated model of community" (Dickson, "'Signals'" 19). "Secret Kisses" offers one expression of this intense desire for interpersonal contact in the words "I want to pull your head close with my fingers, / I want to be clumsy, / I want my lips to feel kissed by you" (*Domestic* 43, ll. 22-24). The insistent, anaphoral "I want" manifests the desire for a better future. Though she does not assure her reader of "happiness in some apocalyptic hereafter," Moure's poetic practice demonstrates "the desire for solutions" (Glickman n. pag.). Ultimately, she invites her readers to share this desire, to reach toward "the relationality of it all" (Mouré, "A Chance" 78).

Conclusion

Speaking the Embrace

> Some say that the goal of art is to resist tyranny. Some say, as Victor Shklovsky did, that the purpose of art is to destroy pessimism.
>
> I say it's both. – Erín Moure, *My Beloved Wager*, 234.

Moure's early poetry—from *Empire, York Street* to *Domestic Fuel*—consistently displays human alienation, mourning the rigid separation of humans from themselves and from others. Over and over, Moure's poems demonstrate that this estrangement ultimately yields violence and death, foreclosing on possibility. As evidenced by the epigraph for this conclusion, however, Moure aligns herself solidly with life, freedom, and hope. Although her poetry often reveals the "painful things about ourselves personally, about the way we relate to other people," Moure insistently calls herself "an optimist," explaining that "by optimism I mean I'm on the side of life" ("Changes" 41). Moure's poetry, indeed, underscores personal and interpersonal alienation, but it makes these observations precisely in protest against the numbing status quo; to use Butling's words, Moure practises a "*re* poetics" that attempts to *re*write, *re*think, and, ultimately, *re*vitalize society (Butling 21). Increasingly, then, Moure's poetry attempts to draw attention to human relationality, emphasizing the porous surfaces—the literal and figurative membranes—that enable connections both within the self and between the self and the other: she rethinks subjectivity as not a boundary but an "approach" (*My Beloved* 180). In this thesis, I have sought to provide a foundation for understanding alienation in Moure's work; thus, I have focused until now on Moure's early texts. This conclusion, though, will begin to trace the ways in which these themes continue, shift, and expand in Moure's recent work. To this end, I will provide brief examples from the collection *Search Procedures* (1996)

and from the recent collaborative work *Expeditions of a Chimæra* (2009; with Avasilichioaei) that, first, portray personal or interpersonal alienation and, second, offer physical, psycho-emotional, and linguistic contact as a means to "break those boundaries of exclusivity" (Mouré, "Examining" 10).

In the publications following *Domestic Fuel*, Moure continues to reveal personal and interpersonal alienation. Her early works, as I have discussed, associate alienation with the economic and social oppression of the status quo, particularly the ossifying and fragmenting effects of the capitalist commodity-structure. In *Search Procedures*, published roughly a decade after *Domestic Fuel*, Moure draws attention to the ways in which the Republic destroys the dynamic and relational qualities of human beings and, instead, presents people as static and separate. Tellingly, the first section of the poem "Human Bearing" features images of office buildings, which often stand for big business and politics, and Moure associates this setting with personal and interpersonal alienation by referring to "standards we bear like raw suits into the downtown" (*Search* 26). Here, *standard* denotes a prescribed measure and, in reference to the office buildings around, likely the norms imposed by contemporary bureaucratic labour. More, these standards bear connotations of both personal and interpersonal alienation: on a personal level, the standards chafe against human skin, making it "raw" and painful; on an interpersonal level, they evoke the image of military banners, representing violent conflict. In this depiction of labour, Moure's characters become "office wary," on their guard against others (26).

Later, in the fourth section of "Human Bearing," in an image that recalls "If You Find It" or "Tonight My Body" from *Wanted Alive*, Moure depicts a woman severed from her own skin: the speaker describes a dream where "Someone is committing surgery," that is, "Removing her skin or glove [. . .] tho she is not / wearing gloves" (*Search* 28). This image conveys interpersonal as well as personal estrangement, for it reveals violent separation precisely where intimate contact should occur. As Manning points out, skin not only encloses but also exposes the

self, for, as a sensing membrane, skin opens us onto the world (Manning 9); Moure, too, recognizes that "to be a skin is to be touched from outside also" (*O Cidadán* 89). In this poem, however, when the woman loses her skin, she also loses her contact with others: both the woman and the surgeon remain nameless and detached from one another, the first identified only as "she" and the second as "Someone" (*Search* 28). Further, because it likens the operation to a murder, the phrase "committing surgery" reveals the ways in which social "regulation" violently severs humans from one another (28).

The third section of the poem also demonstrates that the Republic enforces boundaries rather than connections within and between individuals, thus perpetuating estrangement. This division has not only physical but also social and political components, for Moure. In the first stanza, the aurally similar words "'apartment'" and "'apartness'" both draw attention to a separation that Moure describes as "slaughter" (*Search* 27). The second stanza expands on this emerging theme of alienation, referencing examples of ethnic oppression and exclusion: "The Tutsis, Hutus, Cadians, the trees at Oka" (27). In this phrase, significantly, Moure combines Canadian and international crises and distant and recent events, insistently drawing connections between the well-known horrors of the Rwandan genocide and the lesser-known atrocities of Canadian history. The Rwandan genocide offers a powerful instance of the slaughter resulting from reified boundaries: the genocide of the 1990s grew out of rigid ethnic identities that insisted upon the stability of the self and the clear division between self and other, specifically "the formalized distinction between three aggregate social categories (called tribes by Europeans)—namely, Twa, Tutsi, and Hutu" ("Rwanda" n. pag.). Likewise, the allusion to the Oka Crisis—a contested land claim that, in 1990, escalated into a highly ethnicized standoff between supporters of the Mohawk and of the town of Oka, Quebec—provides a vivid image of alienation in the physical blockades that defined and separated the two groups.

Finally, the reference to Cadians likely alludes to the Acadian deportation, also known as the *Grand dérangement*, from 1755-1763. The Acadians, though of French heritage, attempted to remain neutral as French and English Canada fought for control of the Nova Scotia peninsula, but both English and French forces insisted on firm allegiances and clear divisions, allowing no middle ground. When English forces secured the area, they expelled thousands of Acadians in an attempt to secure the ethnic and political boundaries of English Canada. In short, each of these allusions manifests the self's attempt to establish rigid boundaries precisely by rejecting the ethnic or political other. In "Human Bearing," these forms of interpersonal alienation culminate with an image of a "woman with the bullet wound in her outer body a round hole (only / a small tear)" (*Search* 27). *Small*, a surprising adjective here, insists that, just as a single bullet can kill a person, everyday forms of "'apartness'" can result in "slaughter" (27). In the final line of the section—"What slaughter are you dreaming of now you"—Moure further challenges her readers to acknowledge that an "unequal status quo [. . .] oppress[es] other human beings, not only in Central America but [also] *here*," not only in past centuries but also *now* (*Search* 27; Untitled Statement 80). This final line suggests that, as participants in existing social and political structures, we all perpetuate slaughter, the rigid divisions within and between individuals that harden into violence.

The final sections of "Human Bearing" further demonstrate the ways in which the status quo attempts to secure the boundaries of the self, a division that has "grave" consequences (*My Beloved* 18). Here, Moure's ongoing protest against the "dream of the individual" perpetuated by "patriarchal capitalism, as consumption," expands to consider global economics and politics ("My Existence" 206). In her early volumes, Moure frequently engages with contemporary economic and political issues, including the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the Russo-Finnish Winter War (*Wanted*), and the Contra Affair in Nicaragua (*Domestic Fuel*), for example. This practice becomes increasingly prominent in Moure's later work, as the poet

progressively expands her analysis of alienation to a global scale. Notably, then, the sixth section of "Human Bearing" begins with the words "Half a country displaced into famine," evoking the devastating consequences of economic marginalization in the world market (*Search* 29). The poem's setting contrasts the "sand" and "orchid[s]" of the tropics—the region where many of the world's poorest nations lie—with the "humidex," a Canadian meterological formula that measures perceived heat and humidity (29). More exactly, Moure uses this contrast to reveal that privileged nations such as Canada continue to constitute themselves over and against underprivileged nations. Indeed, the poem hints that the geographical distribution of poverty rests, at least in part, on the fact that boundaries rather than connections characterize international politics and economics. Accordingly, the speaker observes that "The curve of the earth is between," between wealth and poverty (29). Rather than acknowledging its complicity in global poverty, the West, here, ignores and rejects the other: when the humidex registers moist heat, a feature of the tropics, the speaker thinks of the heat as "an invasion" (29). Ultimately, the poem insists, "The other side of plenty is famine," for individuals remain unable or unwilling to reach across physical, economic, and social boundaries, an alienation that results in "the suppression of the possible" (29, 30).

"The Purposes of Skin" also depicts the divisions within and between individuals, showing the ways in which society's regulations construct humans not as dynamic and connected but as static and distinct, separated by a "presentable line" (*O Cidadán* 112). Moure divides this poem into five sections called purposes, each with an upper and a lower portion separated by a blank space and distinguished by alternate type face. Within these divisions, Moure offers a wide variety of seemingly disparate and, even, irrelevant material. In particular, the upper portion of the page usually describes a romantic relationship between a lover and a "deer," a beloved; this portion also sometimes refers to a blind accordion player (*Search* 82). In the lower portion, recurring narrative threads include a woman who looks through a

bakery window at a wedding cake and a woman who hits her head and drops her groceries on the sidewalk. In sum, the formal sections of the poem appear, at first glance, detached, and the reader finds within them only fragments of narratives with no apparent connection. Thematically, too, Moure emphasizes not relationality but separation. For the woman gazing through the window, for example, the wedding cake—itself viewed from a distance—evokes not contact but separation. While a wedding cake normally celebrates an intimate relationship between two individuals, the poem points out the "boxes of sealed plastic archways" used as cake decorations, where *sealed* implies both that the archways lie in sealed boxes and that the archways have no openings to permit connection—physical or psycho-emotional—between the bride and the groom. Indeed, Moure uses this image explicitly to figure the ossification of emotion, for she follows the reference to the sealed archways with the comment that "Most emotion is similarly portrayed" (86). The wedding cake, then, foregrounds psycho-emotional detachment (86).

Likewise, the speaker describes individuals on the street pulling burdensome "sandbags" behind them (82). Sandbags often build walls, barricades, and defences, so they have the primary functions of dividing space and holding back violence; the sandbags thus indicate not simply separation but also hostility between the townspeople. Also, the romantic narrative of the lover and the deer emphasizes a desire to reach across the boundaries between self and other, but the poem points out the ways in which social and economic norms forestall that contact. The speaker longs "to be a deer, to awaken, & want her to touch me," but moments of fear and violence continue to mar this relationship between self and other (82). For instance, the speaker observes that the deer "struck out & tore the sheet" in fear (84). Because the poem has already established the connection between *deer*, the animal, and *dear*, the beloved, the sheet evokes thoughts of a bed and a sexual relationship. However, the violence implied by the verbs *struck* and *tore* reveals the ongoing division between lover and beloved. By portraying the psycho-emotional and physical alienation of

lovers, "The Purposes of Skin" provides another example to show that "*the banal*," the normative structure of society, continues to divide and ossify humans (82).

More recently, in *Expeditions of a Chimæra*, the poem "How" continues to place on view personal and interpersonal alienation. Overall, this poem attempts to resist estrangement by listing tasks, both positive and negative, that promote movement and connection. The negative tasks—the things that one must *un*do or *not* do—indicate the source of the problem that Moure seeks to resolve, namely, alienation. Here, Moure, along with Avasilichioaei, positions herself against the Republic's habit of dividing humans: "How" associates the accepted norms and meanings of the status quo with boundaries and violence, arguing that society must resist all of these forms of alienation, must "unmean, unwar, unnormalize a border" (*Expeditions* n. pag.). Likewise, in the phrase "How to not stop, not obstacle, not fear the foreign," Moure and Avasilichioaei diagnose the problem as the failure to move and to connect with other humans, especially people from other political and ethnic groups (n. pag.). Additionally, Moure and Avasilichioaei describe the status quo with the words "monopolize, monospeak, monouse, monothink, monobe," where the prefix *mono-* denotes singularity or uniformity, designating political, linguistic, intellectual, and—ultimately—ontological estrangement (n. pag.). This radical alienation—this static and isolated self—becomes the source of the social problems that "How" attempts to overcome.

As in Moure's early work, *Search Procedures* and *Expeditions of a Chimæra* point out that the language of the Republic reinforces notions of the human being as static and isolated. For example, in the third section of "Human Bearing," language becomes a means of violence rather than true communication, for the speaker feels compelled to insist that "A verb is not an instant interrogation," as if to contradict hostile uses of language (*Search* 27). In this poem, Moure associates linguistic alienation with cultural conflict and, even, genocide, suggesting that conventional language separates humans from each other. Later, the speaker rejects "declarative

sentences or their derivations" because, by emphasizing the role of the speaker over the addressee, a language composed of declaratives minimizes reciprocity (29). This language of the Republic culminates in silence, a dead body, "silent with no hum now" (*Search* 27). Likewise, "How" observes that prescriptive uses of language can perpetuate human alienation, becoming "monospeak" that fails to connect humans with one another (n. pag.). As these examples from *Search Procedures* and *Expeditions of a Chimæra* show, Moure continues to depict personal and interpersonal alienation in her more recent work, furthering the critique of the social and economic status quo she articulates in *Empire, York Street*, *The Whisky Vigil*, *Wanted Alive*, and *Domestic Fuel*.

Moure's recent collections "build on earlier concerns regarding language, politics, and oppression," as Denisoff remarks of *Sheepish Beauty, Civilian Love*, yet Moure increasingly responds to these concerns with "hope and faith" in a world beyond alienation and exclusion ("Erin" 230). Glimmers of this hope appear in Moure's early works, where, as Donovan astutely observes, even in the midst of the "gritty, dark, and dangerous" times of *Domestic Fuel* and the "depersonalized world" of *Wanted Alive*, Moure "sees potential in human experience and human aspiration" (Rev. of *Domestic* 99; Rev. of *Wanted* 30, 31). Indeed, especially in her most recent work, Moure displays and mourns the rigid divisions within and between individuals in an effort to imagine how "borders [. . .] might be materialized differently" (Moyes, "Acts" 122). In this alienation, Moure finds "a clue as to what we are missing and how we must go on. Touch, tactility, texture. We must speak the embrace with our hands!" ("I'll Start" 13). Accordingly, Moure rethinks subjectivity, replacing the image of a stable, impermeable line with an image of "porosities or what might be 'penetrations' across a liminal surface. *Senses*" (*O Cidadán* 112). Contact takes the place of estrangement, both personal and interpersonal. First, the alienated self appears throughout Moure's poetry as broken, fixed, and rigid, but touch reveals a self always in dynamic relationship. In Moure's terms, "we are shimmers, coalescences, coalitional, relational," always in process (*My Beloved* 225). "The

transitivity and motility of touch," for Susan Stewart, continually shape and reshape the self mentally and physically, so "[t]o touch is to become aware that I am never yet fully formed" (Stewart 165, Manning 152). Second, as Manning argues, touch undoes the "myth of the secure border" (11). Contact troubles "the strict boundaries between inside and outside," allowing humans to "meet, and match, and recognize each other" (Manning xxii; Mouré, "I'll Start" 14). Touch—literal and figurative contact—gestures toward an alternative form of engagement, in which humans might become fully relational.

Accordingly, Moure's recent poetry not only depicts alienation and exclusion but also "revolt[s] against" this division by making contact (*Search* 30). In *Search Procedures*, the epigraph to "The Purposes of Skin" introduces this theme in its desire for contact, for movement across the boundaries: "'*All we want is to explore kindness the enormous country where everything is silent*'" (*Search* 82). This statement—a translation of "Nous voulons explorer la bonté contrée énorme où tout se tait" from Guillaume Apollinaire's "La Jolie Rousse"—associates benevolence with what Moure terms "signals 'across boundaries'" (Apollinaire 344; Moure, *O Cidadán* 112). More, as the poem progresses, associative connections bridge the apparent formal divisions of the poem. Indeed, as I noted earlier, the poem provides only bits of narrative and glimpses of characters, pieces that appear distinct and unrelated at the beginning of the poem. For instance, purpose one refers to an "accordion player in the sun, blind, singing," and purpose two again mentions the "blind accordion player" (82, 83). In purpose three, the accordion itself becomes blind, and Moure mentions its "bellows" (84). Although the musician disappears after purpose two and the instrument vanishes after purpose three, these themes of music and blindness continue to work their way through the poem: purpose four lists "bellows" in a list of kitchen equipment, yet the word clearly resonates with the bellows of the accordion (85).

All of these references occur in the upper portions of the page, but the themes of blindness and music also cross formal boundaries. In the lower segments

of purposes one and two, Moure mentions "Trombones singing" and "Singing in the trees" (82) and states "The trees of the street are singing," recalling the initial image of the blind musician (83). Both themes recur in the lower portion of purpose five: here, Moure mentions a "heart song," which returns to the theme of music, and refers to an object that "hinders peripheral seeing," a phrase that recalls the concept of blindness (86). Likewise, the images of guava and lime join different narrative strands. Moure associates these fruits primarily with the woman who hits her head and drops her groceries, so the guava and lime appear primarily in the lower portions of the poem; nevertheless, in purpose two, the upper portion associates the deer with a skin that "smells as if washed with pressed limes," while the lower portion links the woman to a body that "smells of limes & red guava. / Running down her arm" (83). The scent of lime, in this case, links the two fragmentary narratives. Other images, such as trees, water, language, sheets, divination, and body parts, tie the various themes together, building associative links that reach across the poem's formal divisions. Here, as elsewhere in *Search Procedures*, "layered, underlying meanings" structure the poem, drawing subtle connections across boundaries (Carrière, "Erin Moure" 67).

Indeed, in *Search Procedures*, Moure creates sites of contact, porous surfaces that allow for mutual engagement. In this volume, Moure uses the term *person* to designate a "human under regulation," that is, someone oppressed and constrained by the status quo; "The Purposes of Skin," significantly, begins with an image of a "'person'" cowering beneath a rearing horse (*Search* 28, 82). Fear and violence, rather than openness and tenderness, begin the poem. However, as the poem progresses, the speaker longs to become not a horse but a deer or hart. Though, as a hunted animal, the deer lives always under threat of violence, the deer in Moure's poems signifies the possibility of contact without regulation: whereas the horse perpetrates violence, the hart, at once an animal and the seat of the emotions, signifies the relationship between lovers. Furthermore, in "The Purposes of Skin," the skin

becomes not so much a boundary as a sensing surface: contact replaces division. Skin "delimits the aging hart" but remains "narrow" and permeable, allowing the lovers to "break through" to one another (85).

Moure also depicts the woman "Rubbing up against the deer as she woke, / the grasses flattened beneath her" (85). In this passage, the reference between pronoun and antecedent becomes unclear: *she* and *her* in the phrases "she woke" and "beneath her" could refer either to the deer or to the woman. Contact of skin on skin, here, enables movement across boundaries until rigid divisions become useless. In this poem, Moure also offers the tactile image of "warm water" poured onto the body, and this image, too, presents the skin not as a boundary but as a site of contact (85). Throughout the poem, the speaker seeks out water, believing that "The future depends on this," but Moure does not explain the vital importance of water until the final section of the poem, where she associates it with the mother-child relationship (82). Here, the speaker describes "our skin, which we grew first as a language or paper / / our mouths full of amniotic water" (85). Water, like skin, becomes a symbol of intimate contact with the mother, and the search for water reveals a desire for interpersonal contact. In "The Purposes of Skin," accordingly, contact—both literal and figurative—enables bodies to "gesture toward each other and themselves, [. . .] questioning the boundaries of what it means to touch and be touched, to live together, to live apart, to belong, to communicate, to exclude" (Manning 9).

Expeditions of a Chimæra further develops the theme of contact, turning from alienation to relationship. The volume as a whole centres on translation, foregrounding the "hinge" or "threshold" of contact between bodies, places, and languages (*Expeditions* 23). Hands—symbols of physical contact—feature strongly in "How." Nichols, notably, explores the image of the hand in Moure's *O Cidadán*, where, she argues, hands can "evoke a way of proceeding by touch, of feeling one's way toward the other, of being careful" (151). Importantly, in "How," Moure and Avasilichioaei depict these hands in gestures of hospitality—"How to open hands

justly" and "How to hands. / How to hands open"—where the hands reach out and, simultaneously, invite the other to reach back (n. pag.). In the second quotation, significantly, *hand* takes the place of an intransitive verb, and, thus, the reciprocity of touch—"its dual trajectory of going out and bringing in"—becomes an action or state of being in which humans might exist (Stewart 164). The self, here, becomes not a static, isolated object but a moving, relational being: it must "lose its singularity and become a / flock of sparrows suddened by a wind" (*Expeditions* n. pag.). Moure, in this poem, longs for the restoration of dynamic human relationality.

As a collaborative text, the volume draws attention to the relationships between the authors and their various textual personas, refusing to delimit the voices clearly and, consequently, insisting upon the intricate web of connections between these voices. As Otilia Acacia reminds the reader, one cannot "trust [the authors] for one moment in their attributions" of specific poems to their personas (*Expeditions* 84). Ironically, Acacia herself shares Avasilichioaei's initials, attesting to the points of contact between personas in the text. *Expeditions of a Chimæra* also challenges ethnic and political alienation, especially the rigidity of literal and figurative borders, by tracing connections—points of contact—between places. The final poem, for example, links New York City, Ethiopia, Berlin, Vienna, Wales, London, Calgary, Paris, Montreal, and Romania. The collection explores the relationship between the "foreign and indigenous" and, in "How," wants "to think into foreign. How to not stop, not obstacle, not fear the foreign" (23, n. pag.); in short, Moure and Avasilichioaei resist the strict division—the "obstacle"—between the indigenous and the foreign and insist, instead, on movement across the borders that separate humans (n. pag.). Thus, Moure and Avasilichioaei call the reader "to threshold the threshold" and "to live in the crossings of a / threshold" (n. pag.). Because *threshold* refers to the flooring in a doorway or, more figuratively, to a border or entrance, the phrase "threshold the threshold" calls readers to inhabit the ongoing movement across boundaries and between surfaces. Therefore, like *hands*, *threshold* becomes a verb,

both an action and a way of being in the world. The volume, in these ways, rejects rigid separation in favour of intimate connection.

Throughout her recent volumes, Moure also resists estrangement and exclusion through linguistic contact. In "Human Bearing," Moure searches for a form of language that people "can really inhabit" and encourages her reader to dream of "honest" language (27). In the midst of the slaughter all around, Moure begins to imagine a language of contact, where "to approach something is to give it room and listen. [. . .] *Approach* versus *encroach* or *reproach*" (*My Beloved* 180). This section begins with the phrase "Hush a word" (*Search* 29). One can read *hush* as a verb, making the phrase an imperative to silence; one can also read *hush* as a noun and *a word* as an appositive, presenting the hush as itself a form of language. This opening line also anticipates the epigraph to "The Purposes of Skin," suggesting that the poet has crossed into "'*kindness the enormous country where everything is silent*'" (82). The phrase "Hush a word," consequently, calls for a stilling of previous noise but hints at a new form of communication. The remainder of the section outlines the characteristics of this new language, describing it as a "way," a "means," a "node of habitation," and "an enjambment" (29). These words position language as a form of reaching toward the other: *way* indicates not a defined location but a process or journey toward something. Similarly, *mean* can refer to negotiation, communication, or an intermediate condition, featuring a movement between bodies and across surfaces. *Node* denotes a joint or point of convergence. *Enjambment*, which referred originally to a movement of the *jambe*, the leg, now marks a juncture in poetry, where a sentence continues from one line to the next. This language—exemplified in the phrase "Creating a language for the possible in the midst of"—refuses to solidify boundaries by specifying a definite origin or a distinct destination (29). It becomes, by these descriptions, a movement between, an ongoing approach. It enables human "habitation" (*Search* 29). Accordingly, the section closes with an image of friendship: "their sofas, where we slept / An enjambment" (29). Language, here, becomes a

place of proximity and hospitality, allowing for contact, for movement and relationship between.

In "The Purposes of Skin," Moure also offers linguistic contact as an alternative, "curing us" from alienation (86). Moure interweaves imagery of language—word, sheet, corpus—with imagery of trees and skin. As she reveals at the end of the poem, "birches are writing, the inventresses of paper / & emotion," so the trees become acts of communicative contact (86). These trees signal not only linguistic but also physical contact. In the phrases "Trees are a corpus," "a child's palmetto," and "'forest' of hands," for instance, the trees become hands reaching out, seeking contact (82, 84, 86). These images of trees, then, link language and touch to imagine a dynamic and relational form of engagement. In a complementary movement, skin also becomes language: Moure describes skin, like the trees, as "a language or paper," further linking physical juncture and verbal expression (86). Accordingly, though the poem begins with images of estrangement, such as the plastic bridal party and the people hauling sandbags, it presents the possibility of contact in the image of "the trees" where "A body finally articulates" (82). *Articulate* can mean *to converge at a joint* or *to express clearly*, so this phrase represents the body coming into both physical and linguistic contact with an other. Similarly, Moure explicitly describes the woman's voice as "a skin" that "we break through" (85). Like physical skin, linguistic skin enables rather than inhibits contact, for the speaker records that the lovers "wrote together in silence" (85). Moure concludes this section with a couplet further describing the new, connective form of language she seeks: "'Endemic,' she calls out, 'window of / a working prose'" (85). *Endemic* derives from a Greek root meaning something in or among people, so an endemic form of language grows within and between humans. Language that works, according to Moure, functions as a window in a wall, a pore that allows visual and physical movement through a membrane. Ultimately, this surface—at once voice and skin—seeks to cure alienation, to cross boundaries.

In *Expeditions of a Chimæra*, Moure and Avasilichioaei also offer linguistic contact as an antidote to alienation, especially in "How." Notably, the poem includes both the phrase "How to hands" and, as its counterpart, the phrase "How to throat"; here, while the hand stands for physical contact, the throat stands for linguistic contact (n. pag.). Moure and Avasilichioaei see these forms of contact as deeply interrelated, for they ask "How to translate the hands to the throat. How to translate the throat to the / hands" (n. pag.). Language must function as a form of touch, and touch must, in return, function as a form of language. Interestingly, "How" also draws connections between hands, words, and trees in the statement "How to cultivate palms in language soils. How to seed words and each other / anew" (n. pag.). This group of images clearly draws upon "The Purposes of Skin," where the phrase "child's palmetto" refers to both a kind of tree and a small hand; trees, in the earlier poem, become paper, and hands index touch (*Search* 84). "How" adds an additional layer to this image by revealing that physical and linguistic contact requires careful cultivation, for the trees, words, and humans that grow out of these "language soils" rely on and grow toward "each other" (*Expeditions* n. pag.). These intricate links between hands, trees, and words indicate that language, too, becomes a form of contact, where humans nurture and cultivate one another.

Additionally*, Expeditions of a Chimæra* presents language as a place of contact—of dynamic relationship—between ethnic and political groups. Throughout the collection, Moure and Avasilichioaei associate language with a "passport," a means of movement across boundaries (75). Indeed, poems—specifically, the poem by Elisa Sampedrín found in YYC and the "*mistranslation*" by O. found in YUL—serve as key links between places, connecting "a citizen of Hespaña," the Aeroporturi București (BUH), the Calgary International Airport (YYC), and L'Aéroport international Pierre-Elliott-Trudeau de Montréal (YUL) (72, 70). Thus, although Moure and Avasilichioaei recognize that the language of the Republic can erect barriers between people, they long "to unborder a language's borders" by inhabiting

a different form of "language that opens language to language, opens us to one / another, language that humanes us" (n. pag.). *Expeditions of a Chimæra* explores this language of contact on a formal level. The falling, often trochaic, rhythm of "How" distinguishes the poem from the rising, roughly iambic, rhythm of everyday speech, adumbrating the difference between this language of contact and the language of the status quo. Moreover, Moure and Avasilichioaei repeatedly turn words used most commonly as nouns and adjectives—including *language*, *humane*, *obstacle*, *small*, *hands*, and *signature*—into verbs, a technique that takes the stability of a noun and transforms it into the motility of a verb. *Language*, importantly, serves as a verb in the phrase "How to language"; it becomes processual and connective (n. pag.).

The structure of the poem also accentuates the power of language to open "us to one / another," to enable relationship (n. pag.). The poem consists of forty-two sentence fragments, and the first forty-one begin with the adverb "How." *How* usually functions as an interrogative or relative adverb qualifying the manner or means by which an action or process takes place. Significantly, the fragments remain unfinished, and "'les questions'" remain unanswered, a practice that places value not so much on the conclusions as on the conversation (n. pag.). Questions, in this poem, go back and forth, manifesting a reciprocal linguistic engagement: "How to question. How to be questioned. How to question again. How / to be questioned again" (n. pag.). Language becomes a place of ongoing contact that allows for movement and improvisation. Finally, in "How," the language of the poem crosses physical boundaries, specifically, the boundaries of the book. "How" appears on a loose, unnumbered sheet of paper slipped into the pages of *Expeditions of a Chimæra*; it can—and does, in my copy—shift from one position to another, sometimes facing "Living Proof," other times accompanying "Solvitur Ambulando." Because it disrupts the divisions of the book, "How" connects rather than divides; it manifests the desire "to unborder a border" (n. pag.). The poem ends with the words "In the small of throat's heat, its soft word, how to breathe," varying the pattern of the

poem slightly by locating the reader in the intimate, physical space of the throat (n. pag.). In this place—at once physical and linguistic—breath signifies both voice and life. Contact, here, enables humans to "seed words and each other / anew" (n. pag.).

In these examples from *Search Procedures* and *Expeditions of a Chimæra*, Moure continues to contest the social and economic structures—particularly the structures of late capitalism—that build walls and barricades between humans; instead, she offers a glimpse, a whisper, a gesture toward the other. This physical, psycho-emotional, and linguistic contact, for Moure, becomes a place of negotiation between the familiar and the different, of reciprocity rather than exclusion or absorption. In a beautiful image, Moure imagines "the incredible embrace all of us, everywhere, share" ("I'll Start" 16). She asks us, then, to live "in the midst of," at a "node" that marks both convergence—a juncture—and divergence—a turning point (*Search* 29). Ultimately, like the Marxist tradition, Moure's poetry insists on "a promise and a responsibility for tomorrow," namely, "the promise of human emancipation" (*My Beloved* 278, Simon 730). Whereas the Republic offers an alienation that yields death and hopelessness, Moure gestures toward a relationality "beyond exclusion" and oppression ("Examining" 10). In the final words of *Search Procedures*, she yearns for dynamic relationality, imagining this "place of love" as a place of true human freedom: "*Je veux parler tout simplement de l'amour inconditionnel. Aimer quelqu'un inconditionnellement, c'est ça pour moi la liberté. [. . .] D'avoir la capacité d'aimer quelqu'un inconditionnellement est la racine même de la liberté*" ("Examining" 10, *Search* 145). Significantly, these words spill over the limits of the book form, for they appear below the acknowledgements, which Moure already identifies as supplemental, "(found, surely)" (145). These words also stretch over linguistic boundaries into a richly poetic prose that, moreover, addresses the reader in French, a language the reader may not even understand. This compelling desire becomes, finally, a challenge and an exhortation to readers to reach across boundaries of language, of class, of gender, and of culture toward the other. *Le contact, l'amour, la liberté.*

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