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Queer TransCanadian Women's Writing in the 21st Century:
Assembling a New Cross-Border Ethic

by

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Abstract

This dissertation proposes an alternative theorization of borders through the lenses of contemporary *queer transCanadian women's writing*. Focusing on the first decade of the 21st century, this study examines how the work of Dionne Brand, Emma Donoghue and Hiromi Goto, primarily, dismantles and rearticulates a variety of literal and symbolic boundaries that cut across corporeal, biopolitical and affective structures. By doing so, these authors are assembling a new *cross-border ethic* that interrogates hegemonic structures of power, proposes new forms of relationality, and creates unexpected alliances between material bodies, often reshaping the cultural, the social, and the ethical fabric.

I follow terms like "transCanadian" (Kamboureli and Miki 2007) to analyze how this cross-border ethic is articulated in the following texts: Brand's long poems *Ossuaries* (2010) and *Inventory* (2006), the memoir *A Map to the Door of No Return* (2001), and the novel *What We All Long For* (2005); Goto's novels, *The Water of Possibility* (2002), *Half-World* (2009), and *Darkest Light* (2012), together with the short-story collection *Hopeful Monsters* (2004); the collaborative docu-poem *Borderless: A Docu-Drama About the Lives of Undocumented Workers* (2006); Larissa Lai's poetry in *Automaton Biographies*; and Donoghue's novels *Slammerkin* (2000) and *Room* (2010), together with the short story-collections *The Woman Who Gave Birth to Rabbits* (2002) and *Astray* (2012).

This project does not seek to describe what borders *are* or *are not*. Instead, my work looks at various written and visual texts as contested sites from which to examine what borders *do* and *undo*; in which ways borders shape social and bodily space; and how borders circulate across human and non-human materialities. Combining epistemological and ontological methodologies, this dissertation draws on material feminist theory, philosophically inflected cultural studies, affect theory, and non-humanist political philosophy. This study strives to escape the "glamours of easy globality" (Spivak 2013) and, instead, engage with the imperative to be attentive to the historical and material contingencies of border crossing, which stands as an integral force in the cross-border ethic that these women writers are beginning to assemble.

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Where and how to begin this inventory of feelings, this affective archive? My dissertation simply would not exist without the wonderful friends, colleagues, and family members who have supported me from both sides of the Atlantic. Your love, wisdom, and laughter have kept me going throughout this exciting journey. I feel so lucky!

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Introduction: Cross-Border Sketches

On Borders and Paradoxes

In the last months of 1999, two great friends formed a cross-border orchestra that came to represent a renewal for the possibility of novel forms of dialogue between a variety of cultures in the Middle East. These two men were Edward W. Said and Daniel Barenboim, and this institution was the West-Eastern Divan Orchestra. For decades, Said and Barenboim collaborated in various intellectual projects, always problematizing, in their public personas and their very intimacy, the cultural, socio-political, and ethical implications of crossing a border. In *Parallels and Paradoxes: Explorations in Music and Society* (2004), Said and Barenboim discuss art, music, and politics, among many other concerns, always bearing in mind the poetics and politics of border-crossing. Barenboim writes, "I am not a person who cares very much for possessions. I don't care much about furniture, or reminiscences from the past. I don't collect memorabilia—so my feeling of being at home somewhere is really a *feeling of transition*, as everything is in life. Music is transition, too" (4, my emphasis). It is this moment of artistic and affective possibility of "the transient" that interests me for the purposes of this dissertation. With the phrase "feeling of transition," Barenboim already encapsulates some of the key departure points that I would like to refer to in this introduction: the border-crossing momentum where the geographical, the bodily, and the affective dimensions of border-crossing gather in a particular moment in time and space. What applies to music might be applied to other artistic expressions such as literature and the visual arts in the sense that these are

all forms of the transient, while paradoxically, I would add, also being part of the lasting and enduring dimensions of everyday life. And the friendship between these two friends that was forged between 1991, when they randomly met in the lobby of a London hotel, and 2003, when Said passed away, lasts through the intimacy they shared and the cultural archive they left in their cross-border collaborations.

The productive paradox that characterizes the complexity of artistic and lived experience fuels this project[1]. I believe that borders and boundaries work in similar ways, forging and disallowing alliances, approximations, and collaborations. In this sense, my project does not seek to define, describe, or prescribe what borders *are* or *are not*. Instead, my work looks at literary and other artistic expressions as contested sites from which to examine what borders *do* and *undo*; in which ways borders shape social and bodily space; and how borders circulate across human and non-human materialities. I thus read borders as paradoxical systems of connectivity and disjuncture; approximation and distance; as contested spaces where new apertures and old ruptures merge with ethical, cultural, and socio-political repercussions. Paradox, tension, and unpredictability therefore become crucial elements in my understanding of the functioning and circulation of borders as assemblages of the material and the immaterial world. Similarly, the artistic and the political dimensions are also characterized by this paradoxical and unpredictable nature, thus the responsibility (and the pleasure) for the contemporary critic in border studies to address these issues, particularly in

[1] See Judith Butler's intervention in the collaborative *Who Sings the Nation-State? Language, Politics, Belonging* (2007) for a discussion of this kind of performative contradiction with regards to political activism.

current analysis of the global and the transnational, on the one hand, and the human and the posthuman, on the other hand.

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Border Anxieties Post 9/11

In the last pages of the provoking study *Terrorist Assemblages* (2007), cultural theorist Jasbir K. Puar exclaims: "These are queer times" (204). I cannot but agree; these are queer times indeed. Today's world, as Puar cogently puts it, is immersed in an "array of enduring modernist paradigms (civilizing technologies, Orientalisms, xenophobia, militarization, border anxieties) and postmodernist eruptions (suicide bombers, biometric surveillance strategies, emergent corporealities, counterterrorism in overdrive)" (204). The so-called "war on terror," which has become one of the many perverse outcomes of 9/11, has not only reified geopolitical frontiers in the form of intensified border security worldwide, but has also generated new biopolitical borders in the form of a tightened governance of migrant populations and their bodies (Kuntsman and Miyake 2008; Agathangelou and Ling 2004). This dissertation thus emerges out of a post 9/11 context and its aftermath, characterized by a global crisis that cuts across ecological, socio-political, and I would add, cultural and ethical realms, particularly after the economic collapse of 2008. The ghosts of 9/11 certainly haunt both my own position as a literary and cultural critic, and the work I analyze in this project. My research, nonetheless, insists on gesturing towards September 11 not as a point of origin but as a cross-border event. Let me clarify. Philosophers and cultural critics Slavoj Žižek and Brian Massumi, among others,

consider 9/11 as marking a threshold. Massumi contends that "It can be considered a turning point at which the threat-environment took on ambient thickness, achieved a consistency, which gave the preemptive power mechanisms dedicated to its modulation an advantage over other regimes of power" ("The Future" 62). It is this "turning point" that Massumi addresses that interests me for the purposes of this dissertation. One of the many outcomes of the war on terror targeting places such as Iraq or Afghanistan has involved the displacement of civil populations, leaving growing numbers of refugees to move every day; to turn and return; to orient and reorient themselves through uncertain roads, leading to poverty and in many cases, death. Similarly, we systematically witness other border zones in the world such as Gaza or Lebanon where political corruption and economic greed reign while human rights are suspended in an every day basis. Border controls in contested territories such as El Paso or Ciudad Juárez are increasingly more militarized, always ready to target those so-called deviant populations that, out of necessity, attempt to cross the frontier in a search of a sustainable future. It is therefore of uttermost priority for the public intellectual today to interrogate, to question, and to "think again" about how the border becomes a contested site where the corporeal, the biopolitical, and the affective realms of every day life assemble.

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Cross-Border Assemblages: Corporeality, Biopolitics, and Affect

Partly as a result of being a Trudeau Scholar, I have had the privilege of crossing multiple geographical borders during the last three years of my doctoral

research. No matter how many borders I cross, the experience never fails to elicit a bodily affective response. These moments of excitement and potential pleasure become immediately instrumentalized in that our bodies are systematically subjected to a variety of security measures ranging from repeated instances of identity recognition, physical searches, and body scanners. Despite feeling relatively safe behind my European passport and my Canadian study permit, this public exposure creates a combination of fear and shame, particularly when you are part of a long line and thus, you are being subjected to the looks of others—strangers who momentarily share this contested space. Constructed as an object of suspicion, even in those cases when this might only be an internalized affective response, this moment of potential crossing involves myriad bodily and affective reactions that can range from sweat and nervous tics, to feelings of hesitancy and doubt. And of course my personal experience is determined by other coordinates, such as being constructed as a white European woman of a certain age, class, and normative body type. Racialized populations, more pervasively after 9/11, are systematically delayed, and sometimes held up, by border patrols that subject their bodies to various "surveillance assemblages" under the name of security and protection (Hier 2002). As social anthropologist and gender theorist Henrietta L. Moore aptly puts it, "Technologies of security and surveillance record bodily affects, and deploy neural imaging, iris recognition and a host of other techniques designed to distinguish those who are acceptable from those who are not—a biopolitics of racism that goes well beneath the skin" (173). Thus crossing a geopolitical border not only involves a spatial and temporal shift but also, and

often most importantly, generates a corporeal and affective response with both social, political, and ethical repercussions[2]. Besides the geopolitical dimension of border-crossing, it is the simultaneous circulation of corporeal, biopolitical, and affective forces that interests me for the formulation of a new *cross-border ethic* as illustrated in the work of the writers that I analyze in this dissertation.

***

Unpredictable Borders in Uncertain Times

In the lecture delivered at the Edward Said Memorial Conference in April 2013, philosopher Etienne Balibar refers to the "institution of the border" in terms of uncertainty. I find this specification relevant in my discussion of borders understood not only as sites of artistic possibility and pleasure, but also as contested and often institutionalized entities. Borders do share the uncertain quality that seems to characterize the first decade of the 21st century as articulated by a variety of critics and commentators. It seems, on the one hand, that the term "uncertain" has been co-opted by a variety of voices in the neoliberal financial and economic sectors as a strategic way to intensify regulatory measures, systems of control, and surveillance mechanisms that often involve the reification of hegemonic boundaries[3]. In turn, the concepts of uncertainty and unpredictability have also been employed by critics and writers in the humanities as spaces of artistic creativity and ethical possibility. My doctoral dissertation borrows this

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[2] See Patricia T. Clough's "The Affective Turn: Political Economy, Biomedia, and Bodies" (2008) and Ash Amin's "The Remainders of Race" (2010) for further reference. Moore (2011) draws on these two sources in her discussion on how affect theory interconnects with new developments in biology and informatics.

[3] See Naomi Klein's acclaimed *The Shock Doctrine: The Rise of Disaster Capitalism* (2007) for a discussion of how neoliberal forces maximize moments of uncertainty to push their own agendas.

terminology with regards to borders in that boundaries shift and change, often in unpredictable shapes and trajectories. Other concepts such as reversibility and reciprocity are also invoked in my discussion of cross-border assemblages in terms of the tension between the relations of interiority and exteriority of boundaries, together with their temporality.

In his brilliant study *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor* (2011), Rob Nixon contends that the first decade of the 21st century has witnessed a gravitational shift around issues of environmental justice, particularly within some sectors in the environmental humanities that are striving to counteract the so-called "full stomach" environmentalism that has characterized discourses and practices in the Global North (Guha and Martinez-Alier 1998). Nixon proposes the concept of "slow violence" to understand how catastrophes that are not rendered spectacular or instantaneous pose representational challenges, particularly because these slow motion disasters do not appear to require immediate action. Casualties, as Nixon explains, are thus postponed for generations, which allows for the dispersion of slow violence to prevail. It is the paradoxical nature of this form of residual toxicity, together with the intrinsically temporal, that also intrigues me for my discussion of borders in this dissertation. As I previously mentioned, my project emerges out of a sense of urgency that characterizes the first decade of the 21st century in its accumulation and intensification of processes of uneven globalization and the subsequent crises across the borders of the economic, the socio-political, the cultural, and the ethical. This imperative need for action and change in the present, nonetheless,

requires a careful attentiveness towards other temporalities in order to understand the complexity of today's world. In other words, my interest in the present is ultimately both complemented and informed by the responsibility of the critic to position herself at the crossing—the border—between temporalities where the traces of the past and the pull of the future meet in productive ways. And this crossing of temporal boundaries is a constant trait in the work of the authors that I examine in this project. Resisting received versions of nostalgia or melancholic renderings, their writing explores alternative temporal circuits, often exposing a variety of "slow violences" (Nixon 2011) along the way. The border itself, I argue, occupies a contested space where material and immaterial bodies gather across time; in its complexity, the border translates the slow structural violences of the past into the urgency of the present, while simultaneously projecting them into the pull of the future. As such, the border, as this writers' *oeuvre* illustrates, becomes a matrix of trans-temporality.

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Towards an Onto-Epistemology of Borders

This dissertation emerges out of a sense of urgency about the imperative to turn to literature, more generally, and to 21st century writing, more particularly, to find alternative paradigms in a moment of economic and social turmoil. In this contradictory era of uneven globalization, where information and capital benefit from absolute mobility, while human subjects are further subjected to systems of control and surveillance, borders have become contradictory entities that need to

be further interrogated[4]. Among many other voices in the Humanities and Social Sciences, philosopher Etienne Balibar (2004) and anthropologist Arjun Appadurai (1996) have insisted on the urgent need to consider the human and the cultural dimensions in current theories of globalization to counteract previous accounts that strictly focused on economic discourses. Along the same lines, I would also stress the need for the incorporation of the creative and the imaginative realms into current discourses of the global and the transnational in order to open new paths into the territory of border studies[5].

Theorists across the social sciences and the humanities are striving to resist the apocalyptic tone that characterizes some current discourses of socio-political critique by gesturing instead towards designing new ontologies, new temporalities and spatialities, and new affective routes to reshape self-other relations by finding new commonalities and shared materialities (Moore 2011; Hardt and Negri 2009). While acknowledging persistent difficulties, Moore stresses the need to "envisage and theorize what links human agency and human subjectivity to forms of the possible, to ways of living that open up new ways of being" (13). Simultaneously, therefore, this study prioritizes the ethical and the affective, following Moore (2011) and others, in the attempt to "think again" about how fantasy, desire and hope can be rearticulated as sites of possibility to renew self-other relations and

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[4] G. C. Spivak discusses this "performative contradiction" of capital in that it is simultaneously borderless, while sustained by the reification of boundaries for free-trade speculation. See the lecture "A Borderless World" delivered at the University of Arizona in January 2012. http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Kn_wWOCd4tk

[5] The field of Border Studies flourished in the 1980s with the innovative text *Borderlands/*La Frontera*: The New Mestiza* (1987) by Gloria Anzaldúa. Self-described as a chicana dyke-feminist, tejana patlache poet, writer, and cultural theorist, Anzaldúa prioritizes the material body in her denounce of the structural violences that permeate and sustain hegemonic social and geopolitical boundaries within the context of the contested territory of the U.S./Mexico border.

new connections across human and non-human materialities. In the study *Still Life: Hopes, Desires and Satisfactions* (2011), Moore offers a thought-provoking analysis of the interconnections between artistic expression, social critique, and political intervention in the context of contemporary discussions of globalization. Placing fantasy and desire at the centre of self-other relations, Moore stresses the need to combine strategies from within the epistemological and the ontological realms. Moore thus shares the need to reconnect human subjectivity to the material world in order to activate change in the line of many contemporary theorists in the fields of Material Feminisms and Affect Studies (Alaimo 2010; Braidotti 2006; Ahmed 2006). And yet, while acknowledging the centrality of the material, Moore remains cautious about completely disregarding language and knowledge as conducive to social transformation. Instead, her work proposes a combined onto-epistemological approach to agency and difference by understanding writing as an "everyday embodied practice, and one that is generative of affect" (185). Following Moore's line of argumentation, this dissertation proposes to look at contemporary literary and cultural landscapes by combining epistemological and ontological efforts in order to gesture towards alternative ethical, material, and political frameworks within the field of *queer transCanadian women's writing* in the 21st century.

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Queer TransCanadian Women's Writing Today:
Assembling a New Cross-Border Ethic

In these uncertain times, the role of culture and the arts occupies a shifting space imbued with potential for social and political transformation. It is in this

light that this study proposes an alternative theorization of borders and border-crossings through the lenses of contemporary *queer transCanadian women's writing*. Focusing on the first decade of the 21st century, this dissertation examines how the work of Dionne Brand, Emma Donoghue, and Hiromi Goto, primarily, dismantles and rearticulates a variety of literal and symbolic boundaries that cut across corporeal, biopolitical and affective structures. By doing so, these authors are assembling a new *cross-border ethic* that proposes novel ways of knowing, feeling, and being in the world. Significantly, the turn to ethics that I propose in this dissertation is simultaneously a political commitment. Thus my work looks at ethical choices and practices that queer women writers are engaged with, not at the expense of politics, but containing them. Therefore, in the four chapters that compose this study, I have drawn on politically engaged work (both literary and theoretical) that attends to the materialities of everyday life and experience understood as collective bodies, actions, and practices.

The term "TransCanada" has become associated with the *TransCanada Institute* in Guelph (Canada), and the work of scholars such as Smaro Kamboureli and Roy Miki. As stated in their online mandate,

> The "Trans" in TransCanada, then echoes the various processes—historical, political, national, economic, global—that impact on Canadian literature as an institution that has gone through various stages of development: from being ignored as a colonial product, and thus seen as inferior to the British and American literary traditions, to being reified as a national, read "white," literature, from encompassing, under the aegis of

multiculturalism, diasporic authors to becoming indigenized and reaching international acclaim to being studied in the context of the humanities.

In the last decade, the theoretical framework of the transnational has gained currency among scholars in Canadian Studies, becoming a crucial instrument to examine the literary and cultural processes within and beyond the nation-state (Brydon and Dvořák 2012; Cuder-Domínguez, Martín-Lucas and Villegas-López 2011; Dobson 2009). My project borrows the term "transCanadian" in an attempt to further dislodge a series of cross-border writers from traditional definitions around national literatures and instead, understand how their work is invested in rearticulating new alliances and novel ties of affect in multidirectional trajectories that travel beyond national and transnational discourses *per se*. With an emphasis on materiality and trans-corporeality, the texts analyzed in this project creatively address and question the porosity borders and the socio-political and ethical implications of this permeability for human and more than human populations. By doing so, these women writers are assembling a cross-border archive that expands traditional conceptualizations of what is commonly understood by transnational Canadian literature in the globalized twenty-first century. Furthermore, by posing the prefix "trans-" after the term "queer" in my formulation of *queer transCanadian writers*, this dissertation also aims to provoke a certain collision of meanings that would bring in non-normative practices of gender and sexuality into the discussion, engaging with the presence of queer and other bodies, and thus moving beyond geopolitical border crossings strictly. Such a problematization of borders, as I claim in this study, allows these writers to

transform normative conceptualizations of gender, time, and space, creating unexpected alliances between material bodies, and often reshaping the social and ethical fabric.

An established voice within Canadian literary circles, Toronto's 2009-2011 Poet Laureate Dionne Brand has explored, for over two decades, the impact of multiple violences, slow and fast, positively affirming her identity as a queer and a black Canadian author with an Afro-Caribbean heritage. Founder of *Our Lives*, Canada's first black women's newspaper, Brand systematically moves between genres, always inscribing her transcultural identity and voice within them. While taking into account some of her early writings from the late 80s and early 90s[6], this dissertation focuses primarily on Brand's 21st century work, which problematizes the circulation of borders more directly through the engagement with transnational impulses under contemporary processes of uneven globalization. Particularly in poetry collections such as *Inventory* (2006) and *Ossuaries* (2010), Brand portrays the permeability of the borders between the human body, the technological sphere, and the natural worlds as a strategy to signal the violent impact of structures of power on vulnerable populations. By doing so, her work shows an attentiveness to human and more than human materialities, while simultaneously pushing readers beyond epistemology and the reliability of language structures. And yet, rather ironically, I do find Brand's use of language highly persuasive in the ways she attends to political and ethical

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[6] Some of Brand's early writings include the poetry collections *Chronicles of the Hostile Sun* (1984) and *No Language is Neutral* (1990), the essay collection *Rivers Have Sources, Trees Have Roots: Speaking of Racism* (1986), co-edited with Krisantha Sri Bhaggiyadatta, the short-story collection *Sans Souci: And Other Stories* (1989), and the study *Burden to Carry: Narratives of Black Working Women in Ontario 1920s-1950s* (1991).

matters, particularly by looking at how bodies affect material spaces, while simultaneously being affected by them.

From the 1980s, voices like Dionne Brand's began to denounce the racism integral to Canadian society at the same time as Asian Canadian writers like Joy Kogawa denounced Canada's embarrassing history of internment. Race and ethnicity thus become an integral part of the discussion of how Canada has historically behaved towards so-called "minority populations." In the short piece "Alien Texts, Alien Seductions: The Context of Colour Full Writing" (1998), Japanese Canadian writer Hiromi Goto explores how racialized people in Canada have been systematically constructed as "Others" in what apparently is a multicultural and thus tolerant society. Employing the figure of the alien, Goto mixes creative and non-creative modes of writing to denounce this problematic issue in Canadian society. Through the integration of queer and race politics that so often characterizes her literary corpus, Goto has certainly found a place within the contemporary literary scene, especially from the publication of her first award-winning novel *A Chorus of Mushrooms* (1994). In this dissertation, I look at Goto's 21st century work with a focus on the ethical and the biopolitical realms, particularly in the portrayal of the porosity of borders between posthuman bodies (Braidotti 2013) and spatio-temporal frameworks. Through the formulation of alternative ties of affection and reproduction, novels such as *Half World* (2009) and *Darkest Light* (2012) advocate for renewed alliances, in Deleuze's understanding of the term, between human and more than human beings as a way to activate counter-hegemonic political actions and practices. Moreover, Goto's

fictional worlds address the necropolitical impulses that characterize societies in the 21st century, while simultaneously portraying a variety of expressions of freedom displayed by the multitude. Through an exploration of the border-crossings between the exercise of biosovereignty and the resisting practices of freedom, Goto further promotes alternative forms of justice in this contemporary age of global crisis. Interestingly, Larissa Lai's *oeuvre* shares an interest in the productive potential of the posthuman predicament as a cross-border site, so this dissertation also briefly looks at her poetry collection, *Automaton Biographies* (2009), focusing particularly on the section "rachel." In similar fashion to Brand and Goto, Lai's poetry posits a feminist, anti-capitalist and anti-racist critique of current issues such as the impact of economic globalization on both environmental degradation and the human body[7].

This study also brings Irish Canadian writer Emma Donoghue into conversation. Also a fitting example of the frontier-crossing author, Donoghue grew up in Dublin, moved to Cambridge (UK) to complete her Ph.D., and finally settled in London (Ontario) in 1998, where she has become an award-winning writer with a growing reputation in the Canadian canon. Donoghue's *oeuvre* is characterized by a constant crossing of the boundaries of genre, so critics have examined early short-story collections like *Kissing the Witch* (1997) through a blend of traditions ranging from revisionist mythmaking and postmodern pastiche

[7] Of Chinese ancestry, Larissa Lai was born in the U.S. and then moved to Canada, where she became a critic and a writer, and now a professor at the University of British Columbia. Some of her works include the acclaimed novels *When Fox is a Thousand* (1995) and *Salt Fish Girl* (2002). Other works include *Sybil Unrest* (2009), a collaborative long poem with Rita Wong. See the 2004 special issue of the journal *West Coast Line,* guest edited by Wong and Lowry, for a critical approximation to Larissa Lai's work.

(García Zarranz 2012a), to lesbian gothic fiction and contemporary queer writing (Orme 2010). Early novels like *Stir-Fry* (1994) and *Hood* (1995) attracted the attention of several Irish scholars in the late 90s given the primary focus of the texts on how lesbian identity and sexuality are portrayed in Ireland at that time[8] (Smyth 1997). This dissertation focuses on Donoghue's post-2000 work given that in the last decade, and coinciding with the author's move to Canada, Donoghue's writings such as *Astray* (2012) have shown a broader interest in addressing the complexity of borders under contemporary transnational and globalization processes. Significantly, this project insists on the fact that the texts discussed articulate a cross-border ethic that is not only understood as a transgressive force of resistance but also, at times, unavoidably complicit with certain global processes of uneven globalization. Donoghue's work, for instance, could be accused of privileging mobility in ways synonymous to the elitist cosmopolitanism of current ideological discourses signalling the liberatory conditions of globalization. By showing this ambivalence, however, Donoghue's creative endeavours could be said to propose a "contrapuntal reading" (Said 1993) that invites for a careful analysis of our own involvement in the reification of frontiers in both the Global North and the Global South. Out of this awareness, this dissertation strives to avoid the illusion of a borderless world sustained by cosmopolitan privilege and global capitalism. My work strives to escape the

[8] Out of her doctoral research, Donoghue also published *Passions Between Women* (1993), a study that brings to light a tradition of lesbian relations in British society that she traces back to the late 17th century. Apart from editing several anthologies, Donoghue's scholarly essays on women writers Kate O'Brien and Eva Gore-Booth, and issues like lesbian history and fiction, appearing in collections edited by well-known Irish scholars like Eibhear Walshe (1997), have certainly contributed not only to her own critical reception, but also to the reception of other less well-known Irish women writers.

"glamours of easy globality" (Spivak 2013) and, instead, engage with the imperative to be attentive to the historical and material contingencies of border crossing, as Lianne Moyes contends (2007), which stands as an integral force in the cross-border material ethic that these women writers are beginning to assemble.

***

Cross-Border Methodology

In terms of an overarching framework, my approximation to the so-called field of "border studies" incorporates a variety of approaches from material feminist theory and queer studies (Alaimo and Hekman 2008; Puar 2007), philosophically inflected cultural studies and affect theory (Massumi 2010; Ahmed 2008; De Landa 2006) and nonhumanist political philosophy (Agamben 2000; Hardt and Negri 2004). More specifically, the methodological questions that fuel this project can be summed up as follows:

How do material feminist approaches, in their articulation of the contact-zones between human and more-than-human worlds, allow for a reconfiguration of ethico-political boundaries? The first chapter adopts the critical lenses of material feminist theory in order to look at how Brand's long poem *Ossuaries* (2010), Goto's novel *Half-World* (2009), together with the short story "Stinky Girl" (2004), cross the borders of corporeality through the portrayal of the porous contact zones between human, natural, and posthuman material bodies. In various ways, the texts examined in this chapter depict toxic and deviant human and non-human bodies whose materiality is intimately intertwined with the technological

and the natural worlds surrounding them. By stressing the porosity between borderless materialities and trans-corporeal bodies, these texts usher in alternative forms of embodiment and corporeality in an attempt to develop a new counter-hegemonic cross-border ethic. Employing Michel Foucault's insights on disciplinary power, this chapter also articulates the concept of "corporeal citizenship" in order to look at the reconfiguration of bodily and spatial borders in Donoghue's novel *Room* (2010). In related ways to Brand's poetry, particularly with regards to its treatment and portrayal of imprisonment and surveillance, I claim that the text also raises concerns about the impact of globalization and the war on terror imposed by the U.S. after September 11.

How does biopolitics seek to problematize and redefine the boundaries between life and death? Drawing on Foucauldian theory, the second chapter examines a variety of border crossings within the biopolitical realms in Goto's novel, *The Water of Possibility* (2002), Donoghue's short story-collection *The Woman Who Gave Birth to Rabbits* (2002), and the collaborative docu-poem *Borderless: A Docu-Drama About the Lives of Undocumented Workers* (2006). In myriad ways, these written and visual texts depict the tensions between the technologies of biopower and the emergence of a series of revolutionary practices of freedom that resist such mechanisms of control. Sociologist and gender theorist Haideh Moghissi contends that we need to be attentive to how globalization has taken shape within countries in the creation of "nations within nation" so as to a full understanding of the porosity of geopolitical borders (2011). Moghissi's insights resonate in *Borderless* in that, as the film explains, there are

approximately 200,000 undocumented migrants in Canada, so the third world is no longer outside the nation, but it is located inside Canada's borders, "subsidizing the country's first world economy" (*Borderless*). In this chapter, I argue that the undocumented workers in *Borderless* are not only marginalized but their invisibility points to a more complex set of biopolitical rules that fully operate on the lives of these populations turning them into a paradigmatic example of a vulnerable subjectivity and embodiment (Butler 2004).

How does affect circulate across human and non-human materialities, shaping bodily and social spaces, and constantly displacing the subject/object dyad? Drawing on recent interventions in the field of Affect Studies, chapter three puts Brand's novel *What We All Long For* (2005) in conversation with Donoghue's novel *Slammerkin* (2005) in order to examine how these texts portray the precarious conditions for affective communities to be sustained under processes of uneven globalization and growing neoliberalism. These forces act as blockage points that attempt to disable the circulation of positive ties of affect among certain populations such as immigrants and prostitutes. This chapter also brings Brand's memoir *A Map to the Door of No Return* (2001) and Larissa Lai's poetry in *Automaton Biographies* (2000) into conversation to further explore the ways affect circulates, often crossing bodily and social borders. Brand's memoir, I argue, traces a genealogy of ordinary affects (Stewart 2007) and cross-border pathogeographies (*Feel Tank*) as a way to rethink, re-feel, and resist hegemonic historical archives. On the other hand, I put Lai's long poem, "rachel," in conversation with Ridley Scott's unforgettable *Blade Runner* (1982) to see how

fear, together with other "ugly feelings" (Ngai 2005), circulates among racialized and other so-called deviant populations in ways that challenge received conceptualizations of chrononormative time (Freeman 2010).

Employing recent interventions in Deleuzian philosophy (Puar 2007; De Landa 2006), the final chapter aims to unpack the concept of "cross-border ethic" that I attempt to articulate in the previous sections. I look at how Brand's long poem *Inventory* (2006), Goto's *Darkest Light* (2012), and Donoghue's short story *Astray* (2012) depict a variety of cross-border assemblages that contain the flow of corporeal, biopolitical, and affective borders in novel ways, hence contributing to the interrogation and reformulation of alternative ethical and sociopolitical frameworks. Finally, I also draw on recent interventions in biopolitics and affect theory (Moore 2011; Stewart 2007) to examine how this cross-border ethic often functions as a strategy to counteract those necropolitical impulses that seem to govern contemporary societies (Mbembe 2003).

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Cross-Border Archives: New Assemblages, New Beginnings

In an age that film critic Rey Chow hails as the "world target" (2006), this dissertation illustrates how contemporary queer transCanadian women writers are assembling a contested, shifting, alternative literary and cultural cross-border archive beyond expected routes. Borrowing critic Sneja Gunew's words, women writers such as Brand, Goto, and Donoghue, "chart a course through the minefields of our transnational existence, illustrating new and flexible subjectivities that are surely our best chance for ethical and proximate survival

amidst unequal global mobilities" (43). As I claim in this project, these writers' cross-border assemblages open up a space where an alternative onto-epistemological ethic may tentatively be formulated. Furthermore, I propose to consider this dissertation an assemblage as well, where the critic engages with the work of the writer in the hope to participate in an exercise of collaboration through a shared interest in how borders shape, and often transform, bodily and social spaces. This project thus assembles a variety of literary, theoretical, ethical, and cultural artefacts that would otherwise be scattered; in this sense, this dissertation mirrors the work examined, tentatively becoming a cross-border archive in itself. In the process, I have found unexpected alliances, productive differences, unpredictable connections, and paradoxical resemblances between these contemporary texts. And in a way, this goes back to the idea that borders circulate in paradoxical ways, perhaps more pervasively in the first decade of the 21st century. Spivak claims that we cannot afford a borderless world; and yet, she adds, "where there are walls, you must think borderlessness" (2013).
Significantly, I believe that the writers analyzed in this project also tend to blur the constructed differentiation between theorist and writer in myriad ways.
Researching the work of contemporary queer transCanadian women writers has certainly allowed me to understand how critical theory and cultural production are mutually informing. In this sense, I firmly believe that literature can produce, and sometimes anticipate, innovative theoretical insights and philosophical approaches; and I admire these women writers particularly for that. In other words, this dissertation indirectly considers the figures of the writer and the critic,

together with their *oeuvre*, as "cross-border assemblages" capable, through their collaboration, to think again, to question again, and to remap alternative aesthetic, and hopefully, ethical and socio-political routes.

Chapter One

Borderless Bodies, Unruly Materialities, Impossible Intimacies: Queer TransCanadian Women Writers Crossing the Borders of Corporeality

> What is needed is a robust account of the materialization of *all* bodies—'human' and 'nonhuman'—and the material-discursive practices by which their differential constitutions are marked. This will require an understanding of the nature of the relationship between discursive practices and material phenomena, an accounting of "nonhuman" as well as "human" forms of agency, and an understanding of the precise causal nature of productive practices that takes account of the fullness of matter's implication in its ongoing historicity.
>
> Karen Barad, "Posthumanist Performativity: Toward an Understanding of How Matter Comes to Matter" (810).

> Thinking through toxic bodies allows us to reimagine human corporeality, and materiality itself, not as a utopian or romantic substance existing prior to social inscription, but as something that always bears the trace of history, social position, region, and the uneven distribution of risk.
>
> Stacy Alaimo, "Trans-Corporeal Feminisms and the Ethical Space of Nature" (261).

The first decade of the 21st century has proved to be a contradictory time. Human beings are haunted, on the one hand, by a fading future marked by the fear of destruction and extinction as a result of ecological degradation, viral pandemics, nuclear forces, terrorism, and global neo-liberalism. Yet, on the other hand, the human race has become populated by hopeful beings who can envision the possibility of enjoying higher levels of comfort together with longer lives through advances in technology and alternative forms of reproduction. As Deleuzian theorist Claire Colebrook argues in a series of guest lectures delivered at the University of Alberta in October 2011, this pervasive paradox extends to questions of affect. Colebrook contends that human beings seem to have become mere passive witnesses to multiple forms of ecological and political destruction in the world today. In this sense, we are currently experiencing a loss of affect and as a result, a landscape of "impossible intimacies" (Brand 2010; Berlant 2000). And

yet, this pervasive lack appears to be counteracted by a series of hyper-affective trends and practices, given that human beings today are continuously striving to reconnect with the environments surrounding them through the development of multiple ties of attachment[9]. Within the field of contemporary TransCanLit, queer women writers, such as Dionne Brand, Hiromi Goto, and Emma Donoghue, among others, have ushered in new material representations of corporeality and alternative forms of embodiment in an attempt to develop counter-hegemonic ethical and political frameworks. The fictional worlds of these women writers are populated by this paradoxical mixture of impossibility and hope, devastation and persistence, desperation and desire. It is precisely in the liminal spaces between these binary opposites; in the borders, in the frontiers, where these women writers have found the productive potential for creative, political, and ethical intervention in today's unevenly globalized world. As I claim in this chapter, one of these liminal spaces or contact zones can be found in the crossings between human and non-human material bodies, as well as in the transgression of the borders of corporeality.

The first decade of the 21st century has also seen the emergence of new material feminist theories that have also proposed alternative logics of corporeality allowing for the articulation of counter-hegemonic ethical and political practices[10]. Today we inhabit what feminist theorist Stacy Alaimo refers

[9] The worldwide Occupy movements are a good illustration of this contemporary impulse to create alternative forms of attachment and solidarity between strangers in the search of political action and transformation.
[10] Material feminist theory distinguishes itself from the tradition of Materialist feminism in several ways. As Alaimo and Hekman contend, materialist feminism comes from a Marxist tradition that focuses on labour and class relations, whereas material feminism draws on the traditions of corporeal feminism, science studies, and environmental feminism to explore how the discursive

to as a "trans-corporeal" time-space framework where human materiality is inseparable from the natural and technological worlds. In her discussion on trans-corporeality, Alaimo stresses the need for a theoretical rearticulation of the "contact zones" between human corporeality and the more-than-human worlds so as to situate materiality at the centre of feminist analysis. As such, trans-corporeality becomes a theoretical site where corporeal approaches meet environmental methodologies in productive ways[11]. Along similar lines, feminist philosopher and physicist Karen Barad contends that

> what is needed is a robust account of the materialization of *all* bodies—"human" and "nonhuman"—and the material-discursive practices by which their differential constitutions are marked. This will require an understanding of the nature of the relationship between discursive practices and material phenomena, an accounting of "nonhuman" as well as "human" forms of agency, and an understanding of the precise causal nature of productive practices that takes account of the fullness of matter's implication in its ongoing historicity. (810)

In order to challenge the supremacy of language and culture over matter, Barad articulates a posthumanist notion of performativity that interrogates the assumptions around given differences between human and nonhuman categories. In an attempt to reinvigorate interdisciplinary approaches, feminist critic Nancy

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and the material interact in the constitution of natural, human, and non-human bodies. Prioritizing the ethical, material feminist theories stress the need to rethink the interactions between "culture, history, discourse, technology, biology, and the 'environment,' without privileging any one of these elements" (Alaimo and Hekman 7) in an attempt to articulate alternative, and often unexpected, political coalitions and alliances.

[11] For a discussion of the related concept of "intercorporeality," see Maurice Merleau-Ponty's work, particularly *The Visible and the Invisible* (1968), within the field of Phenomenology.

Tuana also urges all theorists to embrace an ontology that rematerializes the social and takes the agency of the natural seriously, stressing the interaction between humans and the environment; between social practices and natural phenomena (2008). As these material feminist theorists aptly argue, the literal "contact zone" between human, natural, and non-human materialities would allow for the emergence of non-normative ethical and political subjects, relations, and positions.

Contemporary queer transCanadian women writers such as Dionne Brand, Hiromi Goto, and Emma Donoghue locate the materiality of the body at the centre of technological, political, and natural structures in an attempt to advocate for non-normative political and ethical practices. The works analyzed in this chapter portray toxic and deviant human and non-human beings whose materiality is intimately intertwined with the technological and the natural worlds surrounding them[12]. By portraying the collision of multiple materialities and forms of embodiment, these women writers manage to formulate an alternative cross-border ethic based on the systematic interrogation and rearticulation of socially-constructed boundaries. Given the intertwined interaction of environmental, technological, human, and "posthuman" concerns addressed in this chapter, I employ concepts such as "trans-corporeality," "viscous porosity," "unruly materiality," and "posthuman embodiment," deriving from recent developments in material feminist theory (Alaimo 2010, 2008; Tuana 2008; Barad 2003).

[12] The emerging field of Somatechnics brings forth new articulations on the entangled interdependency of corporeality and technology. For further reference, see the journal *Somatechnics* published by Edinburgh University Press and the *Somatechnics Research Network* at http://www.lgbt.arizona.edu/somatechnics

The first section of my chapter examines the representation of the female body as a site of trans-corporeal toxicity in Dionne Brand's poetry collection *Ossuaries* (2010). Yasmine, the central figure in the text, embodies a trans-corporeal toxicity inscribed by the violence of multiple histories and discourses across different temporal and spatial frameworks. Significantly, as Brand's long poem illustrates, trans-corporeality is not only a site of violence and death, but also a place of desire and resistance. "Thinking through toxic bodies," Alaimo claims, "allows us to reimagine human corporeality, and materiality itself, not as a utopian or romantic substance existing prior to social inscription, but as something that always bears the trace of history, social position, region, and the uneven distribution of risk" (261). Brand's *Ossuaries*, I argue, brings this paradox into the forefront by providing a material feminist account of the intimate, and sometimes lethal, outcomes of the crossing of material borders, particularly for the female body. By dealing with the permeability of boundaries between the human body, technology, and the natural world as a paradoxical site of interconnectedness, agency, and dependency, Brand's *Ossuaries* provides a feminist critique of the material, ethical, and political impact of hegemonic structures and practices of power in an unevenly globalized 21st century.

The second section looks at how Hiromi Goto interrogates and deconstructs traditional depictions of the gendered and racialized body by crossing the borders between the human, the natural, and the technological realms in the novel *Half World* (2009) and the short story "Stinky Girl" (2004). I claim that both writings play with the body as a site of desire, resistance, and struggle giving way to

instances of what theorists have referred to as "the posthuman body" (Hayles 2008; Halberstam and Livingston 1995; Foucault 1995). Concepts such as posthuman embodiment and performativity work in Goto's texts as a subversive strategy to challenge hegemonic structures, institutionalized racism, and heteronormative ideologies. In *Half-World* (2010), Goto interrogates the meaning and implications of some preconceived borders around nation, gender, and sexuality by recreating dystopian imaginary worlds. Marketed as a young adult book in Canada, the book mixes human characters that live in the Realm of the Flesh with monstrous beings living in the Realm of Half-World where they are condemned to endlessly experience their most traumatic event. By posing a critique of how these forces are altering our humanities and our bodies, Goto, in a similar fashion to what she does in the collection *Hopeful Monsters*, is thus contributing to Foucauldian discourses on biopower and the posthuman body.

Finally, drawing on Michel Foucault's insights on disciplinary power and Peter Singer's ethical response to globalization, the last section of this chapter seeks to unpack the concept of "corporeal citizenship" as suggested in Emma Donoghue's novel *Room* (2010). The narrator, 5 year-old Jack, has been born and raised in "Room," a paradoxical prison located outside geopolitical and biopolitical borders. While being confined to a soundproofed cell, under the total subjection of his mother's kidnapper, Jack is remarkably free from institutional control. In an intriguing reversal, it is when he escapes and comes out into the realities of an unnamed North American society at the turn of the 21st century that all the disciplinary mechanisms like the media and the hospital saturate the child's

body by marking it as a source of abjection. Jack, nonetheless, challenges socially-constructed categories that prescribe normalization over deviance by developing a novel form of corporeal citizenship characterized by the development of alternative ties of affection towards strangers that problematize the boundaries of the family and the home, and arguably, the nation.

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Toxic Bodies that Matter: Trans-Corporeal Materialities in Dionne Brand's *Ossuaries*

> "We" are not outside observers of the world. Nor are we simply located at particular places *in* the world; rather, we are part *of* the world in its ongoing intra-activity.
>
> Karen Barad, "Posthumanist Performativity: Toward an Understanding of How Matter Comes to Matter" (828).

> there were roads of viscera and supine alphabets,
> and well, fields of prostration,
> buildings mechanized with flesh and acreages
> of tender automobiles
>
> heavy with our tiredness, solid with our devotion
> after work we succumbed
> headlong in effusive rooms
>
> to the science-fiction tales of democracy
> and to their songs,
>
> Dionne Brand, *Inventory* (7, 8).

The first decade of the 21st century has been dramatically shaped by a series of geopolitical events that partly originated in the aftermath of a post 9/11 scenario of destruction and death. Considering that nearly 3,000 bodies perished in the attacks, that many families received only body parts of their loved ones, and that 1.5 million tons of debris were pulled out of the site, I suggest referring to

this material ethnoscape[13] as one of "monstrous trans-corporeality" (Alaimo 2010). However, as Slavoj Žižek and others have argued, coverage of streets filled with soot and rubble consciously avoided providing viewers with footage of the actual carnage, in contrast to common coverage of disasters and conflicts happening in the so-called Third World. Mostly through mediated ways, millions of people witnessed the U.S. superpower become vulnerable territory to external threats thus generating a sense of collective trauma, as Judith Butler eloquently puts it in the collection *Precarious Life: The Powers of Mourning and Violence* (2004). And yet, in a perverse turn of events, the September 11 attacks granted the country with illegal military nation-building interventions and foreign policy actions self-justified under the supposedly unavoidable "war on terror" that has contributed to the uneven restructuring of the world for the last decade. This ongoing war has been accompanied by a "rhetoric of mass deception" (Lai 2009), characterized by such widespread sentences as "enduring freedom," "infinite justice," "state of exception," and the threat of bioterrorism. For the purposes of this section, I would like to particularly focus on how biopolitics has been employed not only in the context of post 9/11, but also in the contemporary climate of global crisis in order to create a global "culture of anthrax" (Hage 2003). In this climate of fear, endless references to toxic bacteria, virus, disease, contagion, and suspicious liquids have permeated both political and cultural

[13] In *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization* (1996), cultural anthropologist Arjun Appadurai describes "ethnoscape" as "the landscape of persons who constitute the shifting world in which we live: tourists, immigrants, refugees, exiles, guest-workers, and other moving groups and individuals constitute an essential feature of the world and appear to affect the politics of (and between) nations to a hitherto unprecedented degree" (33). I further discuss this concept in my analysis of Hiromi Goto's *Half World* in the second section of this chapter.

discourse in order to regulate and control a variety of so-called "deviant" populations[14].

In an attempt to address and counteract some of these hegemonic structures of power, many contemporary writers within and outside the U.S. have voiced their opposition to such strategies of domination and control. I propose to begin the discussion by posing a series of questions: How did events such as September 11 and its aftermath affect cultural practice within Canadian borders? What spaces of critique have been generated? What are the ethical responsibilities that critics and writers face towards the politics of terror, paranoia, and fear that have shaped the turn of the 21st century? As I claim in the introduction to this chapter, recent interventions in material feminist theory are advocating for new ontologies from which to re-address ethical and socio-political relations and practices. Similarly, contemporary queer transCanadian women writers are also gesturing towards novel representations of corporeality and forms of embodiment in an attempt to develop alternative ethical and political frameworks. Drawing on recent developments in material feminist theory (Alaimo 2010; Alaimo and Hekman 2008; Tuana 2008), this section examines the representation of the female body as a site of trans-corporeal toxicity in Dionne Brand's collection *Ossuaries* (2010). Yasmine, the central figure in the text, embodies a trans-corporeal toxicity inscribed by the violence of multiple histories and discourses across different temporal and spatial frameworks. Brand's long poem brings the

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[14] The threat of the Other as a source of pollution is definitely not a new phenomenon. Yet, it could be argued that the feelings of paranoia and anxiety have definitely increased within the last few years, particularly as a consequence of both the U.S. war on terror and the global economic crisis.

paradoxical nature of trans-corporeality to the forefront by providing a material feminist account of the intimate, and sometimes deadly, outcomes of the crossing of material borders, particularly for the female body. By dealing with the permeability of boundaries between the human body, technology, and the natural world as a site of interconnectedness, agency, and dependency, *Ossuaries* provides a feminist critique of the material, ethical, and political impact of hegemonic structures and practices of power in today's unevenly globalized world.

For the last three decades, Dionne Brand's fictional landscapes have been populated by a sense of loss and desolation, particularly in her examinations of racist, nationalistic, and sexist structural violences within the Canadian context. As critic Cheryl Lousley claims,

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

Brand's recent work, I would argue, though still focusing on such environmental, cultural, and political ruptures, is now more invested in addressing the subtleties of transnational and globalization impulses characterizing the first decade of the 21st century (Brydon 2007).

Her collection, *Ossuaries*, opens with an image of environmental toxicity where the narrative persona looks at the past as a site of contaminated dreams and

imprisonment. This exercise of looking back, of tracing the past, is not one of nostalgia, since the sense of violence and paralysis is rendered as never-ending. Human beings seem to have lived a genealogy of toxicity and despair through time and history and thus bodies bear the trace of such ruptures:

> let us begin from there, restraining metals
> covered my heart, rivulets
> of some unknown substance transfused my veins
>
> at night, especially at night, it is always at night,
> a wall of concrete enclosed me,
> it was impossible to open my eyes
>
> I lived like this as I said without care,
> tanks rolled into my life, grenades took root
> in my uterus, I was sickly each morning, so dearly[15] (11)

References to bodily organs collapse with material objects saturating the woman's body with a multitude of toxic materialities. As a result, it is not a foetus but grenades that grow in Yasmine's uterus thus disallowing the possibility of reproduction for the human species. Queer theorist Wendy Pearson claims that the pregnant body is a public body in the sense that it is the locus of future citizens and nations. As Pearson contends, "the ownership of national futurity by iconic citizens erases the possibility that racialized and sexualized bodies can themselves

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[15] Dionne Brand's long poems are punctuated by commas, but the author systematically resists the use of full stops in order to avoid a sense of closure. Thus, I have not included any additional punctuation marks in the quotations I use for my analysis of *Ossuaries* and *Inventory* in this dissertation.

bear futurity" (78). In contrast to Goto's narrative, as I argue in the next section of this chapter, Brand seems reluctant to read this lack of futurity as a potential site for alternative futures. The female body in the long poem is scarred by the violent traces of history; it is exhausted after centuries of exploitation; it is forever rendered unproductive. The result, Brand suggests, is that there is no escape from this barrenness; there is no space for an alternative futurity. *Ossuaries* depicts a landscape populated by bodies that are not only presented as wasted and toxic, but also subjected to systems of surveillance and imprisonment:

> an arm electrified and supplicant, spiked
> with nuclear tips, its transmutation
> in the verdant shoulder of penitentiaries
>
> to come, who would mistake these wounds,
> who call these declarations nothing,
> these tender anatomies (85)

Notice how the reference to tenderness in the last stanza suggests certain innocence and redemption for humanity, despite our characteristic impulse for destruction and annihilation. And yet, Brand resists to give these tender anatomies hope, as the rest of the poem illustrates.

Toxic bodies, as Alaimo suggests in the second epigraph to this chapter, are potentially able to generate counter-hegemonic versions of history. In related ways, Brand's poems are characterized by a non-linear sense of time, together with a transnational sense of space, where bodies have been abused through history's perversities across past, present, and future temporalities. The central

character, Yasmine, not only traces a genealogy that challenges chronological temporal frameworks, but also moves across a multiplicity of spatial locations thus infusing the collection with a general sense of wandering and purposelessness. The contradiction here lies in the fact that this apparent lack of purpose is systematically counteracted by the imperative to "undo," in Penelopian fashion. The need to unravel fuses Brand's poems with what could be referred to as a queer rendering of time and space:

> this is how she wakes each day of each underground year, / [...] the atmosphere coaxed to visible / molecules, definite arrangements of walls and doors / [...] how then to verify her body, rejuvenate the blood-dead / arm, quell her treacherous stomach, [...] / but where was she, which city, what street / [...] the prepositions are irrelevant today, whichever house, / which century, wherever she was, / (22, 23, 26)

The woman's dislocation and strangeness, however, do not prevent her from providing a summary of the world, as she puts it, in similar fashion to the unnamed central character in Brand's long poem *Inventory* (2006). This woman, as I further explain in the last chapter of this dissertation, sits in front of her television every day and night exposing those science-fiction tales of democracy that I referred to in the second epigraph to this section:

> the wealth multiplies in the garbage dumps,
> and the quiet is the quiet of thieves
>
> there are cellphones calling no one,
> no messages burn on the planet's withered lungs

[...]

it's all empty, she thinks, but then again

that's not news (40, 41)

Both female figures in the poems generate a political and material archive that reflects the trans-corporeal materialities characterizing today's contaminated world.

Brand's insistence on dealing with the on-going deterritorialization and reterritorialization of space is, nonetheless, combined with a strong sense of location (Deleuze and Guattari 1987; De Landa 2006). In fact, her poetry manages to negotiate seemingly contradictory strategies like the deterritorialization of space with a redefinition of a politics of location for non-normative subjects. I therefore suggest the need for a theorization of a deterritorialized politics of location to decipher how Brand incorporates these apparently conflicting devices in her work.[16] What I previously referred to as the queer rendering of time and space that characterizes the beginning of *Ossuaries* suddenly clashes with the explicit reference to the twin towers, thus localizing the narrative in a crucial moment and place in recent history: September 11 in Manhattan:

the spectacular buildings falling limpid, to nothing,

rims, aluminum, windowless, fragile staircases,

she wanted, wanted to whisper into telephones

[16] See Goldman (2004) and Johansen (2008) for a discussion of the ongoing deterritorialization and reterritorialization of space in Dionne Brand's *oeuvre*. Also see chapter four in this dissertation for an in-depth analysis of these strategies in Brand's work, particularly in her long poem *Inventory*.

> it's done, someone had done it, someone,
>
> had made up for all the failures,
>
> she looked, pitiless, at the rubble, the shocked [...]
>
> the flights of starlings interrupted,
>
> the genocides of September insects, [...]
>
> here's to the fatal future (26, 27)

The image of the "powdering towers" encapsulates a variety of discourses and materialities such as the vulnerability of solid contained spaces, the boundaries of material objects, and the pervasiveness of imprisonment and surveillance in our globalized world. Once the towers fall, what remains is rendered in terms of destruction, desolation, and loss. Also, the inevitable absence that characterized ground zero for a time further suggests an openness of boundaries, together with the triumph of the unexpected and the unpredictable. Containment, control, and power proved to be an ephemeral illusion that vanished in minutes only giving way to the absence of presence and the presence of ghosts. Brand describes this scenario as a trans-corporeal landscape saturated by the collapse of material human bodies with concrete, glass, dirt, and other toxic materials; a toxic space where the future is only understood backwards.

Despite the fact that 9/11 was primarily experienced through the medium of television, Brand insists on portraying the trans-corporeal materiality of such an event in history, hence reminding readers of the unavoidable relationship between the human and the more-than human worlds. In her discussion of posthumanist performativity, feminist theorist Karen Barad draws on Niels Bohr's

insights to claim that "'We are not outside observers of the world. Nor are we simply located at particular places *in* the world; rather, we are part *of* the world in its ongoing intra-activity" (828). Barad thus breaks down the binary opposition human vs. non-human and instead advocates for a materialist approach to the world's "becoming." Dionne Brand similarly points to the interconnectedness and dependencies between human and more-than-human organisms in her poetry in an attempt to raise a series of political and ethical issues. It is not *any* body, but the female body that appears at the centre of material, social, natural, and cultural factors in *Ossuaries*. And the traumas that her body incorporates leave marks that remain, so no redemption seems possible:

> the crate of bones I've become, good
> I was waiting to throw my limbs on the pile,
> the mounds of disarticulated femurs and radii
>
> but perhaps we were always lying there,
> dead on our feet and recyclable,
> toxic and imperishable, [...]
>
> each bone has lost dialectic now,
> untranslatable though I had so many languages (49-50)

The materiality of the body remains despite the feelings of despair and purposelessness that Yasmine experiences, pointing to humanity's generalized existential crisis. What happens, on the other hand, to the materiality of language? Material feminist theorists contend that language has been granted too much

power, and so they advocate for a material turn in feminist theory. Interestingly, in related ways, Brand calls for an interrogation of language and master narratives through a re-evaluation of materiality in contemporary times:

> after consideration you will discover, as I,
> that verbs are a tragedy, a bleeding cliffside, explosions,
> I'm better off without [...]
>
> a promise of blindness, a lover's clasp of
> violent syntax and the beginning syllabi of verblessness (14, 20)

Notice how that the narrator's loss of sight and name is accompanied by a mistrust for linguistic structures. Then, what kind of alternative discourses should be used? What is the solution for despair? Brand seems to suggest that neither trauma nor mourning is enough for political transformation: "and she had mourned enough for a thousand / broken towers, her eyesight washed immaculate and / caustic, her whole existence was mourning, so what?" (30). The usefulness of mourning is questioned as instead pointing to a lack of political and ethical action. In the influential essay "Violence, Mourning, Politics," philosopher Judith Butler asks a crucial question that can be applied to Brand's narrative: "Is there something to be learned about the geopolitical distribution of corporeal vulnerability from our own brief and devastating exposure to this condition?" (*Precarious* 29). This vulnerability is exacerbated under certain social and political conditions, particularly when violence is a way of life. Arguably, Butler claims that grief and loss, instead of leading to passive powerlessness, can lead to a sense of human vulnerability where collective responsibility for the physical lives of one another

is experienced. Brand's poetry, however, seems to suggest that human beings as such form a paradoxical community where no clear boundaries between victims and perpetrators are delineated: "if we could return through this war, any war, / as if it were we who needed redemption, / instead of this big world, our ossuary" (82). In Brand's poetic *oeuvre*, human beings are systematically exposed to violence, while simultaneously being complicit in it.

In similar fashion to Larissa Lai's provocative poetry collection *Automaton Biographies* (2011), Dionne Brand's *Inventory* and *Ossuaries* introduce several female figures that problematize the role of bearing witness to the contemporary world[17]. Which populations are allowed to bear witness today? Are these women portrayed as mere spectators, indulging in voyeuristic pleasure? Are they instead alternative populations capable of introducing new ways of engaging with today's panorama of global crises? In order to transform contemporary evils in society, it is not enough to "change the bourgeois state," the narrative voice in *Ossuaries* explains, you have to "bring it down" (29). This call for action introduces a shift in the tone of the poem, providing the characters portrayed with a higher degree of social and political agency. Inspired by the riots in Egypt in 1977, the woman now has awakened from her slumber: "conscious as bees, / to the finest changes of sound, / and shadow, sweat and heat, she knows what she is to do" (46). Interestingly, the antigovernment protesters in Egypt in the so-called "Bread Uprising" denounced the corruption that characterized the political situation at the time, when the population was punished with the elimination of public subsidies.

[17] For a discussion on the role of the poet as witness see Brydon (2007). As she claims, "Brand's practice of affective citizenship begins from the emotional register in which injustice lodges itself in the very body of the poet as a special kind of witness" (991).

Months after *Ossuaries* was published, the 2011 Egyptian revolution began, again a popular spontaneous uprising protesting against a series of political and legal inequalities and injustices. The timing is relevant here in that Brand's poems somehow bridge a series of political events that happened in the late 1970s with the contemporary moment, establishing a genealogy of revolutionary practices and resistances. Current global phenomena such as the so-called Arab Spring revolution or the worldwide Occupy movements illustrate how collective action is every day present, thus allowing for the appearance of a series of practices of freedom and resistance.

As part of the 99%, the underground activist in *Ossuaries* is fully aware of the axis of differentiation that excludes her from public visibility and discourses: "Yasmine knows in her hardest heart, / that truth is worked and organized by some, / and she's on the wrong side always" (53). An eternal migrant, Yasmine finds herself yet again in a different location; this time in an unidentified North American urban space where she reflects on the toxic relationship she has had with a man. Surrounded by this city's "calculus of right and left angles," this woman reflects on the death of love and the power dynamics involved in her heterosexual relationship:

> [...] how she'd become,
> some receptacle for his spit, his sperm, his combed-out
> hair, the shavings of his fingernails, each liquid phrase
>
> he had uttered, she had drowned,
> in the shell of her ear,

until his voice seemed to come from her

[...] she'd pinned

her life to his existence when what she wanted was to be

at the crossing [...] (57, 58, my emphasis)

Yasmine's identity had become exclusively defined by this male figure and his bodily waste, further intoxicating her corporeality into paralysis. Instead, she longs for a cross-border existence; a life "at the crossing," where new possibilities of struggle might emerge.

On the other hand, the woman's constant nomadic movement across time and space systematically highlights her singularity, thus calling into question notions of political collectivity and community. *Ossuaries*, then, seems to suggest that we are living in an age of impossible intimacies where love and life can only exist in opposition: "to love is an impediment to this hard business / of living / so I cannot have loved, not me" (34). Yasmine's experience of life is one of survival; a life where prisons and bars prevail, therefore disallowing the possibility of love. This lack of love exceeds the human world and spills into the natural sphere, which has also severely suffered its effects:

the human skin translucent with diesel,

the lemon trees' inadvertent existences,

the satellite whales, GPS necklaces of dolphins and turtles

what can I say truly about the lungs alveoli

of plastic ornaments,

erupting, without oxygen (69)

Notice the trans-corporeal qualities of the scene portrayed here where the technological, the human, and the animal worlds collide, pointing to the negative consequences of excessive industrialization on both human and non-human bodies. Again, Brand depicts a landscape of trans-corporeality where human and more-than human materialities collapse with multiple political and ethical repercussions. As feminist theorist Nancy Tuana reminds us, the porosity between human and non-human agents can allow us to flourish but it can also kill us. Is Brand therefore suggesting that there is no room for shared intimacies nowadays? If this is the case, it could be argued that a politically and ethically efficient sense of collective community is yet "to come" (Derrida and Ferraris 2001); yet to be formulated. It is within this space of possibility, of the unexpected, where a material feminist approach could provide us with a critical lens from which to examine how contemporary transnational women writers are beginning to envision new articulations of political and ethical intervention in today's landscape of global crises.

Material feminists, together with other feminist theorists of the body, strive for "definitions of human corporeality that can account for how the discursive and the material interact in the constitution of bodies" (Alaimo and Hekman 7). In related ways, Dionne Brand's *Ossuaries* offers novel possibilities of reconfiguring material-discursive apparatuses of bodily production by introducing a series of abjected and deviant populations that are granted the possibility to activate change. The revolutionary figure of Yasmine advocates for

alternative ways of understanding human corporeality and how it is inextricably linked to other material bodies. As Karen Barad argues, "Particular possibilities for acting exist at every moment, and these changing possibilities entail a responsibility to intervene in the world's becoming, to contest and rework what matters and what is excluded from mattering" (144). Through a series of different strategies around issues of materiality, embodiment, and corporeality, Brand's poetry posits an anti-capitalist critique against current issues such as the impact of economic globalization on both environmental degradation and the human body. Her work, as I further argue in the last chapter in this dissertation, does contribute to formulating a new cross-border ethic with cultural and social-political repercussions[18].

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[18] A version of this chapter has been published. García Zarranz 2012. *Canada and Beyond: A Journal of Canadian Literary and Cultural Studies* 2.1-2 (December 2012): 51-68.

Productive Monstrosities and Posthuman Bodies in Hiromi Goto's Hopeful Fictions

> The future emerges from the interplay of a repetition of cultural/biological factors, and the emergence of new conditions of survival. It must be connected, genealogically related, to what currently exists, but it is capable of many possible variations in current existence, the exploration of its virtual tendencies as well as its actualized products. The new is a generation of productive monstrosity, the deformation and transformation of prevailing models and norms, so that what has been unrecognized in the past and present, as well as what deformations the present can sustain, will elaborate themselves in the future.
>
> Elizabeth Grosz, "Darwin and Feminism: Preliminary Investigations for a Possible Alliance" (43).

> A wet *crack*! Mr. Glueskin, hard as a peach pit, split wide open to reveal the tender centre. [...] He had no entrails or bones; he was solid white all the way through. And in splitting he had exposed a small baby.
>
> Hiromi Goto, *Half World* (174).

Developing novel aesthetic and ethical frameworks in today's panorama of global crisis, queer transCanadian women writers such as Hiromi Goto and Larissa Lai have suggested alternative ways of understanding humanism beyond traditional enlightenment ideologies by interrogating how certain bodies are produced and policed. Resisting the exclusionary and often colonial concept of the bounded individual, Hiromi Goto's work questions the notion of a universalized western subject as a way of engaging with the multiple ruptures that so-called deviant populations have experienced, particularly in the last decade. I thus suggest reading Goto's rendering of the racialized and gendered body in terms of what contemporary theorists refer to as posthuman embodiment (Braidotti 2013). According to queer theorists Judith Halberstam and Ira Livingston, posthuman bodies "are not slaves to masterdiscourses but emerge at nodes where bodies, bodies of discourse, and discourses of bodies intersect to foreclose any easy distinction between actor and stage, between sender/receiver,

channel, code, message, context" (2). Therefore, the posthuman body challenges the coherence of the human body with all the connotations attached to it in terms of Western humanism. Drawing on material and queer feminist theory (Tuana 2008; Barad 2008; Halberstam and Livingston 1995), this section of my chapter examines how Hiromi Goto's recent novel *Half World* deploys a posthuman body/time/space framework characterized by the porous border-crossings between human and non-human materialities. A posthuman narrative, in Halberstam and Livingston's understanding of the term, *Half World* shows "how the body and its effects have been thoroughly re-imagined through an infra-disciplinary interrogation of human identity and its attendant ideologies" (4).

Furthermore, evoking Larissa Lai's multilayered text *Salt Fish Girl* (2002), Goto's *Half World* reimagines a queer futurity that problematizes spatial and gender heteronormative imaginaries by positioning the racialized abject body as a positive source of difference (Almeida 2009; Pearson 2007; Latimer 2006). Thus this section of my chapter also looks at how Goto reimagines "alternative futurities" populated by queer porous human and non-human bodies that allow for the possibility of living outside of reproductive and familial time. This alternative account on the rearticulation of a future through the transformative power of deformation and monstrosity resonates in Goto's "Stinky Girl," so I will make several connections to this story in this part of the chapter. First published in Aritha van Herk's anthology *Due West* (1996), and later included in the collection *Hopeful Monsters* (2004), Goto's short story addresses the potential for marginalized subjects to counteract hegemonic structures by finding power

through the transgression of multiple boundaries. For the purposes of this chapter, I will examine how the female protagonist in "Stinky Girl," in similar ways to Melanie in *Half World*, manages to overcome her isolation and longings by developing alternative forms of affective attachment not only towards other communities, but towards a renewed understanding of her own material body.

The protagonist in *Half World*, 14 year-old Melanie, lives with her single mother in the edges of a polluted North American city, presumably Vancouver. From the beginning of the narrative, Melanie's mother, Fumiko, is presented as having an unidentified sickness that paralyses her body: "She couldn't keep a job for longer than a few months before her body broke and she had to rest in bed for several weeks. For a while Melanie had worried that her mum had leukemia or cancer, maybe AIDS, but when she forced her to go to a clinic all the tests turned out negative" (17). By portraying the female body as subjected to the toxicity of the multiple environments surrounding it, Goto brings the threatening presence of disease and contamination over human corporeality to the forefront of the narrative. This overwhelming toxicity extends to the desolate landscape portrayed at the opening of *Half World*:

> Melanie turned to the water once more and stared at the distant shore. Industrial cranes, with their bright orange legs and long necks, looked like mechanical giraffes. In her peripheral vision she could see the crow hop closer and begin picking at its meal. Melanie's stomach grumbled. She was hungry ... almost hungry enough to try the abundant mussels exposed on

> the rocks, but she knew the water was filthy with chemicals, tanker sludge and heavy metals. (17)

Notice the trans-corporeal qualities of the scene portrayed here where the technological, the human, and the animal worlds collide, pointing to the negative, and often toxic, consequences of excessive industrialization on both human and non-human bodies. And this is an everyday reality for Melanie's mother and many other low-income populations subjected to high levels of toxic material in their work places or the cities they inhabit[19]. From the beginning of the narrative, Goto is thus positing an anti-capitalist critique against current issues such as the negative impact of economic globalization on both environmental degradation and material human bodies and other organisms.

From the publication of the acclaimed novel *Chorus of Mushrooms* (1994), Hiromi Goto's *oeuvre* has shown a systematic preoccupation with how gendered and racialized bodies embody the potential for becoming productive bodies despite being subjected to multiple forms of abjection and invisibility. As Pearson aptly argues,

> Both the racialized and the sexualized body exist within variably disjunctive relationships to the metonymic 'body' of the nation, i.e. the 'body politic,' which is also the body of the iconic citizen. Such a body politic is maintained through a series of discourses that regulate the visibility, legitimacy, legality, and 'normalcy' of the body, especially in

[19] See Larissa Lai's novel *Salt Fish Girl* for an anti-capitalist and anti-racist critique of the physical impact of exploitation on the workers' bodies.

> terms of the place that any given body is able to maintain within both the public and private spheres of the nation. (77)

Melanie is portrayed as an outsider to the world she lives in. Systematically called a "retard" and "fat" by her schoolmates, she inhabits the margins of society, finding comfort only when she visits an old bookstore on the outskirts of the city, or when she watches the crows that often fly around her. Likewise, the main character in "Stinky Girl" is a 33 year-old woman, living in a trailer with her mother, who spends her time wandering through malls, observing a culture of decay and analyzing the devastating effects of consumerism on the human race. Often subjected to derogatory looks from people, she describes herself as a "fat coloured rat girl" (44). In the study on the politics of the visible for racialized subjects in Asian American and Asian Canadian populations, literary critic Eleanor Ty discusses how the body of racialized subjects occupies a paradoxical position in society given that it is often hyper-visible only at the expense of rendering the rest of the qualities invisible (2004). Self-identified as "Stinky Girl," the story's first person narrator is judged by its size and its race and yet, she is rendered invisible as a result of not sticking to certain normative structures that determine which bodies are normal and which bodies are deviant. I will refer to these bodies as "phantom bodies" in that despite their hyper-visible materiality, it is their deviance from the norm that reduces their agency into merely haunting presences[20]. Interestingly, "Stinky Girl" never purchases any material objects but

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[20] In the study *Bodies and Pleasures: Foucault and the Politics of Sexual Normalization* (1999), Ladelle McWhorter rearticulates "deviance" as a positive ethical approach and a strategy of resistance against hegemonic structures of power.

only analyzes the ethics of the mall culture, with a high level of irony, through the act of walking:

> My forays there are part of an ongoing study of the plight of human existence in a modern colonized country. A mall is the microcosm, the centrifugal force in a cold country where much of the year is sub-zero in temperature. The mall reveals the dynamics of the surrounding inhabitants. Yes, the habits of the masses can be revealed in the Hudson's Bay department store and in the vast expanses of a Toys 'R' Us where hideously greedy children manipulate TV dinner divorcees into making purchases with the monetary equivalence to feeding a small village for a week. (45)

Stinky Girl experiences isolation by exposing herself to hordes of people in a mall. In contrast, Melanie enjoys spending time in a park near the train tracks where she is alone, contemplating movement from a removed position of stasis. Often experiencing "pangs of longing" (23), Melanie is also a lonely teenager who deviates from the norm. Though they are exposed to different public spaces, the effect in both cases is similar: these two female characters hope for change in their lives, and long to have access to intimacy. It will be through alternative forms of attachment not only towards other communities, but also by establishing a different relationship towards their own bodies, that these young women become "hopeful" beings, in Goto's understanding of the term.

Melanie's only friend is Ms. Wei, an old lesbian woman who owns a bookstore at the Rainbow Market. She is described as a woman who wouldn't give

hugs, and who advises Melanie against the potential toxicity of the human body: "There is a natural acid on hands, on the skin, [Ms. Wei explains as she carefully opens the folder], if they touch ancient things with their skin they can damage it" (38). Ms. Wei used to be an archivist before she immigrated to Canada, presumably the place where sections of the novel take place[21]. And yet, despite the lack of physicality, Ms. Wei manages to establish bonds of intimacy with Melanie through the exchange of knowledge and experience. When Melanie finds out that her mother has disappeared, Ms. Wei becomes her metaphorical fairy godmother providing Goto's heroine with a space of safety and possibility. This encounter echoes traditional tales in which the protagonist, lacking in strength and power, is "assisted by small creatures or outsiders, those figures who are marginal and live on the border between wilderness and civilization, between village and woods, between the earthly world and the other sacred world" (Zipes, 81). By introducing a lesbian immigrant woman as the figure of the helper for Melanie in her journey, Goto goes a step further in the transgression of the often heterosexist ideology of traditional fairy and folk tales.

With a series of magical objects and animals, Melanie begins her journey to save her mother from the claws of Mr. Glueskin, who has her trapped in a place outside familial time and space called Half World. After going through several city tunnels and passways, Melanie crosses one door and appears in a cliff where

[21] References to the ways these queer women writers rearticulate the concept of the archive recur throughout my dissertation, particularly in my analysis of Emma Donoghue's short story collections in chapter two and chapter four. See Jacques Derrida's *Archive Fever*: *A Freudian Impression* (1996) for a psychoanalytical take on the nature of the archive. Queer theorist Jasbir K. Puar has also explored the associations between theories of assemblage and the function of the archive in contemporary culture. See *Terrorist Assemblages* (2007) for further reference.

she encounters the Keeper of the Fourth Gate. The toll to pass consists in biting off the smallest finger from her hand, so one of her amulets, metamorphosed into Jade Rat, bites off one of her pinkies from her paws instead, thus preventing Melanie from mutilating her own body. Entering Half World is from the very first instance an experience about crossing not only spatial frontiers, but also the borders of material bodies and corporeality. The heroine needs to actually walk through dead body parts in order to enter this new territory: "Something cracked and snapped beneath her runners. She stared at the ground. And finally saw ... She wasn't standing upon dry branches but upon the brittle finger bones of the people, the creatures who had sought entry into Half World before her ..." (60). Resembling the Bosch's paintings that Melanie used to see hanging in her house, crossing the gate means entering a posthuman ethnoscape populated by monstrous creatures living in despair in a liminal world without colour, condemned to experience their worst traumatic event eternally:

> She continued with her descent, anchoring herself with the railing, as she continued to gaze upon the frightening dreamscape. As she neared the ground she could make out people, strangely shaped creatures dressed in human clothing, dogs endlessly chasing their own tails, a woman jumping into the canal, only to reappear on the worn paving stones, to jump again anew. (75)

Caught in their Half Lives, these posthuman bodies die and return again in an unbreakable pattern, repeating the cycle once and again. Halberstam and Livingstone contend that "Posthuman bodies are the causes and effects of

postmodern relations of power and pleasure, virtuality and reality, sex and its consequences. The posthuman body is a technology, a screen, a projected image; it is a body under the sign of AIDS, a contaminated body, a deadly body, a techno-body; it is ... a queer body" (3). Goto thus poses a critique of how contemporary societies are populated by troubled beings whose experiences of embodiment and corporeality are experienced in terms of lack, trauma, and fear. However, there is still hope in Goto's narratives for human beings today to develop alternative ties of affection and reproduction that could activate counter-hegemonic political actions and practices.

Material feminist critic Elizabeth Grosz provides an intriguing account of futurity in terms of what she calls a "productive monstrosity:"

> The future emerges from the interplay of a repetition of cultural/biological factors, and the emergence of new conditions of survival. It must be connected, genealogically related, to what currently exists, but it is capable of many possible variations in current existence, the exploration of its virtual tendencies as well as its actualized products. The new is a generation of productive monstrosity, the deformation and transformation of prevailing models and norms, so that what has been unrecognized in the past and present, as well as what deformations the present can sustain, will elaborate themselves in the future. (43)

Goto's *oeuvre* echoes Grosz' articulation of "productive monstrosity," particularly in the ways narratives such as *Half World* advocate for alternative futurities populated by non-normative or so-called deviant populations. The doomed

inhabitants of Half World lack the potential to activate change because their bodies are not only subjected to traumatic experiences but also terrorized by Mr. Glueskin, a posthuman being that challenges the boundaries of corporeality. In her discussion of Katrina as an instance of what she refers to as the viscous porosity that characterizes the world today, Nancy Tuana claims that the boundaries between our flesh and the flesh of the world we are of, and in, are porous[22]. This "viscous porosity" of bodies belies any effort to identify a natural divide between nature and culture. Interestingly, these two concepts of "viscosity" and "porosity" resonate in Goto's *Half World* in the representation of the villain Mr. Glueskin, a grotesque creature who has used his corporeal monstrosity as a form of power to control part of the population in his Realm: "His face was gaunt, but his skin seemed to hang from his bones, as if it were too loose. He wore a plastic raincoat that ended high above his skinny knees, and his stick-like legs were ensconced in large black rubber boots. [...] His tongue extended across several metres" (82). Systematically swallowing other creatures' bodies, Mr. Glueskin's physicality is thus constructed through a variety of human and non-human materialities also including skin, plastic, rubber, and glue. The boundaries of his own corporeality are also loose, since he is described several times as looking pregnant. In the essay "Soft Fictions and Intimate Documents: Can Feminism Be Posthuman?," cultural theorist Paula Rabinowitz claims that

[22] In the 2011 CWRC Conference that was held at Ryerson University, Professor Patricia Demers discussed the concept of porosity with regards to space in her paper "Place and Space: Toronto the Good in the Fiction and Life of Grace Irwin." As Demers claims, space should be envisioned not so much as bounded areas, but as open and porous networks of social relations.

> Poised between action and representation, posthuman bodies [...] are bodies living outside national, sexual, economic borders. They exceed and override borders by turning bodies into acts and actions into representations. Eliminating the distinction between action and articulation, deed and word, the posthuman body is still saturated with the stories of humanity that circulate around it; it speaks through a language straddling the borders between health/sickness, male/female, real/imaginary. (98)

As portrayed in Goto's novel, this creature's posthuman body is not only scarred by the traumas that it had experienced for centuries, but also saturated by the multiple other body parts contained within his own materiality, owing to his cannibalistic impulses. Mr. Glueskin lives at The Mirages Hotel, where most of the narrative in the second half of the text takes place:

> The lobby was like a bazaar: a combination of a trade show and a market square. Businessmen with crocodile eyes slid payments of frogs and lizards into one another's pockets as if they were passing envelopes of money. A few finely dressed ladies had bird beaks instead of lips, or reptilian tails trailing out behind their gowns. In little tents and booths merchants displayed their wares and shouted at potential customers, cajoling, begging, screaming for their patronage. [...] Selections of breast implants were displayed on gleaming platters like rows of dead jellyfish with complimentary funhouse mirrors. Dietary supplements were sold with promotional deep fryers and cotton candy machines. (80)

This posthuman space is still characterized by a corporate ideology where capital and commodities hold currency, resembling in a multitude of ways the mall culture depicted in "Stinky Girl" and in Larissa Lai's *Salt Fish Girl*.

In her article on MCS and trans-corporeality, feminist theorist Stacy Alaimo discusses the concept of unruly materiality claiming that "it can be understood as a kind of deviance, in the sense that bodies and human substances may depart from norms, standards, and models of prediction" (116). Goto's protagonists transform the construction of their phantom bodies into ones of unruly materiality in their potential for corporeal agency and productive knowledge. In "Stinky Girl," Goto establishes an intriguing connection between material objects and material bodies and the negative effects in the construction of human subjectivity and corporeality: "People generally believe that fatties secrete all sorts of noxious substances from their bodies. But regardless. The one bane of my life, the one cloud of doom which circumscribes my life is the odour of myself" (35). The narrator has internalized the feelings of revulsion and abjection that she has experienced in her own material body through her interactions with society, especially through her walks around the shopping mall:

> When people see obesity, they are amazed. Fascinated. Attracted and repulsed simultaneously. Now if we could harness all the emotions my scale inspires, who knows how many homes it would heat, how many trains it would move? People always think there is a reason behind being grand. That there must be some sort of glandular problem, or an eating

> disorder, a symptom of some childhood trauma. All I can say is: not to my knowledge. (37)

The very materiality of the woman's body has the potential to become a productive source of energy and yet, capitalist society constructs it as a source of negative affect[23]. Being a witness and thus inevitably part of the "human mall condition" she describes, the narrator, nonetheless, suddenly experiences a moment of hope and possibility when she realizes that her odour is not smell but sound instead:

> The sounds that emanate from my skin are so intense that mortal senses recoil, deflect beauty into ugliness as a way of coping. Unable to bear hearing such unearthly sounds they transmute it into stench. And my joy! Such incredible joy. The hairs on my arms stand electric, the static energy and my smell/sound mix such dizzying intensity the plastic surrounding me bursts apart, falls away from my being like an artificial cocoon. (53)

Her corporeality gains such power that it has the radical potential to affect the environment around her, shattering destructive sources into pieces. Goto thus subverts an essentialist politics of the visible and substitutes it for a politics of resistance based on the fusion of body and voice. Likewise, there is a moment of hope at the end of *Half World* that is intricately linked to Melanie's corporeal materiality and the natural world surrounding her: "The fog squealed and screamed as it tried to pour into her nostrils, her ears and mouth. Melanie refused. She clung to herself and believed. Hope swelled inside her chest and broke free,

[23] See Lauren Berlant's essay "Slow Death (Sovereignty, Obesity, Lateral Agency)" (2007) for an in-depth analysis of how the bodies of certain marginalized populations deteriorate as a result of structural inequalities and violences.

streaming from her body in bright rays of light" (202). Previously, some of the strategic weapons that Melanie tried to use to rescue her mother also appealed to the power of the physical senses for recognition: "She glared at her mother, willing her to know her. Can't you *feel* that it's me! she begged internally. Can't you *see* your own daughter, standing in front of you!" (127). Even though her mother does not seem to remember her own daughter, Melanie uses her own material corporeality as a useful resource to recover memory and intimacy. Her mother, however, seems to have lost hope as a result of being subjected to the control and manipulation of Mr. Glueskin: "Many in Half World cannot rise above the despair. This is why your mother behaves as if she doesn't know you. She doesn't know you right now. She is caught in her trauma. She has not yet woken" (142). It is not until the villain is destroyed that the mother/daughter dyad can be restored. Mr. Glueskin is finally disabled when Melanie throws buckets of ice onto his body until he loses all elasticity and his tongue breaks off. In an intriguing reversal, life instead of death emerges:

> A wet *crack*! Mr. Glueskin, hard as a peach pit, split wide open to reveal the tender centre. [...] They stared, shocked, speechless [...]. His hardened white body had cracked in two. He had no entrails or bones; he was solid white all the way through. And in splitting he had exposed a small baby. (174)

His pregnancy transgresses a series of binary oppositions in terms of the nature/culture divide, together with a set of gender expectations. Furthermore, by making a villain posthuman creature bear the possibility of futurity, Goto is

challenging traditional definitions of the female body as primarily a reproductive body. Futurity in the novel is thus rearticulated through the transgression of several socially-constructed boundaries, including those of gendered material bodies. Interestingly, this baby will be raised by a community of non-normative citizens including the young Melanie and the old lesbian woman, Ms. Wei. In a sense then, it could be argued that Baby G. embodies the combination of fear and yet, hope, that characterizes both Goto's *oeuvre* and contemporary times.

In her discussion of performativity, material feminist Karen Barad stresses the need for the shift of attention from representation towards doings and actions. Goto shares this call in her fictional worlds where anti-racist and queer feminist practices and solidarities are systematically advocated. And this political struggle is particularly forceful considering that *Half World* was released as young adult fiction. There is thus an intended idea of the responsibility towards informing future generations of the importance of sustaining a call for action and for the importance of tracing a feminist genealogy for historical and political purposes. Far from being moralistic, the end of *Half World* provides an alternative version of the happy ending tradition in the western canon. Melanie has to get out of Half World leaving her mother behind. Yet her influence will remain forever imprinted in her daughter's life: "*It is for you to choose what you will do with your Life. Rest, if you are weary. Hide, when it is prudent to do so. But try to live it fully. Live as you are meant to live!* Her mother's Spirit was jubilant. *Darling girl! What you have done! Know that the actions of one girl can change everything!*" (206). Melanie will live without the physical presence of her parents but she will be

surrounded by an alternative family structure that will also provide her with numerous forms of care and attachment. Interestingly, the last few words in the novel are uttered by a cat and a rat who exchange an ironic conversation in the so-called Epilogue:

> *'So the girl saves the Realms, loses her parents and ends up living with an old woman while they raise a baby,' the white cat said snidely. 'Human lives are so pitifully pedestrian. You have to admit it. There is nothing spectacular about them. How awful it must be to be human.' The rat opened wide her mouth and revealed her long incisors in a great rat grin. 'Don't be so certain,' she said. 'Sometimes endings are beginnings in the making.'* (227-229)

By granting the centrality of voice to non-human creatures in the last lines of the narrative, Goto provides readers with an ironic ending that certainly illustrates the constant interrogation of what it means to be human, the ethical responsibilities it entails, and the potential for survival. "Is there no hope for our next generation? Will the non-starving members of our species perish from ennui even before we've polluted our environment to the point of no return?" (50), asks the narrator in "Stinky Girl" at the end of the story. Human beings, on the one hand, do not seem to care about others but merely function as zombies in a world defined by affective paralysis, material consumerism, and the negative construction of racialized and sexualized bodies. And yet, on the other hand, as I claim at the opening of this chapter, renewed versions of hope abound in contemporary societies, particularly if we look at those revolutionary practices that are

struggling to counteract systematic abuses of power. In a myriad ways, Goto's texts show this ambivalence between feelings of terror and hope that ultimately seem to bring forth a series of productive monstrosities. Almeida contends that "as part of a visible minority, Goto employs an ironic voice to reject the imposition of standardized bodies and behaviour and relate the experience of Asian-American women as they become agents of their own bodies and culture" (58-9). Furthermore, as I claim in this chapter, Goto's narratives introduce non-normative subjects that not only resist power structures but also embody the potential for a queer futurity formed by heterogeneous communities of hopeful beings.

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Corporeal Citizenship: Unruly Bodies and Closet Spaces in Emma Donoghue's *Room*

> Agency is about the possibilities and accountability entailed in reconfiguring material-discursive apparatuses of bodily production, including the boundary articulations and exclusions that are marked by those practices in the enactment of a causal structure.
>
> Karen Barad, "Posthumanist Performativity: Toward an Understanding of How Matter Comes to Matter" (827).

> Humans and bees should just wave, no touching. No patting a dog unless its human says OK, no running across roads, no touching private parts except mine in private. Then there's special cases, like police are allowed shoot guns but only at bad guys.
>
> Emma Donoghue, *Room* (274).

In the study *Reinventing Ireland: Culture, Society and the Global Economy* (2002), cultural critics Peadar Kirby, Luke Gibbons, and Michael Cronin discuss the impact of globalization and institutional surveillance in

contemporary Ireland, claiming that "the preoccupation with punishment and social control is an essential feature of the disciplining of populations if they are to be made to live with the economic, social and cultural consequences of aggressive neo-liberalism" (9). Particularly in the context of the world after 9/11, this insistence on discipline and punishment has functioned towards the control of populations and bodies through the application of surveillance technologies. A decade after the attacks, Canadian Prime Minister Stephen Harper reflects on the impact of September 11 in the following terms:

> The war on terror, can it be won? [...] The truth of the matter is there's so many different possibilities, manifestations of terrorism I think it is a case that we will have to be perpetually vigilant … and I just think that's going to be an ongoing reality … that's just life going forward in the 21st century, unfortunately.[24]

Harper's words signal what seems to be a pervasive globalized agreement on regarding systematic surveillance as the unavoidable formula to secure safety, which points to new reconfigurations of biopolitics and biopower[25] in contemporary times. In this contradictory era of uneven globalization, where information, capital, and goods benefit from absolute mobility, while human subjects are further exposed to systems of control and surveillance, biopolitical borders have become contradictory entities that need to be further interrogated, particularly with regards to their impact on material bodies.

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[24] Interview conducted by Meagan Fitzpatrick on September 8, 2011, for CBC News: http://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/story/2011/09/08/pol-harper-mansbridge-invu.html

[25] See chapter two in this dissertation for a detailed discussion of the terms "biopower" and "biopolitics" as developed by Michel Foucault in the Lectures on *Security, Territory, Population* delivered in 1978 and 1979 at the Collège de France.

In these paradoxical times that characterize the beginning of the 21st century, the role of culture and the arts occupies a shifting space imbued with potential for radical social and political transformation. It is in this light that I would like to begin my discussion on Irish-Canadian author Emma Donoghue and her controversial novel *Room* (2010). Sold in over 40 languages, *Room* has become a transnational bestseller since its publication last August. Winner of the Canada and Caribbean Regional Commonwealth Prize for Fiction and the Rogers Writers' Trust Fiction Prize (for best Canadian novel), and shortlisted for the Man Booker Prize, the Governor General's Award, and the Orange Prize, among many other accolades, the publication of *Room* has radically contributed to the consolidation of Emma Donoghue as a writer not only in the Irish and the Canadian literary contexts, but also in the panorama of globalized literature.

Departing from the Irish-centred focus of her earlier "coming out" novels *Stir-Fry* (1994) and *Hood* (1995), and also moving away from the realm of historical or historiographic fiction that has characterized later pieces such as *Slammerkin* (2000), *Life Mask* (2004) or *The Sealed Letter* (2008), Donoghue's novel introduces readers into the mind and world of Jack, a 5 year-old boy that has been born and raised in a paradoxical place called "Room." Drawing on Michel Foucault's insights on surveillance and disciplinary power, together with Peter Singer's ethical response to globalization, this section of my chapter examines the reconfiguration of space and the body in Donoghue's novel *Room*. I interrogate not only how the female body is terrorized through sexual violence and imprisonment, but also how the body of the child occupies a liminal space

that challenges traditional concepts of home and nation. By portraying Jack as embodying a set of ethical foundations necessary for the challenging and re-articulation of traditional binary oppositions that sustain hegemonic and heteronormative structures, I argue that Donoghue is proposing novel forms of "corporeal citizenship" that would allow for social and political transformation. Furthermore, the novel poses an indirect critique of the technologies of surveillance, and therefore raises intriguing concerns about the impact of strategies like the war on terror imposed by the U.S. after 9/11 on populations that are now classified as deviant.

Jack has been born and raised in Room, a paradoxical prison that is not "on the map" and thus a space that is located outside both geopolitical and biopolitical normative boundaries. Hegemonic feelings of attachment, belonging, and national affiliation are hence suspended in this space, and instead, the potential for alternative conceptualizations of affect and citizenship are suggested. In the first volume of *The History of Sexuality* (1978), Foucault claims that "the body of the child, under surveillance, surrounded in his cradle, his bed, or his room by an entire watch-crew of parents, nurses, servants, educators, and doctors, all attentive to the least manifestations of his sex, has constituted, particularly since the eighteenth century, another 'local center' of power-knowledge" (98). Jack, however, while being confined to a soundproofed cell with his mother, under the total subjection of their kidnapper, nicknamed Old Nick, remains remarkably free from institutional control. In fact his body has never been subjected to any traditional disciplinary mechanisms. By systematically sleeping

in a "closet space" (Brown 2000) he calls "Wardrobe," where invisibility represents comfort and safety, Jack has managed to escape the perverted look of his captor. Interestingly, the metaphor of the closet resonates in the narrative in the central role that this material and symbolic space plays in Jack's development. In his study on the metaphorical and material dimensions of the closet as a spatial practice of power/knowledge, Michael Brown argues that the closet "is kept at bay not only from the public sphere, but from the private sphere as well. To be in a closet physically is to stand apart from, but still inside, the room where the closet is located" (128). As Brown contends, feelings of alienation and uncertainty are often the result of occupying this border space. While still generating certain feelings of fragmentation, Jack re-imagines the closet as a liminal space of secret knowledge. He can observe without being seen, in Hitchcockian fashion, thus privileging his optics over his captor's. By doing so, Jack reflects on his captor's ignorance and thus limited power in that he manages to remain unnoticed in Room. Often referred to with the neutral gender "it," Old Nick's attention is most of the times set away from the boy, who is perceived as a non-desirable object. Disciplinary power, Foucault claims, "is exercised through its invisibility; at the same time it imposes on those whom it subjects a principle of compulsory visibility" (*Discipline* 187). Jack, nonetheless, resists this model of disciplinary power by interrogating and reconstructing the spatial realities he inhabits throughout the novel.

This closet space called Wardrobe enables Jack not only to develop his imagination but also to keep his body unmarked by patriarchal violence. In

contrast, Jack's mother has been abused for the seven years she has been locked in Room after being kidnapped when she was 19 years old. Enduring systematic sexual violence and imprisonment, the woman's body appears to function exclusively as the material target of Old Nick's sadistic pleasures. Jack's mother, however, also actively uses her own body as a way of distracting her captor from infringing any violence on Jack. By doing so, she successfully challenges a simplistic interpretation of her role as one of strict submission, and instead suggests a potential for unruliness and dissent in ways that echo Hiromi Goto's narratives. In his discussion of the body politic, Foucault argues that in order for power relations to develop, human bodies must be subjugated by turning them into objects of knowledge (*Discipline* 28). Significantly, though, this obedient and repressed body, Foucault stresses, can also become an enabled and useful body, as Donoghue illustrates in this novel, thus complicating traditional binary opposites like able/disabled, productive/unproductive, or submissive/assertive.

After being locked in Room for seven years, Jack's mother devises a risky plan to escape, which consists in making Jack play dead and then, convincing their captor to take the corpse somewhere outside, wrapped in a rug, and bury it somewhere. Once he's put in the back of Old Nick's truck, Jack is supposed to free himself, jump into the street, and ask for help:

> Don't move don't move don't move JackerJack stay stiff stiff stiff. I'm squished in Rug, I can't breathe right, but dead don't breathe anyway. […] The *beep beep* again, then the *click*, that means Door is open. The ogre's got me, fee fie foe fum. Hot on my legs, oh no, Penis let some pee out.

> And also a bit of poo squirted out my bum, Ma never said this would happen. Stinky. *Sorry*, *Rug*. A grunt near my ear, Old Nick's got me tight. I'm so scared I can't be brave, stop stop stop but I can't make a sound or he'll guess the trick and he'll eat me headfirst, he'll rip off my legs … I count my teeth but I keep losing count […]. *Are you there, Tooth? I can't feel you but you must be in my sock, at the side. You're a bit of Ma, a little bit of Ma's dead spit riding along with me*. I can't feel my arms. The air's different. Still the dustiness of Rug but when I lift my nose a tiny bit I get this air that's … Outside. (137-138)

Notice how Jack's experience of coming out into the "Outside" involves multiple levels of abjection, in Kristevan fashion, having to deal with corporeal fluids, fear, fantasies of dismemberment, and violence. It is in fact the soothing atavistic comfort of chewing one of his mother's teeth that gives him the courage to "come out" into a different material space. By mastering the movement of his body and remaining silent, Jack manages to survive his own performance of death, and live. Interestingly, the idea of performativity is intrinsic to this episode in the novel where Jack frees himself. As Brown and other critics in queer studies have argued, the act of coming out of the closet entails a performative speech act. Often, it is through speech that queer subjects reveal their sexuality, usually to loved ones first to secure a space of safety. Significantly, it is not speech that characterizes Jack's arrival into this unknown place but corporeality through a deep awareness of his own material body. For Jack then, coming out is not only an ontological moment where existence and becoming flourish, but also a moment

of acute awareness and knowledge of his material body. Engaging with the insights of theorists such as Judith Butler, it could be argued then that Jack's coming out of the closet favours a corporeal "doing" over "saying" (*Bodies* 1993).

In Donoghue's novel, the act of leaving Room entails coming out into a different space of power/knowledge, in this case, the society of an unnamed North American city at the turn of the 21st century. While being confined to Room with his mother, under the total subjection of their kidnapper, Jack, as I previously argued, managed to remain free from institutional control. In an intriguing reversal, it is when Jack and his mother enter the realities of this society that all the disciplinary mechanisms like the media, the hospital, and the police saturate the child's body by marking it as a source of monstrosity and imperfection. Jack, nonetheless, strategically devises ways to escape society's multiple closet spaces by developing what I refer to as a new form of "corporeal citizenship" based on the rules of his own material body instead of national or institutional affiliation[26]. According to Foucault, in disciplinary society, social command is regulated and constructed by a network of apparatuses such as the prison, the factory, or the hospital, that produce customs and habits with the ultimate goal of prescribing normal vs. deviant behaviours. In a society of control, the mechanisms of command are distributed throughout the brains and bodies of its citizens, contributing to the interiorization of dialogic systems of integration and exclusion within subjects themselves. Describing the world around him as "the medical

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[26] The concept of "corporeal citizenship" has been previously used within the context of environmental justice in T. Gabrielson and K. Parady's recent article "Corporeal Citizenship: Rethinking Green Citizenship through the Body" in *Environmental Politics* 19.3 (May 2010): 374-391.

planet" (163), Jack systematically experiences the technologies of power over his own body: he is measured, given needles, and dressed in new clothes, constantly feeling observed and under surveillance. In the influential *Discipline and Punish*, Foucault examines in detail the workings of the Panopticon, describing it as "a type of location of bodies in space" (205). By extension, any panoptic institution fulfills a similar role, standing as laboratories of power. Interestingly for the purposes of this chapter, the domain of panopticism, he argues, involves a region of irregular bodies (208). Significantly, Jack's body is saturated by multiple mechanisms of disciplinary control ranging from a variety of doctors and specialists, to the devastating impact of the media that systematically depicts him in terms of deviance and abjection. Called Bonsai Boy, among many other infantilizing and derogatory terms, Jack is described as suffering some form of retardation and potentially subject to all sorts of deficiencies: "As well as immune issues, [Dr. Clay tells Jack's mother,] there are likely to be challenges in the areas of, let's see, social adjustment, obviously, sensory modulation—filtering and sorting all the stimuli barraging him—plus difficulties with spatial perception…" (182). All these disciplinary mechanisms, far from making Jack feel protected, contribute to his uneasiness with the structures of control that surround him in the new world he inhabits. As Jack himself explains, "In Room I was safe and Outside is the scary" (219).

Nevertheless, though only temporarily, Jack's unruly body resists being disciplined by the mechanisms of control that characterize contemporary North American society, thus denaturalizing the body politics of the family, and

arguably by extension, the national. After his mother tries to commit suicide in the clinic where they are being treated, Jack moves in with his extended family for a few days. His grandparents' house represents yet another disciplinary space that attempts to train Jack into becoming a normative subject. In a significant episode in the novel, Jack wants to have a bath with his grandma but she refuses to expose her body to him, and insists on wearing a swimsuit to his amusement. When she explains she rather not be naked in front of him, he cleverly asks if it makes her scared. Perplexed, Jack questions the lack of coherence on the application of rules around the body and physical intimacy:

> Humans and bees should just wave, no touching. No patting a dog unless its human says OK, no running across roads, no touching private parts except mine in private. Then there's special cases, like police are allowed to shoot guns but only at bad guys. There's too many rules to fit in my head, so we make a list with Dr. Clay's extra-heavy golden pen. (274)

When living in Room, Jack and his mother were sometimes dressed and sometimes naked, as he explains, so he does not understand the strange knowledge that adults seem to possess in this new world, where the borders between the private and the public spheres seem arbitrarily constructed. Jack's lack of understanding of these rules functions as a critique of the randomness of institutional disciplinary mechanisms that regulate people's bodies.

In yet another episode in the novel, Jack's grandma takes him to the library for the day. Spontaneously, he gives a hug to a little boy, and accidentally knocks him down. She apologises for her grandson, explaining how he's still learning

about boundaries. After this incident, Jack is reminded of a series of rules around emotional attachment and embodiment: "Remember, […] we don't hug strangers. Even nice ones." Confused, Jack insists on asking his grandma why not, to what she simply replies: "We just don't, we save our hugs for people we love." In a simple statement that yet reveals Jack's dissenting set of rules about the technologies of affection and gender, he defiantly replies: "I love that boy Walker." His grandma, however, simply dismisses him by saying: "Jack, you never saw him before in your life" (288). Jack's corporeal citizenship involves a sympathy towards strangers that might open up spaces for the interrogation of socially-constructed borders around bodies. Challenging systemic categories that prescribe normalization over deviance, Jack develops a series of ties of affection and attachment towards strangers that interrogate the boundaries of the family and the home, thus momentarily enabling the possibility of envisioning a reconfiguration of social relations.

In his provocative book *One World: The Ethics of Globalization*, philosopher Peter Singer encourages nations to take on an ethical perspective on globalization, stressing the need to design an ethic based not on national boundaries but on the idea of one world. Expanding Benedict Anderson's well-known insights on imagined communities, Singer argues the following:

> If Anderson is right, [...] then it is also possible for us to imagine ourselves to be part of a different community. That fits well with the suggestion that the complex set of developments we refer to as globalization should lead us to reconsider the moral significance we currently place on national

> boundaries. We need to ask whether it will, in the long run, be better if we continue to live in the imagined communities we know as nation-states, or if we begin to consider ourselves as members of an imagined community of the world. (171)

Singer discusses the concept of national identity by posing several questions: To what extent we have an obligation to help strangers in distant lands in the same way we have an obligation towards our own neighbours or compatriots? Is geographical prorximity in itself of any moral significance? By acquiring knowledge about his own body and developing alternative ties of affection towards strangers, Jack begins to develop a form of corporeal citizenship that challenges normative borders around corporeality and allows for the reconfiguration of multiple symbolic and material closet-spaces. In this sense, I would argue that Donoghue's young protagonist gestures towards novel forms of affect and embodiment that might open up ethical spaces for the reconfiguration of global geopolitical communities.

Room tackles current affairs such as the impact of naturalized systems of confinement, imprisonment, and surveillance in contemporary Western societies, thus raising concerns about the impact of uneven globalization and strategies like the war on terror imposed by the U.S. after September 11. While economic globalization, through the power of corporations, favours the erasure of borders for the generation of free markets, the recent war on terror has created new borders that have limited the movement of certain members of the world population based on racial and religious categories. One cannot help identifying

an indirect critique of these processes in a novel like *Room*. On the other hand, as I have implicitly suggested in this section, by positioning the child's abjected body as a positive source of difference, Donoghue manages to reimagine a queer futurity located beyond spatial and gender heteronormative imaginaries. Finally, by relocating the body of the child from a position of abnormality and deviance into one of dissenting knowledge and power, Donoghue raises, in Foucauldian fashion, intriguing ethical questions about the implications and limitations of the technologies of power in the 21st century.

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Material feminist theorists strive for "definitions of human corporeality that can account for how the discursive and the material interact in the constitution of bodies. [...] [They] explore the interaction of culture, history, discourse, technology, biology, and the 'environment,' without privileging any one of these elements" (Alaimo and Hekman 7). As I argue in this chapter, the works of these queer transCanadian women writers offer alternative possibilities of reconfiguring material-discursive apparatuses of bodily production by introducing a series of abjected and deviant populations that are granted the possibility to activate change. Jack, Yasmine, Melanie, and "Stinky Girl" all advocate novel ways of understanding human corporeality and how it is inextricably linked to other material bodies. By putting corporeal, and as I further claim in the next chapters, biopolitical and affective relations at the centre of attention, these

writers propose a cross-border ethic that cuts across epistemological and ontological structures, while simultaneously advocating for alternative ways of knowing and being in the world; a cross-border ethic that interrogates how bodies shape and are shaped by other bodies, while simultaneously being involved, and at times complicit, in the circulation of affective economies of oppression and dominance.

Chapter Two

Biosovereign Power, Practices of Freedom, Unruly Multitudes: Biopolitical Border-Crossings in Queer TransCanadian Women's Writing

> Although neoliberal strategies of government appropriate and utilize older forms of power—sovereign power, pastoral power, and disciplinary power—biopower offers the most effective and appealing set of strategies for governing social life under neoliberalism because it finds its telos and legitimacy in its articulated capacity to maximize the energies and capabilities of all: individuals, families, market organizations, and the state.
>
> Majia H. Nadesan, *Governmentality, Biopower, and Everyday Life* (3).

> The task facing capital is thus constantly to rebuild borders, reterritorialize the laboring populations, and reconstruct the fixed dimensions of social space.
>
> Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Commonwealth* (244).

> As each cell was opened, the freed help unlock the other doors, and soon the hallway was filled with warm bodies, whispers, grunts, groans, squeaks, and the pungent odour of fur and flesh long unwashed.
>
> Hiromi Goto, *The Water of Possibility* (231).

How are human populations governed in 21st century societies? How are social relations shaped by technologies of power? Which biopolitical authorities discipline and control so-called "deviant" individuals? What practices of freedom are available for unruly multitudes? As Majia H. Nadesan and other Foucauldian critics cogently argue, liberal and neoliberal rationalities privilege some individuals as autonomous self-regulating agents, while subordinating and disciplining other populations as invisible or dangerous. Nevertheless, as current global phenomena such as the Arab spring revolution or the worldwide Occupy movements illustrate, collective action is everyday present thus allowing for the appearance of a series of practices of freedom and resistance. Drawing on recent studies on biopolitics, together with various rearticulations of the concept of "the multitude" (Caldwell 2004; Hardt and Negri 2004, 2009; Agamben 2000), this

chapter examines the tensions between the technologies of biopower and the emergence of a series of revolutionary practices of freedom that resist such mechanisms of control in a variety of contemporary texts. More specifically, this chapter looks at how queer transCanadian women writers like Hiromi Goto, Emma Donoghue, and Dionne Brand systematically interrogate, cross, and rearticulate a variety of biopolitical borders in their *oeuvre* in order to formulate new ethico-political paradigms of justice and coalition in the 21st century.

In the first section of this chapter, I look at how Hiromi Goto's novel *The Water of Possibility* (2002) critically engages with the crossing of biopolitical boundaries in an attempt to explore contemporary political and ethical issues of government, sovereignty, and power. In contrast to previous forms of sovereignty, Caldwell articulates the concept of biosovereignty as determined by a logic of exception, its application to material life, and its appearance in a global biopolitical terrain. I argue that Goto exposes some of the workings of this current form of biosovereign power in the novel through the construction of the figure of the Patriarch and how he governs the population under his control. I particularly focus on the episode where Sayuri, the teenage protagonist, arrives to a city bordered by a barely visible wall and brightened with a strange artificial light. This energy source is in fact an amplification machine with a stone at the centre that sucks the life force of the creatures in charge of keeping it working. It is only through collective action that Sayuri manages to destroy the machine enabling the multitude of blind creatures to free themselves. I also employ Judith Butler's concept of injured sovereignty to explain how the multitude manages to heal

sovereignty and turn it into an instrument of power only for the benefit of the people. By exploring the biopolitical border-crossings between biosovereign power and the resisting practices of freedom of the multitude, Goto manages to advocate alternative forms of justice and solidarity in this contemporary "age of anxiety" (Dunant and Porter 1996).

Further drawing on Foucauldian notions of biopower and biopolitics (Nadesan 2008; Foucault 2007, 1978; Sunder Rajan 2006), the next section of my chapter examines the representation of the female body as a site of "biocapital" in Emma Donoghue's collection *The Woman Who Gave Birth to Rabbits* (2002). Anthropologist Kaushik Sunder Rajan explains how biocapital stands as a system of exchange, involving systems of production, circulation, and consumption:

> Biocapital, like any other form of circulation of capital, involves the circulation and exchange of money and commodities, whose analysis needs to remain central and at the forefront of analysis. But in addition, the circulations of new and particular forms of currency, such as biological material and information, emerge. (17)

Partially drawing on Sunder Rajan's insights, I argue that Donoghue's stories locate the female body at the center of these circuits of power, knowledge, and capital in an attempt to formulate what I refer to as a genealogy of instrumentalization and biocapitalization. Even though the stories analyzed in this section are inspired by events in 18th and 19th century Britain, Donoghue is actually writing them at the turn of the 21st century from Canadian soil. As a

result, the collection creates a genealogy of the biocapitalization of female bodies across temporal and spatial coordinates that is worth investigating.

The final section of my chapter looks at the shifting expressions of biopolitical life in the collaborative project *Borderless: A Docu-Drama About the Lives of Undocumented Workers* (2006). Directed by Min Sook Lee[27], written by Dionne Brand[28], and narrated by D'bi Young[29], *Borderless* also incorporates the voices of two of the illegal workers in the film, thus enabling the subjects depicted to express themselves. Significantly, this strategy momentarily subverts the idea of immigrant populations as translated subjects. In this final section, I claim that the undocumented workers in *Borderless* are not only marginalized but their invisibility points to a more complex set of biopolitical rules that fully operate on the lives of these populations turning them into a paradigmatic example of a vulnerable subjectivity and embodiment (Butler 2004). While being depicted as a risk to society's security, these illegal workers occupy a paradoxical borderline position in Canadian society. On the one hand, they are invisible and disembodied forces of production, while on the other they generate visible profit for the nation (Hardt and Negri 2009).

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[27] Based in Toronto, Min Sook Lee is a documentary filmmaker whose *oeuvre* has systematically been politically engaged. Her film work includes *El Contrato* (2003), *Hogtown: The Politics of Policing* (2005), *Tiger Spirit* (2008) and *Sedition* (2008). Her latest documentaries are *My Toxic Baby* (2009) and *Badge of Pride* (2010), and the comedy series *She's the Mayor* (2011).
[28] Though acknowledging its collaborative purpose, I will occasionally refer to *Borderless* as Brand's documentary in this chapter for brevity's sake.
[29] D'bi Young Anitafrika is a queer Jamaican-Canadian dub poet, playwright, and educator.

"Guarded by Fear and Imprisoned by Hope:" Technologies of Biosovereignty and Practices of Freedom in Hiromi Goto's *The Water of Possibility*

> It is the invisible sovereign that stares at us behind the dull-witted masks of the powerful who, whether or not they realize it, govern us in its name.
> Giorgio Agamben, *Means Without End*: *Notes on Politics* (7).

> So many ages of peace / and life / flowed like the mountain stream. / Until a troublesome fox was born- / out of whose imaginings was he wrought? / A fox who seeks to be a master / outside of living law.
> Hiromi Goto, *The Water of Possibility* (148-49).

Anne Caldwell and other Foucauldian critics contend that when life becomes the object of political power, the borders of freedom and oppression, security and danger become shifting territory. It is in this crossing of boundaries where the liminal concepts of biopower and biopolitics emerge[30]. In the lecture delivered on January 11, 1978, Michel Foucault introduces the term biopower as "the set of mechanisms through which the basic biological features of human species became the object of a political strategy, of a general strategy of power " (1). Power then is understood not as a theory, but as a set of relations; a network of mechanisms that circulate around bodily and social spaces. In a similar vein, Nadesan discusses the emergence of biopower as a major force in controlling populations, linked to the development of liberal and neoliberal forms of government: "biopower offers the most effective and appealing set of strategies for governing social life under neoliberalism because it finds its *telos* and

[30] In his well-known *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life* (1998), Giorgio Agamben discusses the state of exception in terms of "the limit concept of the doctrine of law and the state, in which sovereignty borders (since every limit concept is always the limit between two concepts) on the sphere of life and becomes indistinguishable from it" (11). Agamben thus articulates sovereignty and *homo sacer* as "borderline" concepts. In Caldwell's words, "Like sovereignty, homo sacer is a creature of the limit" (par. 20). See Agamben's *Means Without End: Notes on Politics* (2000) for further reference.

legitimacy in its articulated capacity to maximize the energies and capabilities of all: individuals, families, market organizations, and the state" (3). Employing Foucauldian analysis of governance and sovereignty (Foucault 2007; Agamben 2000), the first section of my chapter looks at the crossing of biopolitical borders in Hiromi Goto's novel *The Water of Possibility* (2001), particularly focusing on the tensions between the technologies of biosovereignty (Caldwell 2004) and the practices of freedom of the so-called "multitude" (Hardt and Negri 2009). Foucault argues that the concept of territory stands as the very foundation of the principality of sovereignty: "From the Middle Ages to the sixteenth century, sovereignty is not exercised on things, but first of all on a territory, and consequently on the subjects who inhabit it" (96). The management of populations then intersects with issues of governance. As Foucault himself implies, issues of sovereignty, discipline, and government interact with each other, beyond chronological concerns. In similar lines, Judith Butler discusses governmentality as designating "a model for conceptualizing power in its diffuse and multivalent operations, focusing on the management of populations, and operating through state and non-state institutions and discourses" (*Precarious* xv). Butler articulates the idea of a lost or injured sovereignty that occurs when legal rule is suspended and military codes take place. Further drawing on Butler's insights, I argue that Goto's novel depicts a society where the suspension of the rule of law allows for the convergence of governmentality and sovereignty to occur. In contrast to previous forms of sovereignty, Caldwell draws on Foucault's insights to articulate the concept of "biosovereignty" as "a form of sovereignty operating according to

the logic of the exception rather than law, applied to material life rather than juridical life, and moving within a global terrain now almost exclusively biopolitical" (par. 7). In this section, I claim that Goto exposes some of the workings of this current form of biosovereign power in the novel, particularly through the construction of the figure of the Patriarch and how he governs the population under his control. By exploring the biopolitical border-crossings between the exercise of biosovereignty and the resisting practices of freedom of the multitude, Goto manages to advocate alternative forms of justice and solidarity in this contemporary age of global crisis.

Narrated in the third person, *The Water of Possibility* introduces Sayuri Katos, a 12 year-old girl who moves from the city of Calgary to relocate in a small town in the prairies with her family[31]. Her mother, Kimi, is a writer of horror novels, a detail that seems to have had an impact in the development of Sayuri's imagination. One evening, Sayuri and her 7 year-old brother, Keiji, are left alone in their new house, and so they decide to explore the basement. In gothic fashion, this closed space is described in terms of imprisonment:

> The root cellar was literally a hole in the ground, a ceiling held up with old wooden planks and the floor crumbling concrete. The walls all dirt. [...] The Root Cell, a penitentiary for imaginative children everywhere! The bars of the jail cell a twisting, choking mess of gnarled roots. Potatoes and

[31]Hiromi Goto's *The Water of Possibility* (2001) was published by Coteau Books as part of the series entitled *In the Same Boat*. As stated in the preface, this series tries to fill in the gap of stories about Canadian children that are not descendents from either of the country's so-called founding nations. The other four titles, Cheryl Foggo's *I Have Been in Danger*, Ruby Slipperjack's *Little Voice*, Sherie Posesorski's *Escape Plans*, and Diana Vazquez's *Lost in Sierra*, introduce stories of young Canadians of African, Ojibway, Polish, and Spanish backgrounds, respectively.

withered carrots. Tins of oily fish with no can opener. Turnips long forgotten and gone maggoty. That was what the prisoners ate! A single light bulb and the string for a switch dangling in the centre of the room. (57)

The description of the root cellar as a prison sets the tone for a number of adventures that will follow the two protagonists throughout the narrative. Once in the basement, Sayuri and Keiji are magically transplanted into a new environment. Initially, both protagonists are overwhelmed with fear at the unknown. Sayuri, nonetheless, recovers fast and challenges fear through a philosophical reasoning: "What if we think it's scary because we think it's scary? [...] What if [...] our fear makes a monster? What if our not-fear made it a friend?" (73). As Foucault and other critics have argued, fear is strategically deployed by biopolitical mechanisms as a tactic to control populations[32]. By interrogating the nature of her fear, Sayuri manages to gain control over the foreign land she now occupies[33].

I would like to pause here to have a look at etymology in order to discuss the interconnectedness of the concepts of land and terror. On the one hand, the word "territory" comes from the Latin term *terra*, for "land." Interestingly, "territory" may also derive from the word *terrēre,* meaning "to frighten" (*OED*).

[32] As I claim in this dissertation, the first decade of the 21st century has been unquestionably shaped by a series of events that originated with the 9/11 scenario of destruction and death. Mostly in mediated ways, millions of people witnessed the U.S. superpower become vulnerable territory to external threats. As a result, the world has undergone a multiplicity of restructurings, many of these concerning a new rhetoric of terror that has granted the United States with illegal and unjustified foreign policy actions.

[33] The worldwide Occupy movement has radically brought the verb "to occupy" into the centre of anti-capitalist analysis. See Greg Mitchell's *40 Days that Shook the World: From Occupy Wall Street to Occupy Everywhere* (2011) and Todd Gitlin's *Occupy Nation: The Roots, the Spirit, and the Promise of Occupy Wall Street* (2012) for further reference.

Thus when discussing issues of sovereignty and governance, we are also looking at ways of exercising power over a space[34]. Simultaneously, Sayuri opens up the possibility of reading the figure of the stranger as a potential ally by challenging the hegemonic assumption of fearing the Other as a source of danger and monstrosity. In this regard, I argue that Sayuri conducts herself as an ethico-political subject capable of developing strategies of self-government. In his lectures delivered at the Collège de France in 1977 and 1978 on "Security, Territory, Population," Foucault discusses the object of power and governmentality in terms of the conduct of human beings. Moving between the borders of the ethical and the political, conduct stands, on the one hand, as an act of directing others according to different mechanisms of coercion. Conduct, on the other hand, is also a way of behaving. As Foucault argues, the exercise of power consists then in "conducting conduct." In this sense, Sayuri's quest is also a journey towards the development of conduct which will grant her the power to adapt to the new biopolitical spaces and populations she encounters throughout the narrative[35].

One of the first creatures that Sayuri and Keiji come across in this foreign territory is a yamanba, a mountain woman according to Japanese folklore. In an

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[34] See Stuart Elden's *Terror and Territory: The Spatial Extent of Sovereignty* (2009) for an in-depth examination of the interconnections between these two terms in the context of post 9/11.
[35] In the essay "From Domination to Hegemony," Jean Baudrillard claims that "Power itself must be abolished—and not solely in the refusal to be dominated, which is at the heart of all traditional struggles—but also, just as violently, in the refusal to dominate" (*The Agony* 47). Even though I agree with the political impact that a refusal to hold power could bring to humanity, I am hesitant to apply such a utopian vision to discuss populations that have been historically marginalized or rendered deviant on the basis of race, class, gender, or any other axes of differentiation. See Baudrillard's other essays in the posthumously published collection *The Agony of Power* (2010) for a discussion of the differences between domination and hegemony at the beginning of the 21st century.

exercise of hospitality, the children are taken into her house; a place that is called Mother Forest[36]. In contrast to conventional fairy tales where the woods represent danger, the forest in Goto's novel becomes a space of possibility for female liaisons to flourish. In other words, Sayuri's interaction with this older female figure indirectly shapes her behaviour towards others thus allowing for alternative coalitions to emerge. In his socio-political study on folk tales, Jack Zipes discusses the forest as a space that "allows for enchantment and disenchantment, for it is the place where society's conventions no longer hold true. It is the source of natural right, thus the starting place where social wrongs can be righted" (45). In this case, this feminized forest also initiates a process of self-discovery for the protagonist enabling the exercise of self-governance to develop.

After this episode, Keiji disappears, which prompts Sayuri to embark on a quest that involves entering a variety of foreign lands and territories where she encounters other non-human populations. Echo, a cursed kappa[37] creature, and Machigai, a shape-shifting foxgirl become her fellow travelers[38]. Echo's curse consists in not being able to voice any words of her own but only repeat what someone else has already uttered. The foxgirl, on the other hand, has been

[36] In the 1980s, cultural feminism emphasized the relationship between woman and the natural world, focusing on aspects like the power of the imagination and creativity. See Mary Daly's *Gyn/Ecology: The Metaethics of Radical Feminism* (1978) for further reference.

[37] Hiromi Goto introduces the kappa, a mythological water figure in Japanese folklore, in many of her narratives. Often of a mischievous character, the kappa has reptilian features and a gap on the top of its head to hold the water which is a source of power. See Goto's novel *The Kappa Child* (2002) for further reference.

[38] The transformation into animal form brings to mind the figure of the shaman. In different representations of old myths, "the shaman is often characterised by the distinctive ability to change from human into animal shape […] human flesh transformed into animal flesh or covered over by animal skin" (Windling, 2003). Furthermore, in Shamanism, the role of water is crucial to obtain bodily change, which seems relevant with regards to Goto's novel. For further instances of shape-shifting in contemporary queer transCanadian women writers see Larissa Lai's *When Fox is a Thousand* (1995), a particularly intriguing novel in terms of the central roles that gender, race, and sexuality play in the very act of metamorphosis.

expatriated from her territory by the ruler, the old Fox Patriarch, because of her dissidence: "His idea of mischief borders on cruelty. The Fox Collective doesn't know what to do with him. He does not die. Only grows more powerful. When he found out I ate no meat, he cast me from my people. I am forbidden to return until I have eaten flesh" (105). Goto depicts a society where even though pseudo unionized groups are present, their efficiency is ultimately denied by a sovereign whose power exceeds the rule of law. By controlling what the population eats, the sovereign secures his control over the lives and bodies of his subjects. More importantly, as Goto suggests in the narrative, the ruler of this territory has adopted a state of exception where the rights and freedoms of its citizens have been suspended. In the last essay in *Means Without End: Notes on Politics*, Giorgio Agamben declares how "Living in the state of exception that has now become the rule has meant also this: our private biological body has become indistinguishable from our body politic, experiences that once used to be called political suddenly were confined to our biological body, and private experiences present themselves all of a sudden outside us as body politic" (138). Goto is certainly addressing this biopolitical impulse that characterizes societies in the 21st century, particularly engaging with how petty sovereigns today systematically deviate from the law in their exercise of sovereignty and government.

During her journey, Sayuri's body alternatively occupies both spaces of oppression and freedom, so that the effect on the reader is the systematic transgression of biopolitical boundaries. At one point in the narrative, she is

captured and locked in a wooden cage inside a cave by a Blue Oni; a horrifying ogre that according to Japanese myth cannot be overpowered. With the help of the foxgirl, Sayuri manages to free herself and continue her quest in search of her missing brother. She is then welcomed by the Tanuki, a community of women who live underground. Always ensuring to be respectful to the foreign populations she meets, Sayuri is aware of her position as a stranger and thus a potential threat: "I am a visitor to your lands, journeying from one place to another. Please forgive me if I have intruded in your forest" (141). By making Sayuri embody both imprisoned and free subjectivities, Goto manages to interrogate how biopolitical categories are socially constructed.

After spending a few days with the Tanuki women, the three travellers decide to continue their journey in search of Sayuri's brother. To her surprise, though, she is betrayed by Echo so when she wakes up, Machigai is in a cage of metal with a chain bit into her neck, and she is surrounded by kappa soldiers who wear dark clothes, boots, and carry artificial flashlights. Subjected to the soldiers' instructions, the prisoners walk till they reach a desolate piece of land:

> Trees had been cut into low stumps and some were uprooted, the roots writhing upward like screams. The girl stared blankly around her. [...] The destruction to the land was the most horrible thing she had seen since coming to this place. Sayuri shook her head. What did she care? This wasn't her home. And at home, they did this kind of thing every day! She'd lived in a city her whole life! (175)

Sayuri is confronted with an ethical dilemma that echoes some of the concerns raised by Peter Singer in his ethical approach to uneven globalization processes[39]. To what extent are we responsible towards the well being of strangers in distant lands? Should we care about strangers in the same way we care about our neighbours or fellow citizens? Initially, Sayuri is sceptical towards this idea of care towards what is not considered home. Yet, she is dismayed at the desolation in front of her and overwhelmed in terms of her affective response to the land[40]. A sense of loss is followed by Sayuri's terror at the thought of the figure of the Patriarch: "She couldn't think. Panic crumbled her reason and strength. As if the very earth was falling out from beneath her, she would plunge, plummet eternally into a never-ending chasm of fear" (177). As evoked in the epigraph by Agamben that I included at the beginning of this section, it is a yet to be materialized sovereign, a spectral figure, that exerts his power behind the masks of those regulatory apparatuses that sustain his good government. As any effective military army, the kappa soldiers function as an instrument in the hands of the sovereign to control the population. And yet, when Sayuri realizes that the soldiers feed from cruelty and pain, she strategically gains control over her fear in an act of self-government. As Foucault suggests, "[t]o constitute one's self as a subject who governs implies that one has constituted himself as a subject having care for self" ("The Ethic" 13). Sayuri's "care for self" grows through her journey in similar

[39] For a detailed discussion of Peter Singer's insights in *One World: The Ethics of Globalization* (2004) see the section of my dissertation on Emma Donoghue's *Room* where I read Jack as embodying the set of ethical foundations necessary for the rearticulation of social relations and the formation of alternative ties of attachment towards strangers.
[40] The material landscape surrounding Sayuri is described in the text in terms of mourning, which is interesting in an ethico-political sense if we consider Judith Butler's insights in *Precarious Life* (2004). See other sections in this chapter for a more detailed examination of Butler's influential text.

fashion to *bildungsroman* narratives, particularly through the acts of questioning. Once she is free from fear, Sayuri begins to wonder about the causes of her imprisonment: "What did the kappa want with them? Why would the Patriarch imprison them? They hadn't done anything. Unless he hated humans. What would they do to a human who didn't belong in this place?" (180). According to Greek thought, Foucault explains, "in order to behave properly, in order to practice freedom properly, it was necessary to care for self, both in order to know one's self and to improve one's self" ("The Ethic" 5). Foucault's demanding care for yourself ethos involves, among other things, knowing what you are capable of, the meaning of being a citizen in a city, distinguishing between what to and what not to fear, and determining what should be indifferent to you. According to his understanding, it could be argued that Sayuri's journey towards learning to care for herself eventually leads her to the practice of freedom for herself and others.

Wandering through a wasteland as an imprisoned being, Sayuri is taken closer to a city of strange proportions: "The sun reflected off bulbous metal, turrets of glass and razor edges. [...] Metal spiralled from the peaks of fluted towers, and there was no sense in the profusion of glittering walls and roofs tiled with glass. [...] The city glimmered, shimmered, and she could almost hear a metallic hum" (187). Evoking the desolate landscapes of science fiction and apocalyptic narratives, this unknown territory resembles the living hell space portrayed in Goto's novel *Half World*[41]. Brightened with an artificial light, this grotesque cityscape is bordered by a strange material:

[41] Partially drawing on Arjun Appadurai's insights, I describe the landscape portrayed in Goto's *Half World* as a "posthuman ethnoscape" in the first chapter. This space is populated by monstrous

> A barely visible wall stood in their way. Barely visible because Sayuri could see through it. [...] Not a wall. Something else. A shimmering buzz ... was it electricity? The surface of the 'wall' shimmered slightly. Like liquid. And the girl realized that the 'wall' was a rippling dome that surrounded the whole city. [...] The surface of the dome shivered, undulated like fluid. The wall rippled, a slow-motion liquid, and lines formed in the transparent surface. In the shape of a great eye. (192-3)

When the kappa army stops in front of the so-called wall, Sayuri wonders what keeps them from entering their own land. Unexpectedly, one of the soldiers agrees with her and expresses his concern about their own safety: "Every time we pass through this wall, we lose more of ourselves. Are we so weakened that we don't recognize that the final outcome is total nonexistence?" (192). We can see in these words the first moment of awareness in the part of an instrument of control of its own role within the biopolitical technologies of power where life itself is being risked. In his article on necropolitics, Foucauldian scholar Achille Mbembe explains his focus on "those figures of sovereignty whose central project is not the struggle for autonomy but the generalized instrumentalization of human existence and the material destruction of human bodies and populations" (14). The ultimate expression of sovereignty, as he and other critics claim, thus resides in the power to dictate who may live and who must die. According to this definition, the Patriarch is the ultimate biosovereign in that he not only dictates who may live or die, but also rules in such a perverse way that the life of certain populations is

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creatures living in despair in a liminal world without colour, condemned to experience their worst traumatic event eternally. A similar argument could be used to discuss the grotesque city that Sayuri is taken to.

suspended in a kind of living hell. Ruling with fear, this sovereign does not allow any acts of disobedience among his subjects and so he uses a big amber eye to annihilate dissenters like the kappa soldier that complains: "The kappa was tossed into the side of the dome. She was sucked in, absorbed so quickly it was as if she had never existed. Her boots fell heavily to the ground and her clothing fluttered after. One by one, the kappa were pulled in, their forms dissolving like water. Not one of them screamed" (193-94). As the narrative shows, the eye turns into a hole that functions as a doorway into this mysterious city.

When Sayuri awakes, she is taken to meet the Patriarch. Facing him has unexpected results[42]. He is described as a slender fox with a melodious voice and human hands on the ends of his animal limbs. Sayuri's missing brother Keiji is also in the room but he does not seem to recognize his sister. As the Patriarch explains: "He enjoyed his stay here. But then he began to pine for his kind. He became inconsolable and refused to eat, so I took away his painful memories. He's been much happier since. Hasn't he grown under my care?" (200). In contrast to Foucault's understanding of the care for self, the Patriarch's practices of care involve the manipulation of his subjects' bodies and brains[43]. The Patriarch follows a neoliberal logic of biopolitical control through the capitalization of the

[42] For a philosophical account on the implications of "facing" the Other see Emmanuel Levinas' essay "Responsibility for the Other" in *Ethics and Infinity: Conversations with Philippe Nemo* (1985). Levinas understands responsibility as "responsibility for the Other, thus as responsibility for what is not my deed, or for what does not even matter to me; or which precisely does matter to me, is met by me as face. […] since the Other looks at me, I am responsible for him, without even having *taken* on responsibilities in his regard; his responsibility is *incumbent on me*" (95-96).

[43] In her discussion of the new biopolitical and disciplinary apparatuses governing the brain at the turn of the 21st century, Nadesan claims that even though innovations such as behavioral genetics, neuropsychiatry, and cognitive neuroscience "promise 'optimization' within an economy of hope [...], they do so within neoliberal, marketized formulations of risk, responsibility, access, and therapeutic remediation predicated upon, and leading to, new strategies of biopolitical control" (140). See Nadesan's study *Governmentality, Biopower, and Everyday Life* (2008) for further reference.

memory and hope of the populations subjected to his rule[44]. Sayuri is disconcerted at the lack of violence she has been welcomed with and thus wonders about her state: is she a prisoner? a slave? To her surprise, she is treated as a guest; she has a long bath, her clothes are taken care of for her, and she is invited to a banquet where food is served in golden plates. This fake hospitality, attempting to lure Sayuri into a commodified life, does not prevent her from questioning the Patriarch about how the population is treated in this new world around her:

> 'Where does all the food come from?'
>
> *'Why, the kitchens,' the fox smiled indulgently. As if he thought her a slightly stupid child.*
>
> 'Yes, but where do you grow the vegetables? Where do the foodstuffs come from?'
>
> *The great fox frowned slightly. [...] 'From afar!' he pointed vaguely at the window. 'The kappa farm fields to the south. They are good at that. They enjoy the outdoors.'*
>
> 'Oh,' Sayuri said softly. 'The way they enjoy being soldiers too, I suppose'
>
> *'You know nothing,' the Patriarch murmured. [...]*

[44] Larissa Lai's novel *Salt Fish Girl* also engages with how globalizing and transnational contemporary processes have a biopolitical impact on populations classified as deviant or non-normative. The episode that takes place in the Island of Mist and Forgetfulness is particularly interesting in this regard given that Lai disrupts temporality to engage with the role of memory and hope in our contemporary world. Inside this mysterious Island, we find the City of Hope, where there is an inscription in the east gate that says Progress, and an inscription in the west gate that says Democracy. We also find Spool Island, a consumerist utopia, and Ville Despair, the administrative centre of the Island. Nu Wa, one of the protagonists, is betrayed by another woman and, as a result, arrested for illegal immigration and for smuggling heroin into the island and thus locked into a prison for women where she remains for 5 years. When she returns home, it turns out that temporality has been disrupted.

> I know what I saw, [...]. I saw you kill those kappa soldiers who spoke against you.'
>
> *'And are you so eager to follow?' the Patriarch whispered.* (216-17, my italics)

Sayuri has grown a political consciousness and a care for how other lives are managed. In this sense, she is able to overcome her own needs and thus begin to achieve freedom not only for herself but also towards others. As Foucault contends, "being free means not being a slave to one's self and to one's appetites" ("The Ethic" 6). The Patriarch, however, operates in the opposite direction in that he works under the pretence of being a ruler without acknowledging his systematic abuses of power. Social theorist Nikolas Rose explains that in order to rule properly, it is necessary to posses a knowledge of the particular features over which rule is to be exercised: "the characteristics of a land with its peculiar geography, fertility, climate; of a population with its rates of birth, illness, death; of a society with its classes, interests, conflicts; of an economy with its laws of circulation, of supply and demand; of individuals with their passions, interests and propensities to good and evil" (7). The Patriarch's knowledge about his population, particularly the kappa people, has allowed him not only to accumulate power, but to secure and sustain his privileged existence. The kappa populations have been distributed to function as slaves in the farms or alternatively, as soldiers thus standing as both a source of labor and an instrument of power. Commenting on the dangers implied in the misuse of power, Foucault explains that "[i]n the abuse of power, one goes beyond what is legitimately the exercise of power and

one imposes on others one's whims, one's appetites, one's desires" ("The Ethic" 8). If we follow both Rose and Foucault's arguments, the Patriarch cannot be a good ruler in that the populations' needs or interests are never actually taken into account. Also, as ultimately being the one who decides who lives and who must die, the Patriarch exercises a version of "necropolitics" through the application of the technologies of biosovereignty (Mbembe 2003). The ultimate expression of sovereignty, political philosopher Achille Mbembe claims, resides in the power to dictate who may live and who must die. This perverse necropolitics takes shape through systematic global instances of state violence, torture, and capital punishment. In Goto's narrative, when the populations express dissent, they are killed by the ruler. When Sayuri confronts the Patriarch with her questions, she is taken to the dungeons to be imprisoned along with thousands of other terrorized prisoners. Once again in the narrative, Sayuri experiences feelings of loss through a shared sense of collective vulnerability.

Significantly, Sayuri is helped to escape with the aid of an unexpected ally and yet, she is confronted with an ethical dilemma with regards to the other prisoners:

> All those cells ... They were not the only prisoners. She couldn't leave them behind, could she? But it would take so long. What if they were caught setting the others free? Then her only chance would be wasted. *Should she overlook the suffering of others?* [...] They could come back later, she rationalized. After she'd got her brother. What if this chance was lost? And prisoners died? She hadn't placed them in their cells! But she

had the power, now, to free them ... 'WE MUST FREE THE OTHERS!' Sayuri hissed. (229-30, my emphasis)

Sayuri measures the risks of liberating other prisoners in terms of what it would mean to her own possibility of freedom. Challenging what it would be a neoliberal pressure to optimize time management, she decides instead to give priority to the act of freeing others over her own safety. By so doing, Sayuri engages in an act of solidarity towards strangers based on the idea of collective vulnerability. A multitude of non-human creatures[45] are liberated: "As each cell was opened, the freed help unlock the other doors, and soon the hallway was filled with warm bodies, whispers, grunts, groans, squeaks, and the pungent odour of fur and flesh long unwashed" (231). It is only through collective action that Sayuri and others are able to practice freedom. In *Dissensus: On Politics and Aesthetics*, Jacques Rancière argues that "for the concept of the multitudes the community has to be grounded on the very nature of being in common, in the power which places beings in general in community" (86). The multitude, as understood by Rancière, rejects the idea of a negatively defined politics. Instead, he advocates for a political philosophy approach that reads the multiple as the very law of being. In similar lines, discussing the "material" and "affective" conditions of labor, political philosophers Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri offer

[45] As I claim in the first chapter, the crossing of boundaries between human and non-human materialities is a constant trait in the work of the contemporary queer women writers discussed in this project. Material feminist theorists are looking at how the discursive and the material realms interact in the constitution of bodies in order to explore the question of nonhuman and post-human nature and its relationship to the human. See Donna Haraway's *Simians, Cyborgs and Women: The Reinvention of Nature* (1991) and Rosi Braidotti's *Metamorphoses: Towards a Materialist Theory of Becoming* (2002) for earlier accounts on the centrality of nonhuman materialities as potential sites of political and ethical intervention, particularly through the de-centring of the unified Western subject.

some illuminating insights on the subject of "the multitude" in their controversial trilogy *Empire* (2000), *Multitude: War and Democracy in the Age of Empire* (2004), and *Commonwealth* (2009). In general lines, they claim that the poor, together with other neglected groups of people, constitute a productive force that they understand as a potential resisting "multitude" against the tyrannical global capitalist processes of what they refer to as "Empire." I believe that some of the communities that Goto depicts in *The Water of Possibility* could be read as part of this resistance to hegemonic structures. By acting together for the common right to freedom, Sayuri and these non-human creatures form a resisting multitude against the rogue power of the Patriarch. In this sense, it could be argued that this act enables "the population" to now become "the people."[46] According to Foucault, from the beginning of the 18th century, the population stands as a political subject, as a new collective subject foreign to the juridical and political thought of earlier centuries. Simultaneously, the population is an object upon which mechanisms of power are directed. The people, on the contrary, refuse to be the population; They disrupt the system (*Security* 44). Significantly, the creatures that are now liberated have all been blinded, which stresses the impact of biopower structures upon them. It is their very bodies, their limbs, that have been subjected to the technologies of power by the Patriarch.

Following this theoretical articulation, could Sayuri still belong to this multitude? In contrast to the rest of the creatures, Goto's heroine occupies a

[46] In the essay "What is a People?", Agamben explains how the term *people* always indicates the poor, the underprivileged, and the excluded in modern European languages. He then discusses how in western politics, this concept does not function as a unitary subject but as a dialectic: "on the one hand, the *People* as a whole and as an integral body politic and, on the other hand, the *people* as a subset and as fragmentary multiplicity of needy and excluded bodies" (*Means* 30).

position of power in her distinct individuality and her able body. However, even if her singularity seems to obstruct the idea of a multitude, she is seen as an Other by the non-human creatures which means that she embodies the figure of the stranger and the foreign within her own self[47]. Thus, they all unite to fight a common wrong. Sayuri suggests using the blindness of the multitude to their advantage. The plan is to find the energy source that lights up the whole city and switch it off so that the kappa and the Patriarch are metaphorically blinded too. Addressing the other fellow creatures as comrades, Sayuri firmly claims: "Where there is power, there must be machinery" (242). Some of the creatures in this city are imprisoned around an amplification machine with a stone at the centre that sucks their life force in order to keep it functioning. The energy that is being produced is the source of electricity for the whole city. As a result of their rights being suspended by a form of "rogue power" (Butler 2004), these creatures have been dehumanized. According to Butler, managing a population is "not only a process through which regulatory power produces a set of subjects. It is also the process of their de-subjectivation, one with enormous political and legal consequences" (98). The material that these terrorized creatures are made of is thinning into almost transparency. Sayuri wonders why these almost transparent beings remain there if there are no guards holding them. They respond with an intriguing paradox loaded with multiple cultural, political, and ethical implications:

[47] See Julia Kristeva's *Strangers to Ourselves* (1991) for a psychoanalytical account of the historical evolution of the figures of the stranger and the foreigner.

> 'We are guarded by fear,' the rat whispered, 'and imprisoned by hope. The Patriarch promisssed our freedom if we could keep the ssstone fed for five days. Ssso we took turns feeding the monsster and tearing each other away before the ssstone took everything. But every day, we are lesss than we were the day before'. (249)

Notice how Goto's use of language in this section brings to light a tradition of fiction initiated by pioneering figures like J.R.R Tolkien and his fantasy bestselling works *The Hobbit* (1937) and *The Lord of the Rings* (1954)[48]. In this regard, it could be argued that Goto, together with other queer women writers such as Larissa Lai or Nalo Hopkinson, is tracing and reinventing a genealogy—a multitude— of left-wing fantasy writing. These authors, nonetheless, are not only contributing to this tradition, but also rearticulating it by locating the gendered body, ethics, and race at the centre of their narratives. Interestingly, it is often the villains who employ sibilants in their speech in Manga, Anime, and other Comic genres. Goto's novel, however, resists the categories of "good" and "evil" and, instead, focuses on the precarious life and disposable bodies of these creatures. By doing so, Goto follows a Foucauldian approach to ethics where issues of care and conduct occupy a key position in the rearticulation of the concept of the multitude. Moreover, biopower is here portrayed at its core, since the technologies of control are literally produced and reproduced through the life itself of these creatures who are living a precarious existence. In the article "Indefinite

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[48] Gollum, one of the most fascinating characters in Tolkien's work, is known to speak a version of non-standard English, where sibilants are prominent. See George Clark and Daniel Timmons' *J.R.R. Tolkien and his Literary Resonances* (2000) for further reference. Other examples of this use of language can be found in genres such as Anime and Manga, and Comics like *Spider-Man*.

Detention," Judith Butler discusses the use of sovereignty as a tactic to ensure its own effectivity within the context of post 9/11 U.S. dubious politics of terror: "Sovereignty becomes that instrument of power by which law is either used tactically or suspended, populations are monitored, detained, regulated, inspected, interrogated, rendered uniform in their actions, fully ritualized and exposed to control and regulation in their daily lives" (97). The creatures that sustain the amplification machine in *The Water of Possibility* are imprisoned and exposed to the Patriarch's mechanisms of control not only through sacrificing their material bodies but life itself[49]. Caldwell explains how

> As the boundaries of the nation state become more porous, sovereignty as the power to determine boundaries becomes more pervasive. The status of life, in a parallel manner, becomes increasingly precarious. More and more, life across the globe exists in a state of crisis, caught within and subject to a sovereign power itself indeterminate. This indeterminate sovereignty increasingly ranges over all territories and all peoples: over humanity as such. (par. 29)

The machine that sucks these creatures' energy works as a power device that constantly craves power itself, thus standing as a sort of machinistic version of Hardt and Negri's "Empire." Then, the only solution they come up with to destroy this device is to make it feed itself with its own appetite and desire:

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[49] This chamber of horrors, where the machine itself and the tubes function as human intestines, resembles many sci-fi scenarios in literature and film history. For a psychoanalytic interpretation of alternative material forms of reproduction in movies such as James Cameron's *Aliens* (1986), see Annette Kuhn's edited collection *Alien Zone: Cultural Theory and Contemporary Science Fiction Cinema* (1990) and Barbara Creed's *The Monstrous-Feminine: Film, Feminism, Psychoanalysis* (1993).

> Hunger was always hungry and wanted food. If you fed the hunger with hunger, it would be a closed circuit instead of a one-way flow. [...] The hunger would get hungrier and try to consume more and more without ever getting full [...]. The stone will be feeding on itself, on its own hunger in a continuous cycle [...], so much the stone will break down! (250)

It is only through shared vulnerability and subsequent collective action that the machine is overpowered, enabling the multitude of blind creatures not only to free themselves but also to recover a lost sovereignty that now will be restored onto the people. Returning to Butler's idea of an injured sovereignty, I argue that this multitude, which is composed of non-normative subjects such as Sayuri and the rest of the blind creatures, succeed in healing sovereignty by turning it into an instrument of power for the benefit of the people. As I previously mentioned, Sayuri is able to understand these prisoners' oppression partly because she has experienced that vulnerability before. As Butler claims, "To be injured means that one has the chance to reflect upon injury, to find out the mechanisms of its distribution, to find out who else suffers from permeable borders, unexpected violence, dispossession, and fear, and in what ways" (*Precarious* xii). Throughout her journeys, Sayuri has been subjected to a variety of forms of violence including imprisonment and the suspension of rights. As a result, she has grown an awareness about the meaning and implications of what it means to become vulnerable to hegemonic structures of power. Paradoxically, though, this vulnerability has also made her more exposed to desire and an unconscious longing for power itself. When the Patriarch lures her into joining him so that she

could enjoy the pleasures of power, Sayuri hesitates: "If she took one step more, she would be lost. Lost in the swirl of desire for desire, her own need above all others, and it would taste so good. Because she wouldn't ever have to feel guilty..." (270). Yet, with the intervention of her comrades, Sayuri regains her agency and strength and cuts the hands of the Patriarch, thus breaking his hold over the other creatures.

Now the roles have been exchanged: the Patriarch has been defeated and is waiting to see what awaits him. Once again, Sayuri faces an ethical dilemma with biopolitical consequences. How worthy is the Patriarch's life? Should he be judged and punished for his crimes? Should he receive the same pain he had inflicted on others? According to Sayuri's knowledge of the world, imprisonment comes to her mind as the ideal solution: Prison "might not change him, [...] but it keeps him from doing more harm! He loses his freedom as payment for his crimes" (278). Other creatures however advocate for a different alternative: healing the criminal in order that he grows a conscience so that bearing the responsibility for his own crimes would become his punishment. By making Sayuri follow this alternative path, Goto is thus advocating novel forms of justice that go beyond traditional forms of imprisonment and punishment. How could justice be distributed nowadays so that human rights are not violated? Theorists across the Social Sciences and the Humanities have denounced the situation of the prisoners in Guantanamo, misleadingly referred to as detainees held in waiting (Chomsky 2006; Žižek 2005; Butler 2004). In the essay "Indefinite Detention," Judith Butler continues to explain how some imprisoned lives are viewed and

judged such that they are deemed less than human, having departed from the recognizable human community: "dehumanization becomes the condition for the production of the human to the extent that a 'Western' civilization defines itself over and against a population understood as, by definition, illegitimate, if not dubiously human" (*Precarious* 91). Once liberated, all the injured creatures in Goto's narrative begin a long process of both emotional and physical healing through the care for each other. The Patriarch, now called Haru, after running for weeks over the lands he had ordered destroyed, comes back and asks to become a member of the new society they aim to found[50]: "A great wrong I have done and the tasks facing me will take the remainder of my life. I would welcome an apprentice to pass my lore to and help me in my work" (286). His first task will be to restore sight to the blind. Then, he will replant the blasted lands with seeds. Who will be part of this new society? The soldiers leave for their marshy lands. Similarly, barefoot and dispossessed of any personal belongings, Sayuri and Keiji begin their journey back home. In an act of reconciliation, Haru gives Sayuri a pair of slippers. As Butler concludes, "It is as much a matter of wrestling ethically with one's own murderous impulses, impulses that seek to quell an overwhelming fear, as it is a matter of apprehending the suffering of others and taking stock of the suffering one has inflicted" (*Precarious* 150). By accepting this gift, Sayuri begins a process of forgiveness, which further stresses Goto's interest in finding

[50] These creatures want to establish a School of Higher Arts and Healing as part of their new society, which points out to the importance that Goto places on learning and education. This initiative, nonetheless, is problematic in that it opens up the possibility of creating new hierarchies and structures of power within this new multitude of peoples, which could ultimately lead not only to institutional discipline but also to the recreation of rogue forms of biopolitical governance.

alternative forms of alliances between populations to fight abuses of power in an attempt to move towards the ultimate goal of common peace.

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An Archive of Spectacular Wonders: The Biocapitalization of the Female Body in Emma Donoghue's *The Woman Who Gave Birth to Rabbits*

> Biocapital, then, is always already all too new and all too familiar; all too specific to new emergences in the life sciences and all too general a symptom of a rapidly mutating political economic structure that we call "capitalism."
>
> Kaushik Sunder Rajan, *Biocapital: The Constitution of Postgenomic Life* (280).

> How many rabbits, sir, could one woman of middling size be supposed to have in her body?
>
> Emma Donoghue, *The Woman Who Gave Birth to Rabbits* (4).

Within the context of the U.S., particularly through the Bush administration, cultural critic Majia H. Nadesan contends that the "hysterization of women's sexuality and normalization of heterosexuality are elements of government strategies seeking to combat the nation's alleged descent into moral decay" (113). Echoing today's paradoxical culture of surveillance and spectacle, Emma Donoghue's short stories situate the woman's body as a site of disease or deviance that poses moral and biological threats to discourses around national vitality, while simultaneously being a profitable commodity to be capitalized. Drawing on Foucauldian conceptualizations of biopolitics (Nadesan 2008; Foucault 2007, 1978; Sunder Rajan 2006), this section of my chapter examines the representation of the female body as a site of "biocapital" in Donoghue's

collection *The Woman Who Gave Birth to Rabbits* (2002). Locating the female body at the crossroads of multiple biopolitical borders, Donoghue's stories "The Last Rabbit," "Cured," and "A Short Story" denounce, in various ways, the historical instrumentalization of woman's bodies in the hands of biopolitical male authorities such as physicians or surgeons, who have systematically regulated female sexuality as a source of perversion. By posing a critique against the historical instrumentalization of women's bodies, Donoghue traces a genealogy of biocapitalization that feeds itself with the bodies of women and other non-normative subjects.

In the foreword to the collection, the author explains how the stories in *The Woman Who Gave Birth to Rabbits* are drawn and inspired by a mixture of scraps of history consisting of pamphlets, records, and notes from the last 700 years of British and Irish life. In an exercise of historiographic metafiction (Hutcheon 1987), the author combines historical episodes with fictional traits in the stories in order to make a commentary on present-day capitalist societies by the very exercise of digging up the past. Donoghue explicitly comments on her purpose to engage with the realm of "life" and so therefore, we could describe the collection as a display of biosocial and biopolitical relations. Significantly, these power relations are always gendered given that biopolitical authorities such as surgeons and physicians in the 18th and 19th century were mostly male, whereas the objects of study were often those bodies deviating from the norm: children, women, and other so-called second class populations. In her Foucauldian study on governmentality and biopower, Nadesan explains how "In the nineteenth century,

the emerging fields of medicine, psychiatry, psychology, and education all provided knowledge used to represent, divide and govern populations according to standards of normality and pathology" (25). These "deviant" bodies needed to be regulated and normalized though a series of disciplinary mechanisms and techniques. If we think about contemporary times, particularly within the context of American neoliberal Christianity, there seems to be a correlation between these moments in history. As Nadesan contends, "Gay, sexually amoral, irresponsible, lazy, unpatriotic Americans are constituted as 'others' in need of surveillance and intervention in the neoconservative and religious imaginations" (111). We could then trace a genealogy of biocapitalization that would begin with the birth of biopolitics in the second half of the 18th century and kept growing, transforming, and adopting itself to new modes of political and social life into the 21st century. In his analysis of biocapitalism within the genome industry, anthropologist Kaushik Sunder Rajan discusses biotechnology as yet another form of enterprise inextricable from contemporary capitalism. Biocapital, Sunder Rajan contends, does not signify a distinct epochal phase of capitalism: "the relationship between 'capitalism' (itself not a unitary category) and what I call biocapital is one where the latter is, simultaneously, a continuation of, an evolution of, a subset of, and a form distinct from, the former. Further, biocapital itself takes shape in incongruent fashion across the multiple sites of its global emergence" (10). In this section of my chapter, I transplant the concept of biocapital into a different socio-economic, political, and cultural context where new forms of biocapital emerged, particularly in the realms of medicine.

Published in 2002, "Cured" is set in the second half of 19th century Britain. A young woman, referred to in the text as Miss F., is admitted into the London Surgical Home in 1861 after suffering from a back ache for two years. Presumably, her pains could be associated to the consequences of excessive labour since she used to be a cook for a well-off family for a few years. This job involved a number of physical tasks that seemed to leave traces in the body of the worker. Miss F.'s brother, however, insists on bringing her into this so-called new clinic for female health. Interestingly, her brother is a policeman, which intensifies the idea of the woman's body being subjected to disciplinary figures of control within the private sphere of the very family unit. By almost forcing his sister to go to this clinic, he not only polices her body but also brings a private matter into the public sphere. The Surgical Home is run by Dr. Baker Brown, a male figure who from the very beginning positions himself as a biopolitical authority:

> To speak frankly, Miss F., I see myself—being both a doctor and a gentleman—as a protector of womankind. [...] It appears that destiny has called me to rescue the softer sex from the general ignorance of their friends and advisors. I am a pioneer, so to speak, in a wholly new branch of the healing sciences. (107)

This male figure uses his alleged knowledge in order to secure a position of power over the female patients that come to his clinic looking for an answer to their physical pains. Lacking awareness of what is about to happen, these women's bodies are ultimately manipulated by this doctor who, as is later revealed in the

narrative, systematically performs illegal clitoridectomies to his patients[51]. By doing so, Dr. Baker Brown stands as a biopolitical agent in the radical instrumentalization and further capitalization of women's bodies.

In the influential first volume of *The History of Sexuality*, Michel Foucault explains how the bourgeois, capitalist, and industrial society[52] that emerged in the 19th century set out to formulate the uniform truth of sex, since it was inscribed not only in an "economy of pleasure but in an ordered system of knowledge" (69). Sexuality became the theme of political operations, economic intervention, and ideological campaigns for raising standards of morality and responsibility. The hysterization of women, for instance, was conducted in the name of the responsibility they owed to their children or their family. One of the differences that marked the threshold of our modernity, as Foucault convincingly argues, was that power stopped speaking through blood and instead, it started speaking through sex, sexuality, and the body. As Ornella Moscucci explains in her article on the politics of sexual pleasure in 19th century Britain,

> As the new professional experts, medical practitioners in the Victorian period claimed medicine as the cornerstone of public morals. Working in conjunction with clerics and philanthropists, they elaborated a medico-

[51] In the article "Clitoridectomy, Circumcision, and the Politics of Sexual Pleasure in Mid-Victorian Britain" (1996), Ornella Moscucci explains how clitoridectomy was occasionally performed during the 1850s as a cure for masturbation though it never became established in Britain as an acceptable medical practice. In contrast to the Renaissance, Moscucci explains how the conceptualization of the clitoris became problematic by the end of the 18th century: "As the emerging notion of two opposite sexes made heterosexual coupling 'natural,' the capacity of the clitoris for homo- and autoeroticism was increasingly perceived as a threat to the social order" (69).

[52] It should be noted that, as Nadesan reminds us in *Governmentality, Biopower, and Everyday Life* (2008), the British had embraced free trade in 1846 with the repeal of the Corn Laws, thus adopting a liberal market economy.

> moral discourse that extensively deployed a set of class and danger-related polarities: health/disease, virtue/vice, cleanliness/filth, morality/depravity, civilization/barbarity. (60)

Sexuality was thus endowed with the greatest instrumentality, particularly affecting the bodies and lives of women. Being saturated with sexuality, the female body was consequently relegated to family roles and reproduction. Donoghue's narrative is interrupted by a series of medical writings in italics reflecting Dr. Baker's thoughts as he scrutinizes the woman's conduct: "*The patient becomes restless and excited, or melancholy and retiring; listless and indifferent to the social influences of domestic life*" (113). The doctor subjects Miss F. to a variety of intimate questions and examinations that make this young woman blush and, somehow unexpectedly, sexually aroused:

> She squeezed her eyes shut and let him part her legs. [...] She wondered why he was standing there peering down at her, and what he was looking for. She thought perhaps it was almost over, and then he touched her somewhere. It was not a part she had a name for, or not one that could be said aloud. (111)

Notice the gender imbalance in the act of looking: the male figure remains in charge of the gaze through the examination of the woman's body, while she, in contrast, keeps her eyes closed, thus not having access to this process. Dr. Baker further polices this woman's life by having the right to ask a series of questions that assume the hysterization of her body and hence the understanding of female sexuality as a source of perversion: "Miss F., do you ever suffer from maniacal

fits? [...] Have you any, ah, pernicious habits? [...] Unaccountable fits of depression? [...] Attacks of melancholy without any tangible reason?" (112-113). Foucault contends that the medicine of perversions and the programs of eugenics became some of the innovations in the technology of sex through the second half of the 19th century. The juridical and the medical control of perversion was developed through a multiplicity of disciplinary mechanisms and normative discourses aiming to ensure reproduction while excluding practices of other forms of sexuality. In this context, female sexual pleasure had to be repressed, punished, or criminalized.

After a thorough examination of the woman's body, the doctor proceeds to give his diagnosis: "what you are suffering from is a profound disease that affects your whole body and mind, not just your back. You are a victim of a loss of nerve power. [...] You are a respectable young woman who has fallen victim to a terrible, but curable disease" (114). As Nadesan explains, the "techniques of cure" were for Foucault "expressions of new forms of power, acting both upon the minds and the bodies of its subjects, and eventually transforming the chaotic space of the madhouse into the disciplined and disciplining space of the nineteenth-century psychiatric institution" (142). By entitling the story "Cured," Donoghue reorients Foucault's rhetoric in order to refer to how, in this case, a woman is "cured" not from madness but from experiencing sexual pleasure. The woman's body is saturated with sexuality and thus needs to be regulated by various biopolitical male figures. Foucault explains how "the art of punishing, in the régime of disciplinary power, is aimed neither at expiation, nor even precisely

at repression. […] it *normalizes*" (*Discipline* 183). In this sense, through a violent biopolitical punishment affecting her own body, the woman is ultimately subjected to a normative system of conduct historically dictated by both capitalist and patriarchal standards.

Disciplines, according to Foucault, are "methods [that] made possible the meticulous control of the operations of the body, which assured the constant subjection of its forces and imposed upon them a relation of docility-utility" (137). In the 18th and 19th centuries, as Donoghue's stories aptly illustrate, disciplinary mechanisms became general formulas of domination. Significantly, when the doctor explains to Miss. F. the details of her so-called disease, he guarantees her that once cured, her body will be again a source of production: "what I can assure you is that under my personal care you will soon become a happy and useful member of society, and the sister your brother deserves" (115). By so doing, the female body in "Cured" becomes a docile body that has been both analyzed and manipulated without her awareness while simultaneously being capitalized as a source of production. The reader finds out the truth about why the woman is there before she does through the notes that he writes: "*The patient having been placed completely under the influence of chloroform, the clitoris is freely excised either by scissors or knife—I always prefer the scissors*" (115). Under the influence of chloroform, the woman remains unaware of the operation. When she wakes up, she bleeds for days. Then, when she tries to figure out what has happened to her, she is tied to the bed thus forcing her body into absolute paralysis and docility. It is at this moment that the clinic, which has functioned as

a panoptical institution so far, momentarily transforms into a literal prison for the woman. As Nadesan aptly argues, "Foucault saw biopolitics as intimately connected with the uncoupling and transformation of sovereignty and state government because, as the eighteenth-century state assumed pastoral authority for the health and welfare of its population, it helped produce new and more diffuse institutional apparatuses aimed at maximizing national vitality" (93-94). Significantly, Dr. Brown's biopolitical authority is strengthened through the imperialist rhetoric of nation-building that characterized the Victorian period. As explained by the Matron, a female figure that functions as an ally to the doctor and his disciplinary techniques: "Mr Baker Brown is a most celebrated surgeon throughout the Empire" (119). Interestingly, Miss F. is admitted into the clinic in 1861 where she spends three weeks, only to come out a "different" woman, having partially lost the possibility of experiencing sexual pleasure. It is also in 1861 when Prince Albert, Queen Victoria's husband, dies after which she refuses to go out in public for years. Even though this coincidence might seem anecdotal, it could be argued that this national loss is levelled to the woman's sexual loss, which not only indicates Donoghue's irony but also involves a set of political implications.

In order to secure the nation, figures like Dr. Brown had the duty of keeping women away from sexual pleasure:

> I swear to you, Miss F., I have seen women who were morally degraded, monsters of sensuality—until my operation transformed them. Women have come to this clinic in a state of desperation, complaining of pain in

> one organ or limb or another, or even in rage, talking of divorces, and afterwards I send them home restored, to take up their rightful places by their husbands' sides. (122)

Less a vice than a polluting antisocial activity, masturbation, as Moscucci explains, "had a destabilizing effect on society, as it prevented healthy sexual desire from fulfilling socially desirable ends—marriage and procreation, which were the foundation of the social order" (63). The sustenance of this status quo involved the construction of a right kind of woman of traditional femininity who would stand not only as the bearer of the household, but also as a symbol of national stability.

Clitoridectomy[53] is examined by Moscucci "as a chapter in the history of the social construction of racial and sexual differences" (62). Significantly, Dr. Baker makes reference to the colonies to justify his medical practice: "There are many countries in the Empire, Miss F., where a primitive form of my operation is done on every girl at the age of puberty, to ward off the disease of self-irritation before it has a chance to take hold!" (122). Moscucci contends that,

> as can be seen from the medical/anthropological literature on clitoral enlargement in black races and in prostitutes, the work of sexual normalization carried out in the Victorian period was as dependent on the

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[53] As Donoghue explains in a note at the end of the story "Cured," clitoridectomy was performed in America until the early 20th century. Nowadays, other types of surgery such as the correction of "clitorimegaly" (large clitoris) are performed in the U.S. on a regular basis. For further insights on female genital mutilation see Alice Walker's *Warrior Marks: Female Genital Mutilation and the Sexual Blinding of Women* (1993), Andrew H. Miller and James Eli Adams' *Sexualities in Victorian Britain* (1996), Stanlie M. James and Claire C. Robertson's *Genital Cutting and Transnational Sisterhood: Disputing U.S. Polemics* (2002), and Ylva Hernlund and Bettina Shell-Duncan's *Transcultural Bodies: Female Genital Cutting in Global Context* (2007).

> construction of racial and class differences as it was on the definition of gender categories. (70)

Furthermore, as the woman in Donoghue's story realizes, the so-called medical activity performed by Dr. Baker is actually understood in terms of a "mission," a word loaded with both religious connotations and colonialist implications. Discussing the dual meanings of the word "conversion" as use value to exchange value, but also as transformation in religious belief, Sunder Rajan claims that capitalism is not just a formation that is conditioned by religion, but also a religious phenomenon: "Salvationary discourses, which are often embedded in, and disseminated through, ritual, are paternalistic, cultic, and libidinal. Therefore salvationary discourse and practice are also explicitly *gendered* in multiple ways" (184). As he goes on to explain, the terms "salvation" and "nation" are not meant to function as binaries but rather as dialectic counterparts to each other. In "Cured," the woman explicitly describes the doctor's voice as evangelical in episodes such as the following: "Miss F., I must tell you frankly that I believe I have rendered you more truly feminine-more healthy in your natural instincts-more prepared to discover real happiness in marital intercourse, if marriage is to be your lot in life, and why should it not, now?" (120-21). This passage in the story illustrates how religious and nationalist discourses overlap with gender structures at the entrepreneurial service of biopolitical structures that are sustained by the capitalization of women's bodies and sexuality.

In an attempt to further manipulate Miss F., the doctor misleadingly claims that his alleged operations not only bring him material success, but also

immaterial forms of value such as the admiration of his colleagues in his profession, together with the gratitude of other women[54]. However, this is challenged by his own personal notes which stress the need to keep patients isolated: "The strictest quiet must be enjoined, and the attention of relatives, if possible, avoided, so that the moral influence of medical attendant and nurse may be uninterruptedly maintained" (120). The manipulation of information thus becomes a source of power-knowledge for the biopolitical authorities in the narrative. As Sunder Rajan claims, "Information potentially has, in addition to Marxian use value and exchange value, a third form of value, a 'moral' value that operates in the realm of symbolic capital" (56). The lack of information also extends to the lack of access to language, particularly for working class women. Once the woman in "Cured" realizes that something has gone wrong in her body, she threatens the doctor with telling her brother to which he responds condescendingly:

> For a woman of your pretensions to modesty and respectability, Miss F., to attempt to convey such intimate information to a young man—her own brother—who would be mortified, I imagine—who would cover his ears at such shamelessness in a sister, or run our of the room—what words would you use to make your complaint, may I ask? (121)

There is no feminist discourse available to this woman who as a result, is exposed to a sense of absolute vulnerability. Her subjection to biopolitical technologies

[54] Dr. Baker Brown founded the London Home for Surgical Disease of Women in 1858. Nearly 10 years later, he was expelled from the Obstetrical Society charged with unethical and unprofessional behaviour. As Moscucci claims, "while circumcision was a central plank of the Victorian construction of bourgeois masculinity, clitoridectomy ran counter to prevailing middle-class assumptions about women's sexuality" (65-66).

and discourses of power also involves a high exposure to risk. The body of this woman has not only been constructed as unhealthy and thus unproductive, but also her very life has been risked from the moments she enters the clinic. Once she becomes aware of the truth, risk actually maximizes given that her awareness in not enough to challenge society's norms dictating the conduct of womanhood. Miss F. is then silenced and relegated to the private sphere.

Describing the moment as one of "private wonder," Donoghue's "A Short Story" opens up with the birth of a baby girl of minimal proportions in a household in Cork, Ireland, some time in the early 19th century. Kitty never speaks, suffers from bad health conditions, and gives up growing at the age of 3. Ironically, however, the life of this girl is taken into the hands of Doctor Gilligan who offers to take Kitty to England with the pretext of exposing her to better weather conditions: "He mentioned, only in passing, the possibility of introducing the child to certain men of science and ladies of quality. A select audience; the highest motives: to further the cause of physiological knowledge" (165). After receiving the amount equivalent to three months' rent, the Crackhams decide to lend their daughter to the doctor, thus turning the girl's body into a source of biocapital. What are the biocapitalization strategies that the doctor employs? First of all, the girl's extra-ordinariness is highly profitable, so it is the abnormal and the uncommon body that becomes a source of capital: "It struck him that the girl's tininess would seem even more extraordinary if she were, say, nine years old instead of three. To explain her speechlessness, he could present her as an exotic foreigner" (164). Significantly, turning her into a non-national can also be

rendered profitable, hence incorporating the rhetoric of Empire into the biocapitalization of this girl's life and body. Then, the so-called Doctor embarks in a crusade that involves travelling around the country, parading the girl's body as a "public wonder" through multiple exhibitions and fairs. The Victorian era was well-known for the proliferation and success of the circus, together with other forms of entertainment that involved the circulation of so-called freakish and deviant populations as "spectacles" to feed the crowds[55]. The dehumanization that Kitty experiences begins with the erasure of her proper name, the biocapitalization of her own body in the hands of a male authority, and then, by the audiences to which she is exposed to which begin to objectify her through the use of the neutral pronoun "it." The now renamed "Caroline Crachami" is shown to British society as the smallest female on record: "The papers called her the Nation's Darling, the Wonder of Wonders. The King took her hand between his finger and thumb, and declared himself immensely pleased to make her acquaintance" (166). Notice how nationalist and scientific discourses merge strategically to capitalize on the body of young children. Far from being condemned as morally wrong, sovereign power applauds this kind of exploitation, indirectly endorsing child's labour[56].

On their way back to the doctor's lodgings, the little girl unexpectedly dies after having received more than two hundred visitors that day. The doctor then

[55] Mesmerism and hypnosis, for instance, were profitable forms of entertainment in the 19th century in Britain. See Margaret Atwood's novel *Alias Grace* (1996) for an interesting example of how the performance of hypnosis also functioned as spectacle in the Canadian context.
[56] Significantly, through the first decades of the 19th century, there was a huge demand for female and child labour, especially in the textile industry. It was not until 1867, right in the Victorian era, that the Factory Act laws stated that women and children could only work 10 hours a day in factories. For further reference on child labour in Britain at the time see Janet Sacks' *Victorian Childhood* (2010) and Ginger S. Frost's *Victorian Childhoods* (2009).

decides to sell the girl's body to the Royal College of Surgeons but before that, he decides to cut the body open, chop it, and boil it down leaving only the bones. In contrast to Dr. Baker in "Cured," Doctor Clift is described as "an articulator; a butcher in the service of science, or even art" (167). In Gothic[57] fashion, this Dr. Frankenstein figure is invested in a version of biopolitics that ironically involves the biocapitalization of death:

> His job was to draw grace and knowledge out of putridity. He needed a delicate touch in this case, as the carcass was so small. [...] All his years of drawing and copying and assembling more ordinary skeletons had prepared him for this. He needed to recall every one of the two hundred and six bones in the body, and recognise their patterns, [...]. He was going to raise a little girl from the dead, so the living might understand. (166-67)

The spectacular body then becomes a spectacular corpse. Turned into a macabre puppet, Kitty's bones are now displayed for eternity: "She was a fossil, now; she had her niche in history. Shortly she would be placed on show in the Museum Hall between tanks that held a cock with a leg grafted on to its comb and a foetus with veins cast in red wax. [...] She would stand grinning at her baffled visitors until all those who'd ever known her were dust" (169). Donoghue's story thus closes with a paradox: the female body becomes a corpse, allowing no futurity and therefore, enabling no reproduction. Yet, by displaying the remaining traces

[57] The Gothic tradition and its multiple ramifications into "female Gothic," "lesbian Gothic," and "postfeminist Gothic," have recurrently dealt with the problematic construction of female identity. For studies on female Gothic, see *Literary Women* (1977) by Ellen Moers and *Art of Darkness: A Poetics of Gothic* (1995) by Anne Williams. See Paulina Palmer's *Lesbian Gothic: Transgressive Fictions* (1999) for an approach to lesbian Gothic narratives. For a discussion on postfeminist Gothic, see *Postfeminist Gothic: Critical Interventions in Contemporary Culture* (2007), edited by Benjamin A. Brabon and Stéphanie Genz.

of Kitty's body in the walls of the public space of the museum, she will then be allowed a presence in history, thus participating in what I would refer to as an archive of spectacular wonders. As I will further argue in this chapter, other female characters in Donoghue's collection exploit the biocapitalization of their bodies to their own benefit by turning them into sources of wonder and spectacularity. This strategy not only allows these women to gain access to the public political life but also to disrupt biopolitical mechanisms of power and normative conduct. In other words, the biocapitalization of the female body involves a level of spectacularity that is sometimes used by the women in the stories themselves as a strategy of resistance.

In "The Last Rabbit," particularly, Donoghue's female protagonist manages to resist the mechanisms of power-knowledge and the biopolitical structures that render her body as a source of production by performing a spectacular pregnancy. Drawing on Dumit and Davis-Floyd's insights in *Cyborg Babies: From Techno-Sex to Techno-Tots* (1998), Nadesan discusses how biotechnological knowledge today is invested in the production of perfect babies: "Amniocentesis, ultrasonography, alpha-feto-protein (AFP) testing, among other screening devices, apply biopolitical knowledge and technology to facilitate production of perfect beings: the perfect babies who will grow up to be the self-regulating and responsible citizens of the neoliberal state" (131-32). Donoghue challenges contemporary investments around biotechnological knowledge by telling the story of Mary Toft, a woman who claimed to have given birth to over a dozen rabbits. A potentially monstrous body hence becomes a source of profitable

spectacle in the story. Published in 2002, "The Last Rabbit" is set at the beginning of the 18th century in Georgian England. The protagonist temporarily manages to convince a series of biopolitical authorities that she is capable of giving birth to rabbits out of her own body. Mary's sister in law encourages her to exploit this business of pregnancy: "If you was the first woman in the world to give birth to a rabbit [...] would you not soon be famous? Would people not pay to see you?" (2). Through the act of seeing, the grotesque pregnancy of the woman can be biocapitalized as a source of profitable spectacularity. Similarly, Mary's trick is supported by the local man-midwife, who is in charge of examining her body to decide whether it is actually productive: "Mr Howard said it was all to the good that I still bled, off and on, after miscarrying, and had a drop of milk in my breasts; it would be more lifelike, that way" (3). Far from producing perfect babies, this woman decides to exploit her body instead as an abject and grotesque reproductive machine.

Because of the clearly questionable veracity of her story, Mary wonders whether an actual audience would ever believe it. Her sister in law, nonetheless, insists: "And if who can tell what's true and what's not in these times, Mary, why then mayn't this rabbit story be as true as anything else" (2). The idea of selling the truth and fabricating lies resonates with contemporary times, particularly if we think about the culture of talk shows where any body can be profitable for the audiences as long as it escapes the norm. In other words, only those bodies that deviate from what is socially constructed as normal, that is the either "freakish" or the hyper-perfect bodies, become profitable as a source of spectacle in today's

mediated world. In a way then, both contemporary society and the one portrayed in Donoghue's story point to a continuum where the idea of spectacular bodies can be capitalized beyond the idea of truth. In the study *Powers of Freedom* (1999), social theorist Nikolas Rose discusses contemporary regimes and practices of government, paying special attention to the Foucauldian notion of conduct. Rose contends that analytics of government are concerned mainly with knowledges, or regimes of truth: "It is thus a matter of analysing what counts as truth, who has the power to define truth, the role of different authorities of truth, and the epistemological, institutional and technical conditions for the production and circulation of truths" (30). As suggested in "The Last Rabbit," it is the male biopolitical figures who have access to science and other medical discourses, thus having the power to decide what counts as truth in the context of 18th century England. The woman in Donoghue's story, however, transgresses these ethico-political regimes by not only participating but also momentarily profiting from the very circulation of lies, in this case.

Before Mary embarks on a journey to London to sell her story, she is taken to Mr Howard's chaise in Guildford, where he soon appropriates the woman's body and calls it a "magical womb." In the search of a spectacular wonder, other doctors follow, deciding to visit and examine her body: "The visitor was a foreign gentleman, a Mr. St. Andre, surgeon to the King himself. He felt my belly and remarked that it was barely swollen. Then he reached into my dress and squeezed my nipples to see what would come out of it" (5). Significantly, even though Mary begins to be circulated as a biocapital object of exchange, she manages to

retain agency over her own body. Again, as it happens in "Cured," this is connected to the idea of the gaze: "They watched me like owls. I am not a handsome woman; all my features are bigger than they need be for a body so small. But these gentlemen looked at me as if I was made of gold, and by now I was so brazen I could look right back" (8). According to the *Oxford Dictionary of Etymology*, the noun "spectacle" derives from the Latin verb *specere*, which means "to look at." Interestingly, this woman is capable of looking back at these biopolitical authorities, therefore resisting becoming an object of power-knowledge. By doing so, Mary is appropriating the spectacularity of her own body into a source of power and resistance to strategies of biocapitalization. As Foucault famously puts it, where there is power, there is resistance, or better say, a plurality of resistances: “Just as the network of power relations ends by forming a dense web that passes through apparatuses and institutions, without being exactly localized in them, so too the swarm of points of resistance traverses social stratifications and individual unities” (*The History* 96).

Progressively becoming famous for her spectacular deeds, Mary shows her amusement at human behaviour: "The day I produced my eighteenth rabbit, I suddenly saw what my sister Toft had meant, when she told me how impossibilities might as easily be believed as not" (9). When she is taken to London with Sir Richard Manningham, yet another man-midwife, she is concerned that her lies are finally not going to be sold unless there is some sort of religious intervention: "I would have been so glad to have brought out one last rabbit, to let it fall like a holy miracle into his fine hands" (11). Once again we

find the intersections of biocapital with both nationalist and religious crusades. Sunder Rajan discusses how drug development is nowadays conceptualized as a *miraculous* enterprise with a structure founded on the inadequacy of previous therapies. This pattern is followed by some of the medical discourses that appear in Donoghue's stories, where biopolitical figures are invested in performing a mission for profit gain despite the rhetoric of fulfilling a common good. It is at the horrific sight of various knives, a forceps, some scissors, and other instruments, when Mary feels she has been reduced to "nothing but a body" (12). The narrative is left unfinished thus leaving Mary's fate unwritten. By doing so, Donoghue manages, on the one hand, to avoid making an explicit moral point. This strategy, on the other hand, not only challenges the idea of history as a source of fixed truths, but also leaves readers the possibility of deciding what the ethico-political outcome of the story would be, thus turning us into agents of cultural and, to an extent, biopolitical intervention.

In *Discipline and Punish*, Foucault explains how at the turn of the 19th century, "the great spectacle of physical punishment disappeared; the tortured body was avoided; the theatrical representation of pain was excluded from punishment" (14). However, as Donoghue's collection illustrates, the female body has been systematically punished by disciplinary mechanisms, while simultaneously being capitalized in public venues as a source of wonder and spectacularity. Her critique therefore allows for a discussion of the historical impact of biocapitalization on these non-normative bodies. The term "biocapital" is for Sunder Rajan a cross-border concept that establishes a relationship between

materiality and abstraction. As I have argued in this section of my chapter, Donoghue's stories engage and challenge this dialectic by locating the female body precisely at the centre of material and abstract processes of normalization in history. In other words, the female bodies in Donoghue's collection are instrumentalized by male biopolitical figures, while simultaneously representing social relations conditioned by patriarchal domination. By doing so, Donoghue develops a genealogy of biocapitalization that can be traced through this archive of spectacular and deviant bodies.

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Biopolitical Effacement and Disposable Bodies in *Borderless: A Docu-Drama about the Lives of Undocumented Workers*

> What makes a city hustle? Unknown people, unseen hands, unread hearts, borderless bodies.
>
> *Borderless*: *A Docu-Drama About the Lives of Undocumented Workers* (2006).

> The task at hand is to establish modes of public seeing and hearing that might well respond to the cry of the human within the sphere of appearance.
>
> Judith Butler, *Precarious Life: The Powers of Mourning and Violence* (147).

Liberal and neoliberal rationalities, as Foucauldian critics aptly argue, privilege some individuals as autonomous self-regulating agents, while subordinating and disciplining others as invisible or dangerous. Employing Giorgio Agamben's insights on biopolitical fracture, cultural critic Majia H. Nadesan explains that

> the contradictions stemming from the operations of liberal democracy are contained by a series of social and geographic exclusions. In order to maintain the fantasy of a society of self-governing individuals, the system must constantly purify itself of those persons and institutions whose very existence belies the fantasy. The "solutions" to demonstrated failures of liberal government are symbolic and/or geographic elimination and/or marginalization of those whose presence mar the ruptures. (181)

Paradoxically, however, certain populations are systematically erased from public political life, while simultaneously being exploited as productive sources of capital. In the preface to *Commonwealth* (2009), the final piece in the trilogy begun with *Empire* (2000) and continued with *Multitude* (2004), political philosophers Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri address this paradox by claiming that "The poor, migrants, and 'precarious' workers (that is, those without stable employment) are often conceived as excluded, but really, though subordinated, they are completely within the global rhythms of biopolitical production" (xi). Drawing on recent interventions in political philosophy and globalization theory (Hardt and Negri 2009; Butler 2006; Sassen 1998), the last section of my chapter examines the shifting expressions of biopolitical life in the collaborative project *Borderless: A Docu-Drama About the Lives of Undocumented Workers* (2006). While being depicted as a risk to society's security, the illegal workers portrayed in the film occupy a paradoxical borderline position in Canadian society. On the one hand, they are invisible and thus disembodied forces of production, while on the other they generate visible profit for the nation. In other words, these "modern

outlaws," as the voice over calls them, are subjected to biopolitical structures that erase their very existence, while simultaneously becoming the objects of capitalist intervention. As political philosopher and queer theorist Judith Butler contends, a distinct form of normative power works through radical effacement; there never was a human, there never was a life: "the public realm of appearance is itself constituted on the basis of the exclusion of that image" (*Precarious* 147). The documentary, however, challenges these exclusionary practices by relocating these deviant subjects and bodies at the centre of a public image. By doing so, *Borderless* is aligning itself with a body of work by contemporary writers, visual artists, and critics who are calling for a reconfiguration of social and biopolitical relations in our unevenly globalized world.

Released in 2006 as a "docu-drama," *Borderless* is explicit in its collaborative nature[58]. The film is directed by award-winning filmmaker Min Sook Lee, a Korean-born/Toronto-based artist who has been looking at issues of social justice and power for the last decade. Some of her politically-engaged work includes the documentaries *El Contrato* (2003), which addresses the situation of migrant farm workers in Ontario, *Tiger Spirit* (2008), about the reunification of the two Koreas, and the recent, *My Toxic Baby* (2009), which exposes the dangers of living in a chemically saturated world. The narration in *Borderless* is placed in the hands of Trinidadian-born/Toronto-based acclaimed poet Dionne Brand. For the last three decades, Brand's poetic landscapes have exposed the dangers of

[58] The genre of the docu-drama has gained popularity in the last few years, particularly after 9/11, with titles such as *The Road to Guantanamo* (2006), directed by Michael Winterbottom and Mat Whitecross. See the collection *Docufictions: Essays on the Intersection of Documentary and Fictional Filmmaking* (2006), edited by Rhodes and Springer, for further reference on the workings of this artistic genre.

racist, nationalistic, and sexist structural violences within the context of Canadian society and culture. Furthermore, the voice over of Jamaican-Canadian dub poet, D'bi Young, alternates in *Borderless* with the voices of the undocumented workers themselves, who retell the stories of their vulnerable situation in Canada. By doing so, the film momentarily subverts the idea of immigrant populations as translated subjects. Moreover, I would argue that this polyphonic rendering of voices not only highlights the collective purpose of the film, but also suggests a renewed artistic transnationalism that would displace received versions of official multiculturalism in Canada. Interestingly, *Borderless* was commissioned by KAIROS, an ecumenical social justice group that wanted to look at migration issues inside Canadian borders. As a result, Sook Lee explains, the film has been successful in the post secondary educational circuit, often attracting the attention of teachers like myself (Michael *blogTO*). The film, however, has not circulated among academic circles. While acknowledging the educational purpose of the film, my work seeks to open up the critical discussion by also considering the documentary as a site of cultural, biopolitical, and ethical intervention[59].

Set against a black screen, the opening captions of the film introduce viewers into the material realities of those populations that need to cross geopolitical borders in order to find a sustainable life:

> Every year the number of people crossing borders grows. Unauthorized migration is now the fastest rising form of migration. For most, it's about survival. / Half the world, nearly 3 billion people, live on less than 2

[59] While being aware of the generic differences, I use the terms "documentary" and "film" indistinctively in my analysis of *Borderless*.

> dollars a day. The others are busy reinforcing borders; but the hunger of the free market still needs to be fed. (*Borderless*)

This journey, as the film illustrates, involves fighting against the pressures of a neoliberal apparatus that increasingly tightens these borders by the intensification of surveillance and other regulatory mechanisms. *Borderless* opens up with an aerial shot of a city at night where skyscrapers and neon lights abound, including a shot of the Hilton Hotel. Initially, a general audience would not necessarily identify it as a Canadian city but as yet another instance of a contemporary global city. Thus the stories that the viewers are about to hear become immediately transnational, since the lives of undocumented workers are a reality in every country in the world. The camera then zooms into an image of a Clock Tower that Canadian audiences would recognize as the Old City Hall in downtown Toronto. Then, superimposed into a shot of the streets, the film shows a quotation from Angela, an undocumented worker, in white captions: "Basically I'm here, just living here. I don't technically have any claims. Somebody could just pick me up. The only proof that I've ever been in Canada is to say I know a street here" (*Borderless*). As later explained in the film, Angela is a second generation Caribbean woman who has been working as a domestic servant in Toronto for many years, following the example of her mother, who was also part of this global labour force. The illegal status of this woman pushes her into invisibility in the political dimensions of life, thus locating her at the service of capitalist exploitation. In her study on global cities, sociologist Saskia Sassen convincingly claims that the presence of immigrants and other traditionally excluded peoples in

what she calls "global cities" has pushed the limits of legitimacy by interrogating a key question: "Whose city is this?" (*Globalization* xix). As Sassen argues, the "global city is a strategic site for disempowered actors because it enables them to gain presence, to emerge as subjects, even when they do not gain direct power" (xxi). In this sense, Angela's productive presence in Toronto should not only grant her a sense of territorial knowledge but also allow her to participate in the public sphere of the city. And yet, this woman's life has been centered around her labour which has forced her, paradoxically, to remain invisible, thus erasing her from the right to citizenship and political intervention.

In the next sequence, the camera is positioned inside a vehicle so that it joins the noise and movement of the city. As it traverses some of the streets in downtown Toronto, the audience listens to a phone conversation between two women where one asks the other about her day. Without much energy, Angela explains how her day has been yet another normal day where she has cooked and cleaned the house. Her every day life consists of performing these chores for the family she works for illegally. Paradoxically, this woman is sacrificing her life as a way to secure her own existence. In his discussion on biocapital, anthropologist Kaushik Sunder Rajan articulates the notion of a "sacrificial" population:

> When this excluded population gets incorporated into logics and circuits of global capitalism [...], however, this population shifts away from being sacrificed to being *consumed*. The worker's body becomes available to systems of capital [...] as a source of value generation, and as a source of knowledge production. (99)

The bodies of the undocumented workers in *Borderless* are sacrificed and consumed by both national and global capitalist structures, while simultaneously being erased from the public sphere. As Butler cogently puts it, even though we struggle for rights over our own bodies, these very bodies are not only our own. Given that the body is formed "within the crucible of social life" (*Precarious* 26) and as such, always presupposes a public dimension, what happens to those bodies that are negated entry into that very public space?

In similar ways to other characters in Dionne Brand's poetry collections such as *Ossuaries* (2010), the undocumented workers in *Borderless* live anonymously, underground. As the camera approaches a building, the voice over ponders about the invisibility of certain populations in urban hubs: "What makes a city hustle? Nothing extraordinary. It takes a lot of unknown people, unseen hands, unread hearts, borderless bodies" (*Borderless*). These unseen bodies ensure the profit of the nation by their own exploitation. As the film states, Angela earns $220 a week flat without insurance or benefits for taking care of children that are not her own. Notice the affective implications that this kind of labour entails, traversing other axes of differentiation such as gender and sexuality. In their discussion on biopolitics and materiality, Hardt and Negri argue that the contemporary scene of production has been transformed by labour that produces immaterial products such as ideas, knowledge, affects, relationships, and images. As a result, other forms of material labour, together with society as a whole, are being transformed. Given her precarious status as an undocumented worker, Angela is forced to sacrifice the time with her own kids and instead, look after

other people's children, thus performing a kind of affective labour. As Hardt and Negri contend, what is common to these forms of immaterial labour is best expressed by their biopolitical character. Here lies a paradox where the object of production is really a subject: "Living beings as fixed capital are at the center of this transformation, and the production of forms of life is becoming the basis of added value" (*Commonwealth* 132). Consequently, as Angela's case shows, the boundaries between labour and life become radically blurred.

Borderless stresses the need to examine both material and immaterial aspects of the biopolitical structures that rule the life of illegal workers like Angela. With a traveling shot, the following sequence of the film portrays a series of houses in a suburban area of the city, which stresses the stark contrast between the visibility of these magnificent commodities and the invisibility of the exploitation that occurs behind the walls[60]. It is not only a contrast but a direct relationship between the presence of these neighbourhoods and the erasure of the work force of certain populations in that one sustains the other. In other words, without the cheap labour of invisible workers like Angela, the everyday life of privileged populations would be radically altered in the sense that their lifestyle would be unsustainable. The images of the row of houses remains unfocused, which not only points to the presumable need to keep the anonymity of the people living in those neighbourhoods, but also to the idea of the universality of privilege and commodification in the suburban areas of global cities across the world. On the one hand, this is a systemic problem that extends beyond the national borders

[60] The implications of migration and other forms of mobility are represented in the film through the constant traveling shots of the camera.

of Canada. On the other hand, it is also an issue that stresses class differences within the nation. As the narrator explains, there are approximately 200,000 undocumented workers who "are a part of the third world inside Canada's borders that subsidizes our first world economy" (*Borderless*). Then, the voice over is superimposed on a billboard that reads "The Art of Luxury Living," depicting a heterosexual white couple drinking champagne as role models of normative behaviour. The hypervisibility of such advertisements that are part of our everyday life in magazines, TV shows, and so on, radically clashes with the radical erasure of non-normative populations from the public sphere. These effaced communities would include illegal workers, together with other subjects that threaten hegemonic structures of power by their very presence.

Within the context of U.S. conservative Christianity, particularly during the Bush administration, Nadesan discusses strategies of governmentality around biopower: "Paradoxically, perhaps, these fears of moral malaise and social contagion coexist with a growing social anxiety about the internal threats posed by susceptible bodies, bodies with weakened immune systems, and/or susceptibility genes" (115). Even though *Borderless* is situated within the particular context of Canada, I believe the term "susceptible bodies" can be translated here in that the bodies of these undocumented workers are rendered inferior and invisible, and yet their difference is depicted as threatening to normative structures. Individuals and practices that are rendered undesirable, Nadesan further explains, are systematically subjected to surveillance and various regulatory mechanisms of control by the state and other institutional apparatuses.

Geraldo, a Costa Rican construction worker in *Borderless*, discusses the conditions of labour in Canada explaining how the main priority is production. As he claims, it is not a matter of quality but quantity: "work how you will but make it fast" (*Borderless*). Production is thus prioritized as the ultimate goal. The illegal workers portrayed in the film earn less than half the money a Canadian worker would, when they get paid at all, given that the law always supports the employer. In this sense, the risk for these undocumented workers is two-fold. On the one hand, the camera shows a construction worker climbing on a roof, thus exposing his own physical body to a series of unacceptable risks. Furthermore, these people work with no guarantee of even getting their wages in exchange of their labour given that they do not exist as proper subjects by the law. Arguably then, these illegal workers are exposed to the mechanisms of necropolitics, in Achille Mbembe's understanding of the term, in that their lives and bodies are subjected to a kind of sovereignty capable of distinguishing who matters and who is disposable. Interestingly though, this population matters in terms of capitalist profit, while systematically being rendered disposable in terms of access to citizenship or the right to health insurance.

In *Precarious Life*, Judith Butler discusses which bodies count as having lived a liveable life thus granting them the possibility of a grievable death:

> Some lives are grievable, and other are not; the differential allocation of grievability that decides what kind of subject is and must be grieved, and which kind of subject must not, operates to produce and maintain certain

> exclusionary conceptions of who is normatively human: what counts as a livable life and a grievable death. (xiv-xv)

Butler's insights take us back to the idea of risk in *Borderless* given that when one of these illegal workers has an accident at the workplace, their rights are nowhere to be found because their very existence has not been granted. And the power remains within the state and its regulatory mechanisms of control which has secured their authority to decide to call upon the illegal status of these workers and then expel them from the nation at their convenience. As Geraldo explains, no one complains because the employer could just call the police and then, you would just have to leave running. Interestingly, Hardt and Negri discuss the effects of the illegal status of certain populations in terms of a precarity understood as a poverty of space:

> Being clandestine not only deprives people of social services and the rights of citizenship but also discourages them from circulating in and mixing freely with other segments of the society. Just as precarity creates a poverty of time, so too geographical and social barriers intensify a poverty of space. (*Commonwealth* 148)

The lives of the illegal workers in *Borderless* are indeed rarely shared in community precisely because their very existence has been erased from all the dimensions of public life. This is a point that Geraldo clearly refers to in the documentary when he claims that "beyond the borders of Canada, Canada is Canada. And inside the borders of Canada, it's something else" (*Borderless*). In other words, Geraldo is pointing to the multicultural make up of the nation which

in fact hides a darker side when considering the conditions of illegal workers within the country[61]. This is a complex phenomenon that not only reflects the problems associated to migration, but also reflects a mixture of racist, sexist and classist ideologies and material realities that are still very much present in the everyday life of many populations in Canada.

In *Commonwealth,* Hardt and Negri contend that certain populations are subjected to the impositions of a precarious life understood as "a mechanism of control that determines the temporality of workers, destroying the division between work time and nonwork time, requiring workers not to work all the time but to be constantly available for work" (146). Lacking control over their own life, precarity becomes then a *temporal* poverty. As I previously mentioned with regard to Angela's role as an absent mother to her own children, the precariousness of these people's life involves a level of affective labor. Similarly, Geraldo's family pressures him on the phone to come back home soon because of a series of health problems in the family. His lack of resources, nonetheless, prevents him from directly helping his own people and instead provide a kind of more symbolic aid by occasionally sending money, or barrels with food, as another sequence in the documentary shows. Significantly, these barrels, though subjected to border controls, participate in the borderless system of global free trade. People, however, are increasingly subjected to more strict systems of

[61] From the 1970s onwards, Canada has been systematically associated with the concept of the cultural mosaic, a convenient term to construct the nation as the ideal space for the development of multicultural identity. Nevertheless, even though policies such as the Canadian Multiculturalism Act (1988) recognize cultural diversity, they do so, as Smaro Kamboureli puts it, "by practising a sedative politics … that attempts to recognize ethnic differences, but only in a contained fashion, in order to manage them" (*Scandalous* 82). As a result, numerous voices have emerged in the last three decades exploring how the rhetoric of tolerance that is intrinsic in multicultural Canada masks race, sex, and class issues (Kamboureli 2007; Bannerji 2000; Brand 1994).

surveillance when trying to cross national frontiers. As the film aptly puts it, "Border controls are an exacting science. It's no accident who gets into the front door" (*Borderless*). When Angela applies for legal status, for instance, she has to wait for two years and a half before she hears back that her claim has in fact been denied.

Borderless illustrates how illegal workers in Canada are subjected to a process of dehumanization and desubjectivation by the very erasure of their existence in the biopolitical realm of society. As Geraldo puts it, "This is their country; this is their home; I am nothing more than someone who is hiding, like a rat" (*Borderless*). Dehumanization, Butler contends, "becomes the condition for the production of the human to the extent that a 'Western' civilization defines itself over and against a population understood as, by definition, illegitimate, if not dubiously human" (*Precarious* 91). The workers depicted in the docu-drama live imprisoned lives in that they are viewed and judged such that they are deemed less than human, having departed from the recognizable human community. These "modern outlaws," as the narrative voice calls them, are negated the right to voice any dissent against the biocapitalist structures that exploit them out of the liminal space they occupy between the borders of existence and effacement from the public sphere[62]. The idea of being negated the right to exist is intensified in the film by the shots taken inside an underground train that traverses the city. First we see a close up of a black woman's mouth as she talks on the phone to her child. Then, the image fades out into the shot of the

[62] A Levinasian reading of the film would focus on the precariousness of the situation of the illegal workers portrayed in *Borderless*, particularly in terms of how certain faces, certain bodies are systematically absent from the public sphere.

subway which points to the idea of these populations living a precarious life underground; in darkness; without rights. Further discussing how processes of dehumanization operate with regards to representation, Butler contends that "those who have no chance to represent themselves run a greater risk of being treated as less than human, regarded as less than human, or indeed, not regarded at all" (*Precarious* 141). I believe that *Borderless* attempts to momentarily challenge these normative systems by providing the undocumented workers in the film with the right to life not only in representation but also in the public realm of the spaces they occupy.

Borderless closes with the voice of Angela's child, singing, as the camera zooms out of the building into a panorama shot of the city of Toronto. After a fade out, the last images in the docu-poem show some white captions over a black screen that pose a crucial comment on the material realities of border crossings today:

> The product of a colonial history, today's borderlines create contradictions and tensions in an age of globalization. Increasingly, borders have become opened to capital and goods, but closed to people. As a result, migrants who are forced to cross borders in order to survive have become modern outlaws.

As Hardt and Negri cogently put it, we live in a globalizing capitalist world "whose geography is striated by old and new boundaries and cleavages" (230). The film, however, closes with a slight tone of hope: "Despite everything, migrants continue to assert a basic human right: the freedom to move. Propelled

by courage and determination, their journeys speak to us of our *common humanity* and call us to a vision of borderless justice" (*Borderless*, my emphasis)

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I would like to conclude this chapter by addressing the "commonality" suggested at the end of *Borderless*. In the epilogue to the second part of *Commonwealth*, "*De Homine* 1: Biopolitical Reason," Hardt and Negri stress the need to explore the terrain of biopolitical reason in order to be able to experience the common not as an ontological issue but as one of production, or what they refer to as "making the common" (123). With regard to resistance, they insist on the need for the creation of alternatives beyond opposition: "epistemology has to be grounded on the terrain of struggle—struggle that not only drives the critique of present reality of domination but also animates the constitution of another reality" (*Commonwealth* 121). As illustrated in the written and visual texts discussed in this chapter, the work of contemporary queer transCanadian women authors such as Hiromi Goto, Emma Donoghue, Dionne Brand, not only poses a critique against hegemonic structures of power, traversing the axes of gender, nation, sexuality, race, and class, but also strives to propose alternative forms of social and biopolitical relations. As Foucault aptly claims, to become other than what we are requires an ethics and politics of counter-conduct (*Security* 2009). And this is precisely what these women writers and visual artists are striving to convey in their work by pushing the limits of representation and by saturating the screen with bodies that are rendered unrepresentable by hegemonic structures of power.

Chapter 3

Affective Encounters and Cross-Border Pathogeographies in Queer TransCanadian Women's Writing

> It is through emotions, or how we respond to objects and others, that surfaces or boundaries are made: the 'I' and the 'we' are shaped by, and even take the shape of, contact with others.
>
> Sara Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion* (10).

> People here live in uncontrollable passion, in mad rages, and in the brusque inevitability of death. Or damage. As if a face would not be a face without a scar...
>
> Dionne Brand, *A Map to the Door of No Return* (11).

> my father's enterprise
> rations my emotional response time
> pupil is the empty space
> through which light passes.
>
> Larissa Lai, "rachel," *Automaton Biographies* (14).

Affect is everywhere. Affect is nowhere. In other words, forms of affect not only leave traces in human bodies and other materialities but also impregnate the incorporeal (Gregg and Seigworth 2010; Deleuze and Guattari 1987). Affect thus occupies a slippery terrain that spreads across the social, the political, the economic, and the cultural realms. Many theorists have exploited what I would refer to as the *trans-locationality* of affect as a site of potential and possibility. As Ben Anderson convincingly puts it,

> Affects are understood as impersonal intensities that do not belong to a subject or an object, nor do they reside in the mediating space between a subject and an object. So the key political and ethical task for a cultural politics of affect is to disclose and thereafter open up points of potential on the "very edge of semantic availability" (Williams 1977, 134) by

> comprehending the genealogies, conditionalities, performativities, and potentialities of different affects. (161)

In this regard, affect theorists have insisted on interrogating not what affect *is* but what affect *does*. In *The Cultural Politics of Emotion* (2004), Sara Ahmed claims that "emotions are not 'in' either the individual or the social, but produce the very surfaces and boundaries that allow the individual and the social to be delineated as if they are objects" (10). Affects then are not property; they are not owned by subjects but *circulate* between bodies[63]. In this way, emotions are *relational*. On the one hand, as I claim in this chapter, affects typically occupy a borderline space between the subject and the object. It is through the skin, a bodily surface, that affect mediates the in/out boundary, often circulating between the interior and exterior of objects and systems. In other words, as Ahmed contends in the essay "Embodying Strangers,"

> The skin functions as a boundary or border, by supposedly holding or containing the subject within a certain contour, keeping the subject inside, and the other outside. But as a border, the skin performs that particular destabilising logic, calling into question the exclusion of the other from the subject and risking the subject's falling into—or becoming—the other. (*Body Matters* 91)

[63] Following Stewart (2007), I employ the term affect in the singular and the plural form indistinctively throughout this chapter. I favour the term "affect" over "feeling" in that, as Crawford claims, "affect involves the capacity *to become* whereas feeling consists in the stabilizing of being" (qtd. in *Sexualities* 267). For further reference, see Lucas Crawford's essay "Transgender Without Organs? Mobilizing a Geo-Affective Theory of Gender Modification" (2008).

On the other hand, affect is simultaneously located and deterritorialized, and as such, it flows between the individual and the collective; the personal and the public. Following these lines of enquiry, I suggest articulating affect as a cross-border concept characterized not only by an *in-betweenness* (Gregg and Seigworth), but also by a *trans-locationality* and *trans-temporality* that can allow for the emergence of new forms of social relations and ethical intervention.

Sharing the urge expressed by recent theorists in the field of Affect Studies, contemporary queer transCanadian women writers are portraying the multiple directions in which affect circulates, cutting across the aesthetic, the ethical, and the cultural realms. This chapter looks at how Dionne Brand, Emma Donoghue, and Larissa Lai's *oeuvre* interrogates normative affective practices and discourses in a variety of ways, participating in moments of boundary undoings.[64] Their 21st century work proposes alternative ways of approaching, interrogating, and reimagining what I would refer to as the poetics and the politics of affect. Ahmed claims that emotions are the very "flesh" of time (*The Cultural* 202), so significantly, discussions of affective spatialities and temporalities occupy a central position in the literature and thus in my analysis. By employing different cross-border strategies, particularly with regards to the rearticulation of temporal and spatial structures, these writers propose ways of reorienting affect by dislodging it from regulatory affective economies.

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[64] I am indebted to Dagmar Lorenz-Meyer's insights in "Re-Assembling Gender as a Matter of Concern: Gender Essentialisms and Interventions of Feminist Materialism" for this phrase. Her paper was delivered at the 8th *European Feminist Research Conference* held in Budapest in May 2012.

Drawing on globalization and affect theory (Ahmed 2004; Sedgwick 2003; Sassen 1998), the first section of this chapter examines how affect shapes social and bodily space in the novels of two queer transCanadian women writers: Dionne Brand's *What We All Long For* (2005) and Emma Donoghue's *Slammerkin* (2000). Brand and Donoghue's eccentric subjects, in Teresa de Lauretis' understanding of the term, actively struggle to legitimize the presence of their sexualized and racialized bodies in the transnational urban centers of Toronto and London, respectively. By doing so, they not only contribute to the remapping of geo-political and cultural space but also to the tentative creation of alternative affective communities[65]. Both novels depict the constant struggle for certain disoriented bodies to develop and maintain a sense of community that would distance itself from normative affective ties and affiliations. Though set in disparate temporal and spatial frameworks, both texts engage with how the perverse entanglement of capital and affect in so-called global cities systematically threatens to shatter the sustainability of such affective communities, often turning these spaces into sites of bare affect[66] (Agamben 2000).

This chapter also looks at the ways in which contemporary queer Trans.Can. women's writing suggests alternative affective landscapes that counteract so-called "normative affects" (Ahmed 2006; Berlant 2006). Employing

[65] See Gandhi (2006) for a discussion of the politics of friendship within the context of anticolonial encounters in the late Victorian period. I am indebted to the title of her book for the term "affective community."

[66] See philosopher Giorgio Agamben's articulation of the concepts of sovereignty, bare life, and state of exception in *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life* (1998) and *Means Without End: Notes on Politics* (2000) for further reference.

Jonathan Flatley's insights on "affective mapping" (2008), together with the concept "pathogeography"[67], the second section explores the circulation of affect in Dionne Brand's *A Map to the Door of No Return* (2001). The memoir, I argue, traces a genealogy of ordinary affects (Stewart 2007) in order to rewrite and re-experience normative temporal, spatial, and bodily relations. By doing so, Brand assembles an affective archive that not only advocates for a politics of resistance but also contributes to the formulation of alternative social and ethical relations.

Stressing the need to shift emphasis from epistemology to affect and phenomenology, queer critic Eve K. Sedgwick explains how "Affects can be, and are, attached to things, people, ideas, sensations, relations, activities, ambitions, institutions, and any number of other things, including other affects" (19). What happens then when certain populations are negated the possibility of creating affective communities? What are the limitations of affect? How to theorize the lack of affect? In the last section of this chapter, I look at how Larissa Lai's poetry collection, *Automaton Biographies* (2009), problematizes the limitations of affect by introducing "rachel," a racialized automaton, as a subject capable of embodying alternative ethico-political paradigms. In related ways to Ridley Scott's movie *Blade Runner* (1982), Lai's long poem not only interrogates the limits of the human but also shows how fear circulates around racialized bodies, often turning them into locus of negative affect and uncertain temporality (Massumi 2010).

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[67] I have borrowed the term "pathogeography" from a project developed by a group of artists and activists from Feel Tank Chicago in 2007, which aims "to reveal hidden political histories as [they] map the affective expressions of the body politic." See further information here: http://www.pathogeographies.net/

"The Whole City's Our Bawdy-House, My Lass:" Affective Spaces and Disoriented Bodies in Dionne Brand and Emma Donoghue's Fictions

> Anonymity is the big lie of a city. You aren't anonymous at all. You're common, really, common like so many pebbles, so many specks of dirt, so many atoms of materiality.
> Dionne Brand, *What We All Long For* (3).

In the study *Globalization and its Discontents* (1998), sociologist Saskia Sassen argues that the presence of immigrants and other traditionally excluded peoples in what she refers to as "global cities" has pushed the limits of legitimacy by interrogating a key question: "Whose city is this?" (xix). In global urban networks such as New York or Tokyo, corporate actors and traditionally disadvantaged ones share economic and cultural participation in these new transnational geographies. Sassen's claim thus allows for the emergence of a series of spaces and locationalities of resistance. Applying Homi Bhabha's spatio-temporal insights for an analysis of contemporary Irish novels, critic Linden Peach contends that "when the socially marginalized emerge from the margins, a spatial shift occurs" (78). This shift, he argues, may involve the geographical, the socio-cultural, and the figurative. Taking up Peach's ideas, this chapter also incorporates the affective terrain in order to discuss the possibilities and limitations of such practices of intervention. Drawing on globalization and affect theory (Ahmed 2004; Sedgwick 2003; Sassen 1998), this section considers the representation of affective space in Dionne Brand's *What We All Long For* (2005) and Emma Donoghue's *Slammerkin* (2000). As I argue, Brand and Donoghue's eccentric subjects actively struggle to legitimize the presence of their sexualized and racialized bodies in the transnational urban centers of Toronto and London,

respectively[68]. As such, they contribute—albeit momentarily—to the remapping of geo political and cultural space but also to the tentative creation of alternative affective communities. Here, I use the term "community" in its etymological sense—*Lat. communis*: common (*OED*). As the narrator in Brand's novel claims, "that friendship of opposition to the state of things, and their common oddness, held all of them together" (19). And yet, what do Brand and Donoghue's characters hold in common? What is being exchanged in their relations? In her discussion on affective economies, Sara Ahmed claims that "feelings do not reside in subjects or objects, but are produced as effects of circulation" (*The Cultural* 8). Affects, then, are not property, as I explain in my introduction; they are not owned or possessed by subjects. Rather, they circulate between bodies constantly generating new encounters through spatial processes of approximation, disorientation, and reorientation (Ahmed 2004). Affect shapes social and bodily space in Brand and Donoghue's fictions, particularly through the constant struggle for certain disoriented bodies to develop and maintain a sense of community that would distance itself from normative affective ties and affiliations. Though set in disparate temporal and spatial frameworks, these novels engage with how the perverse entanglement of capital and affect in so-called global cities systematically threatens to shatter the sustainability of such affective communities, often turning these spaces into sites of bare affect.

[68] Feminist philosopher Teresa de Lauretis employs the term "eccentric subject" to refer to an "excessive critical position … attained through practices of political and personal displacement across boundaries between sociosexual identities and communities, between bodies and discourses" (145). See the essay "Eccentric Subjects: Feminist Theory and Historical Consciousness" in *Feminist Studies* 16.1 (Spring 1990) for further reference.

In an interview reprinted in the collection *No Margins: Writing Canadian Fiction in Lesbian* (2005), Brand, Toronto's 2010 Poet Laureate, shares her views on the creative potential of urban space within her work: "I've always wanted to write about the emergent city [...] I think the city is a source of incredible energy. I'm not saying that it's always positive energy but I love that and I want to describe it" (33). From her early essay collections such as *Bread Out Of Stone* (1994) to her more recent memoir, *A Map to the Door of No Return* (2001), as well as her poetry collection *Thirsty* (2002), the city has continued to occupy an important role in her writings. In particular, Toronto has been rewritten and reimagined throughout Brand's *oeuvre* as a site of contradiction, a vision that has often attracted the attention of Canadian literary and cultural critics (Ty 2011; Goldman 2004; Walcott 1997). In a key essay on public space and citizenship, Emily Johansen discusses how the young group of Canadians depicted in Brand's *What We All Long For* have developed what she terms a "territorialized cosmopolitan subjectivity"(49). Johansen claims that although these youths are constructed through multiple affiliations across the axes of gender, sexuality, race, and class, their alternative subject position is neither uprooted or deterritorialized but firmly located in the streets of Toronto. While supporting Johansen's insights, I would like to shift the attention from what I see as the cosmopolitan make up of the novel to instead focus on the affective ruptures that emerge, partly, as a result of aggressive capitalist ideologies under processes of uneven globalization.

Set in 2002, Brand's novel introduces Tuyen, a lesbian artist of Vietnamese ancestry who lives alone in a shabby apartment in College Street after

leaving her family's suburban house in Richmond Hill. Surrounded by the objects that she systematically crafts and moulds to turn into pieces of art, Tuyen is a Pygmalion figure who sculpts and transforms matter through touch, an interaction that both Ahmed (2004) and Sedgwick (2003) have indicated is crucial in understanding affective orientations. Tuyen's brother, Quy, went missing in the South China Sea when their parents were fleeing Vietnam. The loss of their five year old has shaped both the family's affective relations and their attitude towards Toronto following emigration to Canada. In *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*, Sara Ahmed aptly claims that "emotions shape the very surfaces of bodies, which take shape through the repetition of actions over time, as well as through orientations towards and away from others" (4). Tuyen's parents have been emotionally paralysed by pain, whereas Tuyen has insisted on re-orienting affect towards objects as a way to compensate for her lack of affective ties towards her family. Also disconnected from her brother, Binh, as well as her other sisters, Tuyen longs to escape familiarity and everyday life, and instead longs for the touch of strangers: "Tuyen wanted no duty. And perhaps that is what she had arrived at. Yet, she wanted an embrace so tight, and with such a gathering of scents and touches. She wanted sensuality, not duty" (61). Refusing to engage in emotional debt towards her family, Tuyen instead longs for the polysensual possibilities of the city as a vehicle to develop a sustainable affective community. By doing so, she constantly reinvents her subjectivity and the social relations around her.

One of Tuyen's longings involves her friend Carla who inhabits "a world of fantasy, of distance, of dreams" (17) and thus remains out of touch throughout the narrative. Carla is unable to feel desire, so the sense that she has most developed is that of sight. She is constantly depicted staring out the window, voyeuristically observing the life of others: "She watched and watched until the light went and the street lights came on and the crowd changed, with the exception of the regular homeless" (39). Significantly, though, Carla is barely seen throughout the narrative; her presence often being described as otherworldly or ghastly: "She rode along the shore, feeling translucent" (30). Quy occupies a similar spectral position from the point of view of his family who have not heard from him since he went missing as a boy. Readers, however, have partial access to his life through the sections in the novel where he functions as narrator. Quy explains how he spent seven years living as an orphan in a refugee camp in Pulau Bidong, an island off the coast of Malaysia, where he learnt how to survive. Yet, this traumatic experience produced a precariousness in his affective attachments. In the essay "Beyond Human Life," Giorgio Agamben argues that "the refugee should be considered for what it is, namely, nothing less than a limit-concept that at once brings a radical crisis to the principles of the nation-state and clears the way for a renewal of categories that can no longer be delayed" (*Means* 21-22). Interestingly, the apartments where Carla and Tuyen live are described as places of refuge thus establishing an indirect connection with Quy's bare life on Pulau Bidong. The juxtaposition of these narratives, as Eleanor Ty observes, allows Brand to show "the condition of globality and displacement in contemporary

Canadian society" (107). Furthermore, by portraying all of these characters as occupying refugee spaces, Brand problematizes the normative productions behind the categories of community, nation, and belonging to instead advocate for the forging of alternative affective affiliations.

The episode of Carla's mother's suicide is significant in illustrating the novel's use of affective spaces. When Carla was five, her mother, Angie, jumped off her apartment's balcony leaving her son Jamal, then a baby, with the young girl. Her growing cancer, together with the emotional dislocation of having been exploited by Carla's father (himself a married man) leads to Angie's tragic suicide. Understandably, this moment of negative affect[69] shapes Carla's social relations in various ways. Loss, on the one hand, makes her retreat from intimacy with others:

> Loving Angie was a gate, and at every moment she made decisions based on that love, if the gate swung open or closed. She kept from loving because she loved Angie. She collected nothing like furniture or books because she loved Angie and things would clutter the space between her present self and the self that Angie loved. Carla needed a clear empty path to Angie as a living being. (111)

There is no room for the development of affective ties given that her love for the lost object—her mother—(already) occupies this space. When Angie vanishes off the balcony, she both symbolically and literally remains out of touch from her daughter and yet, her presence is forever imprinted on Carla like as a scar on the

[69] In the study *Ugly Feelings* (2005), Sianne Ngai proposes to rethink certain negative emotions such as envy or paranoia as contradictory sites from which to look at the intersections between the aesthetic and the political. See the last chapter of this dissertation for a discussion of Ngai's work with regards to Emma Donoghue's collection *Astray* (2012).

skin. Thus Carla lives a life of bare affect that systematically truncates the possibility of her forging any affective community. Moreover, when her mother entrusts her with the baby, she dooms Carla to a complicated bond of emotional debt and dependence with her brother: "Her affection for him had never kept him safe or close. She knew that she loved him with a possessive passion, but she had never felt that love returned. He had always felt himself disconnected" (236). Here, in *What We All Long For*, Brand depicts the global city of Toronto not only as a transnational space of interconnectivity but also as a site of death.

Building on the city as a site of negative affect, Toronto's "polyphonic murmurings" (Brand 2005) and multicultural surface hide a darker side of racism and exploitation that is intertwined with the stories of affective longings experienced by the characters in Brand's novel. For instance, the lives of Tuyen's parents, Cam and Tuan, are saturated by negative affect, primarily guilt and shame as a result of the accumulation of loss they have experienced. A former doctor in Vietnam, Cam is unable to perform her profession in Canada and so temporarily becomes a manicurist. Interestingly, this job entails the touch of other women though only superficially, since the interaction only involves the nails located at the very tip of the fingers. Importantly, however, these ephemeral moments of touch are determined by an economic exchange, thus limiting the possibility for any sustained affect to occur. Far from connecting herself to a larger community of women, the role of manicurist leaves Cam further disconnected from other people, so after a while, she gives up the job to open a restaurant with her husband in Chinatown. As a consequence of suffering anxiety

and fear of being caught without proof of her identity—proof, in other words, of citizenship—, Tuyen's mother, rather erratically, systematically covers all the surfaces of her house with plastic:

> Cam had laminated everything in sight when she discovered a shop, Vickram's, that did laminating. [...] Which is why the carpeting in their spacious house had a path of plastic running over regularly travelled surfaces. And the chairs and couches were not only Scotchgarded but covered in protective plastic that made sitting the most uncomfortable act. (63)

This compulsive need to laminate her furniture not only prevents Cam from touching and thus feeling familiar objects but also signals her affective rupture that emerges as a result of being subjected to certain forms of institutionalised racism. In contrast to Tuyen's sensuality, Cam's life has been stripped from desire, which has led this woman into a sterilized existence. And yet, she is consumed by the city and its inhabitants who are ready to enjoy all the tastes of Vietnamese food in the restaurant. Ironically, neither Cam nor her husband could cook very well but this is no obstacle for their customers: "Eager Anglos ready to taste the fare of their multicultural city wouldn't know the differences" (67). Out of a "lapping shame" (20), Tuyen feels compelled to leave her home and family; she is ashamed of their language and their nostalgia for a place that is no longer here but elsewhere, in some place of the imagination. Calling herself a Dadaist, Tuyen refuses to become swallowed by the nation and instead, rebels by developing alternative tastes and affective attachments with other people like herself; those

born in the country to parents born elsewhere: "This is what drew them together. They each had the hip quietness of having seen; the feeling of living in two dimensions, the look of being on the brink, at the doorway listening for everything" (20). Tuyen's failed orientation to family life has reoriented her towards an alternative community where the senses are prioritized. What orients these characters towards each other and a potential touch is, in fact, their shared sights and hearings. Tuyen's disorientation from her family, however, is not that different from the disorientation that her mother feels since in a way, they are both caught in circuits of shame (Sedgwick 2003). Cam's guilt, however, paralyses her and prevents her access into any affective community: "It was she to blame, it was she who could have with *one turning of the head* caught sight of Quy and pulled him to her. She could taste that moment, she longed to live it, it terrified her. She had such a deep sense of shame she felt inhuman" (113, my emphasis). Tragically, failing to turn makes her disorient herself from her son thus making her not only lose a most prized object of positive affect but negatively affecting Quy's own life trajectory.

Brand's characters constantly struggle to counteract the negative racialization and sexualization of their bodies in the global city of Toronto[70]. Oku, a young black poet and failed M.A. literature student of Caribbean ancestry, strives to find his identity and place in the city against the oppressive forces of institutional control and the endemic problem of institutionalized racism personified by forces like the police who systematically criminalize his body.

[70] In the long poem *Thirsty* (2002), Dionne Brand also addresses the negative racialization of the black male body in the context of Toronto in the 1980s.

Here, Toronto functions as a site of contradiction for black men like Oku who, despite being Canadian by birth, lack the fully recognized right to access all the practices of citizenship (Johansen 48). Thus Brand shows how the superficiality of skin colour further complicates the meaning of citizenship. Nevertheless, as Sassen contends, the "global city is a strategic site for disempowered actors because it enables them to gain presence, to emerge as subjects, even when they do not gain direct power" (*Globalization* xxi). In the novel, Brand illustrates this during Oku's recollection of an encounter with the police when he was just eighteen. Recalling the incident, Oku recounts how he foresaw the racialized charade about to occur and thus anticipated his part in this perverse performance: "Two cops came out of the car. He can't remember if they called him, if they told him to stop. His arms rose easily as if reaching for an embrace. [...] He yielded his body as if to a lover, and the cop slid into his arms" (165). From an Althusserian perspective, Oku's interruption of the police's interpellation produces a process of de-subjectification to occur. However, his "already knowing" the role to play momentarily subverts the police's authority. Also, by means of using his body as an affective shield, Oku manages to contain the violence of the situation and instead shifts the attention into the corporeal and spatial aspects of the choreography played with the police. As Phanuel Antwi claims, Brand's novel "presents in Oku a black man who, through experience, has learned to strategically use his body as an instrument of dissent to navigate grey zones with police officers" (218). Oku then momentarily disrupts institutional structures in

this macabre tableau not only through his anticipated bodily knowledge but by locating a form of reverse affect at the centre of the exchange of power.

The perverse entanglement of capital and affect in so-called global cities has also shaped Quy's life trajectory and the relationships that he has formed along the way. Quy repeatedly explains how he spent most of his life alone; from the ages of five to twelve when he met Loc Tuc, a heroin-addicted monk who took him out of Pulau Bidong. "He gave me a direction. He taught me who I was" (Brand 217), Quy claims. Described as a cosmopolitan man, the monk is one of several other ethically dubious characters involved in a variety of illegal activities such as the unofficial refugee trade. Importantly, they all live in the city's underworld that echoes Donoghue's portrayal of late eighteenth century London in *Slammerkin* at a time when industrialisation was booming. Quy and the monk engage in transnational flows, that is, they move to Singapore and then to Bangkok. Quy's affective ties thus develop intertwined with processes of economic exchange in the growing markets of the Asian tigers of the 1990s: "We were like a gang, like any conglomerate of businessmen. We had territory, we had monopolies, we had wars, we had alliances" (284). Importantly, Brand resists portraying Quy as an example of universal innocence and instead, turns him into an equally suspect character; he is someone not to be trusted, as the narrative suggests. As such, he is not distinctly different from Binh, Tuyen's other brother, who runs a store yet also spends his time trading and exchanging illegal goods, often engaged in irregular activities. Brand shows, however, that disadvantaged populations not only survive on trading official and unofficial goods but also on

the circulation of physical threats: "their gains weren't stock options and expensive homes but momentary physical control and perennially contested fearsomeness" (257). This is the same space of negative affect where Quy has grown up. His affective affiliations have been structured around violence and economic gain: "Brotherliness is another feeling I can't come up with. Self-interest is what moves the world. People bunch together because they are scared. I'm a loner" (139). It is this self-interest that orients him, making him cross the Pacific and reach the shores of Canada in search of more economic gain.

When Binh seems to have found his lost brother Quy, a turning point in the narrative occurs, which shapes spatial structures and once again transforms affective relations in the novel. Far from providing Tuyen with any sense of peace, Quy's appearance disrupts her: "She felt disoriented, drawn to the babyness of the face against the body springy as violence" (227). Facing her missing brother reactivates Tuyen's emotional debt thus creating a moment of negative affect. And yet, Tuyen slowly accepts the idea of taking some responsibility and so she unites forces with her brother to help their parents deal with the shock of seeing their missing son again. Similarly, when Carla's father, Derek, finally takes responsibility for his son, Jamal, Carla momentarily experiences a sense of happiness and relief: "She rode through the city, now feeling free. [...] Derek had bailed Jamal out. Jamal was going to live with him. Whether that lasted or not now was up to them" (314). These ephemeral moments of positive affect quickly vanish when it is revealed that Carla's brother is yet again involved in an illegal activity soon after leaving prison. In a perverse twist, Jamal's violence is targeted

towards Quy who is alone outside his parents' house, waiting to be finally recognised by his family. *What We All Long For*, then, ends with Quy bleeding in the street and his parents frantically running out to grab him. This final moment of touch becomes a brief instance of what Lauren Berlant terms "cruel optimism" (21) where the promise of a happy future is left unresolved. Brand, therefore, gives no room for affective ties within the family to become sustainable.

In his analysis of *What We All Long For*, cultural critic Kit Dobson contends that Brand's novel "represents a generational shift in the politics of being in Canadian space, pushing the notions of community and belonging in different directions" (142). In their recognition of the city's dangers, violence, and limitations, characters like Tuyen and Oku represent those alternative bodies capable of reclaiming such an urban space; beings "longing for the dissonance," as Oku explains (228). As a result of a series of structural violences, the moments of affect that these characters experience, however, cannot be sustained and thus remain ephemeral. The young people in Brand's novel have been exposed to a series of emotional ruptures that have pulled them into searching for alternative forms of affective communities that are yet "to come" (Derrida 1999). In more dramatic ways, the older generations depicted in the text have no access to affective intervention owing to personal histories of loss being intertwined with contemporary processes of global displacement and dispossession.

Despite being set in the late 18th century Britain, Emma Donoghue's *Slammerkin* (2000) resembles Brand's narrative in how social relations and affective spaces are indirectly shaped by processes of uneven globalization and

aggressive neoliberal ideologies. Donoghue departs from the Irish-centred focus of her earlier "coming out" novels *Stir-Fry* (1994) and *Hood* (1995) and moves into the realm of historical or historiographic fiction that characterises her later pieces such as *Life Mask* (2004) and *The Sealed Letter* (2008). Donoghue's shift allows her to contest received masculinist constructions of history and nation, thus sustaining a critique of normative affective and gender structures. *Slammerkin* (meaning a loose dress, and a loose woman) covers the tortuous life of the young Mary Saunders from 1760 to 1763. In spite of depicting themes such as rape, abandonment, abortion, and prostitution in the narrative, Donoghue's portrayal of this partially historical protagonist resists victimisation and subjection. Together with other prostitutes in the novel, Mary becomes as an active presence in the city, often reterritorializing and resexualizing the masculinist spaces she occupies despite her socio-economic limitations. Mary's emotional precariousness, however, generates an on-going sense of disorientation that ultimately prevents her from remaining within the borders of any solid affective community. In the second half of this section, I will focus on two affective encounters (Gregg and Seigworth 2010) that, in similar fashion to Brand's, are tangled with the transaction of capital thus forming a variety of economies of affect (Ahmed 2010).

As critic Morales Ladrón argues, problematic relationships between mother and daughter figures are a constant trait across Donoghue's *oeuvre* (107), and *Slammerkin* is no exception to this. The first section of the novel narrates Mary's initiation into London's underground life after being evicted from the

family home by her own mother, Mrs. Susan Digot. When she realizes that her daughter is pregnant, she kicks her out of the family home, telling her "You have no mother now" (31). Left homeless and alone, wandering the streets of London, Mary wonders about her lack of place and resources: "If she was sunk so low that her own mother wouldn't give her shelter, what use was it to appeal to strangers?" (33). This moment of disaffection shatters Mary's embodied subjectivity, dramatically shaping her future encounters with other female characters in the narrative. After being repeatedly raped and almost beaten to death, a Messianic figure in the body of a young but experienced prostitute called Doll Higgins miraculously rescues her, feeds her, and gives her shelter. Enacting Derrida's notion of "pure" or "unconditional" hospitality, this stranger saves Mary's life by welcoming her into her household, a room at the Rookery, without hesitation.[71] As Derrida claims, "unconditional hospitality implies that you don't ask the other, the newcomer, the guest, to give anything back, or even to identify himself or herself. Even if the other deprives you of your mastery or your home, you have to accept this" (70). Describing herself as a "free agent," Doll accepts the stranger without any initial expectation thus proving the potential for affective allegiances to emerge. In an ironic reversal of the figure of the male professor Henry Higgins in Bernard Shaw's *Pygmalion* (1912), the female prostitute Doll Higgins teaches the young (anti)heroine proto-feminist lessons, such as "It's every girl for herself"

[71] The figure of the stranger recurs in Donoghue's *oeuvre*, oscillating between being a source of uncertainty and a source of comfort, love, and community. After moving to Dublin, Maria, one of the main characters in *Stir-Fry* (1994), experiences feelings of estrangement associated with the space of the city. On the other hand, it is loss what makes Pen in *Hood* (1995) think of strangers living in one world community. Similarly, the character of Jack in *Room* (2010), as I argue in chapter one, develops a form of corporeal citizenship where ties of affection and attachment towards strangers interrogate the boundaries of the home and by extension, the nation, towards new reconfigurations of world communities.

(36) and "Never give up your liberty" (70). Through Doll's guidance, Mary begins to feels at home, soon integrating into the city's underworld.

Doll's life of prostitution is associated, sometimes directly, sometimes obliquely, to concepts of home and citizenship: "she seemed unable to remember a time before *strolling*—that was her word for it—or any possibilities beyond its reach. It was like a country she lived in. [...] Doll had no sense that there was any border to her territory" (38-40). At twenty-one years old, Doll has managed to reterritorialize the streets of a city during a moment when historical women like her were rendered invisible and thus not considered full citizens in society. By sharing her knowledge with Mary, Donoghue's (anti)heroine learns how to cope with "life's shortcuts, back alleys, [and] gaps in the walls" (72). Momentarily, then, Doll and Mary form a deterritorialized affective community that not only enables their sustenance, but also grants them certain freedom of movement and choice[72]. Doll's sense of place is not only described in terms of mobility but also around issues of class, sexuality, and civility. In one of her lessons to Mary, Doll explains that "Decent folk don't wander like we do … decent folk stay in their place" (62). When Mary and Doll stroll, they are re-inscribing their presence in the city, while also re-sexualizing the urban spaces they occupy:

> By now there was hardly a corner of the city where Mary hadn't turned a trick, from the pristine pavements of the West End to the knotted Cockney streets where Spanish Jews, Lascar seamen from the Indies, blacks and

[72] The term "deterritorialization" gained popularity with the work of French philosophers Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari in the 1970s. Since then, the concept has been rearticulated from diverse fields of study, such as social and cultural anthropology (Appadurai 1996) and political philosophy (Hardt and Negri 2004). See chapter four in this dissertation for a discussion of the workings of deterritorialization in contemporary queer transCanadian women's writing.

> Chinamen all mingled like dyes in a basin. She's had coopers and cordwainers, knife-grinders and window-polishers, watchmen and excisemen and a butcher with chapped hands. (59)

The affective economies of sex and capital are both intertwined in Mary's transnational sexual exchanges in her wanderings around the blooming city of London[73]. An emerging city in terms of industrialization and trade, this urban centre is beginning to show the traits of the future global cities in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. As *Slammerkin* shows, the textile industry, for instance, was central to economic development. Mary and Doll are fascinated by clothes, which stand as fetishized objects that they manage to reappropriate despite often becoming commodities that substitute affection: "At night when she couldn't sleep, she consoled herself with the inventory of her possessions. She has sleeves, bodices, ruffles, and embroidered stomachers, a brown velvet mantua and a cardinal cape. She owned a spray of silk daisies and a black ribbon choker, one silk slammerkin in violet and another in dark green" (83). Ironically, this inventory of substitute affects grants Mary a sense of purpose, pulling her towards a more sustainable future[74]. In many ways this is the flipside of Quy's entrepreneurial adventures in Brand's novel, which involve the exploitation of refugees and other vulnerable populations in the context of the expansion of Asian markets in the 1990s. In a reversal to modern versions of mobility as synonymous

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[73] In *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*, Sara Ahmed discusses the concept of affective economies claiming that "feelings do not reside in subjects or objects, but are produced as effects of circulation" (8). Involving an exchange of sex and capital, prostitution as such participates in the circulation of affective economies.

[74] See Brydon (2007) for an intriguing article on the workings of affective citizenship in Dionne Brand's poetry collection *Inventory* (2006).

to an elitist cosmopolitanism, Donoghue associates mobility with an alternative mode of empowerment for previously disoriented subjects such as female prostitutes who rank in the lowest parts of society in terms of class, respectability, and power. By doing so, *Slammerkin* challenges those discourses and ideologies that privilege mobility over rootedness as a sign of the liberatory condition of globalization. In fact, Doll and Mary's mobility, as happens with the characters in Brand's *What We All Long For*, is firmly located in the streets of London.

These two young women form a precarious affective community temporarily sustained by their instincts for survival and a shared longing for freedom at any cost. Passing as a Penitent, Mary spends nearly two months at the Magdalen Hospital to improve her health, following Doll's indirect advice. Feeling oppressed, however, Mary decides to leave this symbolic prison, making her decision after realising that she wants to be in charge of her life, and stop "drifting along like a leaf on the river" (102). When Mary comes back home from her symbolic exile, she finds no one at the Rookie, except for a landowner who claims to be owed rent that she cannot pay for. Running away from this situation, Mary suddenly encounters Doll's corpse in a back alley:

> It occurred to her to kiss the taut scarred drum of Doll's cheek, but she found she couldn't. The lightest touch might keep Mary there, rooted in this frozen alley. Instead, she stretched out her hand to the worn red ribbon in Doll's wig. Was it the same one, she wondered, the first one, the ribbon the child Mary had set her eyes and heart on at the Seven Dials, three long years ago? (116)

The young woman's body not only represents a warning for Mary as to the potential lethal outcome of her life but also becomes a symbolic fetish not to be touched. In the words of critic Eibhear Walshe, "Donoghue is a very physical writer, always presenting her characters within the context of bodily desires and discomforts and in this novel the body now becomes a place of extreme unease" (281-82). The affective impact of Doll's death on Mary's subjectivity and sense of embodiment resembles that of Angie's death on her daughter Carla in *What We All Long For*. On the one hand, this loss symbolises Mary's disorientation as a subject, since without her alter ego, she finds herself rootless and without a home. Far from disappearing, however, Doll now occupies a spectral position that will continue to guide Mary into uncertain paths. In similar fashion to Carla's haunted existence by the loss of her mother, these phantom traces of affect are, on the other hand, impregnated into Mary's skin and sense of self throughout the rest of the narrative. Temporarily, Mary transfers her affection for Doll into a piece of clothing; a ribbon that will function as the bond between the two women for the rest of the narrative.

Feeling dislocated and scared, the idea of London as a space of possibility collapses, so the (anti)heroine feels urged to flee the city: "London was the page on which she'd been written from the start; she didn't know who she was if she wasn't there" (131). The city becomes an imaginary space that begins to dissolve for Mary as she journeys from England into Wales. It is through the movement between geographical borders that Mary spins a new identity for herself as an orphan girl in search of the position of servant for Mrs. Jones, an old friend of her

mother. Attempting to fulfill a Christian act but consequently putting her own family in a position of risk and danger, Mrs. Jones opens the door and welcomes this stranger into her household. As Mary herself ponders, "Who'd take in the daughter of a friend she hadn't seen in twenty years? What kind of fool would open her house to a stranger?" (126). Mrs. Jones, however, welcomes her without hesitation, hiring her as a maid. Interestingly, Mary is allocated in the attic with another young maid named Abi, a black maid-of-all-work, as she is called (166). The attic becomes an affective space where these two young women tackle issues of gender, race, and class oppression[75]. In this privileged microcosm, both women momentarily develop certain affiliation and solidarity. Again, however, this affective community is rendered precarious given that both women's relationship is entangled with economic issues thus making distrust a key element in their association.

Mary is constantly aware of the charade she is performing, almost to the point of actually believing her invented role as a "wandering orphan," as she calls herself. Consequently, she begins to integrate her presence within the household through the development of intimacy with her mistress, Mrs. Jones. It is through the act of sewing that both girl and woman bond, creating an illusion of equality

[75] With the publication of proto-feminist texts, such as Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* (1847) and Charlotte Perkins Gilman's "The Yellow Wallpaper" (1899), the attic became a symbol of oppression against women's bodies and subjectivities under patriarchal structures. With the publication of Jean Rhys' novel *Wide Sargasso Sea* (1966), a subversive retelling of the story of Bertha Mason, the meaning of the attic shifted to contain further instances of racial discrimination and class inequalities. See Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar's pioneering study *The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination* (1979) for an in-depth analysis of this contested space. Contemporary women writers, as illustrated by Margaret Atwood's novel *Alias Grace* (1996) and Emma Donoghue's collection *Kissing the Witch: Old Tales in New Skins* (1997), have revisited the attic as a subversive space for feminist intervention and coalition. See García Zarranz (2012a) for further reference.

through the erasure of class difference: "Mary's hands were too good to wear out on the back of a scrubbing brush. When the pair of them were working away side by side, hour after hour, Mrs. Jones had the curious sensation that they were not mistress and maid but equal helpmeets, almost" (235). When Mary and Mrs. Jones sew together, they often tell stories to each other thus managing to rewrite the masculinist spaces they occupy by the presence of their own bodies. Mr. Jones is in fact excluded from this female community, which ultimately creates feelings of insecurity in him. His masculinity is threatened by the active role that this female stranger, as he calls her, has begun to play in the life of his wife. This young girl has managed to replace this man in terms of a kind of intimacy that remains incomprehensible to him. For Mary, this microcosm had finally made her feel that she belongs somewhere:

> Here, in the stuffy clutter of a small sewing room in the Joneses' house on Inch Lane in the town of Monmouth in England or Wales or *somewhere in between* [...]. Till this endless afternoon, Mary had never quite known the truth: this was home. (337, my emphasis)

Significantly, Mary's moment of affective realization is spatially determined in a multitude of locations, ranging from a closed room, a family house, a town, and finally, the border between two countries. This moment of placement, nonetheless, is only ephemeral, since these locations soon become stained as a consequence of a spiral of lies and deceit that lead to punishment, violence, and death.

Against the locals' attempts to make her feel as an insider, Mary systematically lacks freedom: "Service had reduced her to a child, put her under orders to get up and lie down at someone else's rules, working for someone else's whim; her days were spent obeying someone else's rules, working for someone else's profit. Nothing was Mary's anymore" (188). Her lack of power and independence prompts her return into the world of prostitution but this time as a secret source of financial independence in order to secure herself with an alternative future. Mary's hidden horde of money becomes "a kind of secret fetish" (Peach 83). Her desire is oriented towards this object thus turning it into the only source of affect. Consequently, when Mrs. Jones decides to take this sinful money away to charity, Mary responds to this affective betrayal by killing her. Again affective practices are entangled in economic exchanges, hence blocking the possibility for the (anti)heroine to sustain a long-term affective community. As Quy puts it in Dionne Brand's novel, "For some of us, the world is never forgiving. And anyway, we don't believe in such things, these ideas of forgiveness, redemption—it's useless" (285). Described as a murderess and a monster, Mary is sentenced to death by hanging after being charged with the murder of her mistress. She is executed in the public space of the Market Square in Monmouth; her body exposed to strangers and familiar faces alike. It is interesting to note how, once again, the connection between the body and space acquires a crucial meaning in Donoghue's text. One woman dies, and yet, another one survives. Benefitting from the confusion after Mrs. Jones' murder, Abi runs off to London, a place she describes as "a topsy-turvy city" where race seems to

become invisible: "Strangers barely turned their heads. She wondered whether her skin had turned white overnight, or become quite invisible. This place would do, she thought with a sudden surge of hope; no one would ever find her here" (378). In a way, Abi is retracing the steps of other women before her; disoriented women like Doll and Mary, who somehow paved out the way into the possibility of creating future communities of positive affect. As Peach aptly contends, "Donoghue's reader cannot but be aware that, in writing in the eighteenth century, Donoghue is indirectly offering a feminist critique of late twentieth-century, capitalist-society" (12).

Political philosophers Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, as I suggest in chapter two, controversially claim that the poor, together with other neglected groups of people, constitute a productive force they understand as a potential resisting "multitude" against the tyrannical global capitalist processes of what they refer to as Empire. This section has read the affective communities depicted in the novels of these queer transCanadian women writers as instances of this potential force of resistance against normative sexual, gendered, and racial hegemonic structures. In Brand and Donoghue's texts, nonetheless, Toronto and London also stand as global spaces of cruel optimism (Berlant 2006), where the sustenance of affective communities is always under threat, never secured. By tackling these tensions and contradictions, Brand and Donoghue problematize current configurations of social relations to instead advocate for the creation of alternative

logics of affect, embodiment, and space in the panorama of the unevenly globalized twenty-first century[76].

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Ordinary Affects and Cross-Border Pathogeographies in Dionne Brand's *A Map to the Door of No Return: Notes on Belonging*

> Ordinary affects are public feelings that begin and end in broad circulation, but they're also the stuff that seemingly intimate lives are made of. They give circuits and flows the forms of a life. They can be experienced as a pleasure and a shock, as an empty pause or a dragging undertow, as a sensibility that snaps into place or a profound disorientation.
>
> Kathleen Stewart, *Ordinary Affects* (2).

> To live in the Black Diaspora is I think to live as a fiction—a creation of empires, and also self-creation. It is to be a being living inside and outside of herself. It is to apprehend the sign one makes yet to be unable to escape it except in radiant moments of ordinariness made like art.
>
> Dionne Brand, *A Map to the Door of No Return* (19).

In the afterword to the short story collection *Astray* (2012), Emma Donoghue claims that "When you work in the hybrid form of historical fiction, there will be Seven-League-Boot moments: crucial facts joyfully uncovered in dusty archives and online databases, as well as great leaps of insight and imagination. But you will also be haunted by a looming absence: the shadowy mass of all that's been lost, that can never be recovered" (270). This ghostly presence or haunting absence certainly reflects a sense of loss that circulates in the embodied labour of the historian[77]. What happens if we turn this melancholia for a

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[76] A version of this chapter has been accepted for publication. García Zarranz 2013. *Peer English.*

[77] See Ann Cvetkovich's *An Archive of Feelings* (2003) for a discussion of trauma and cultural memory from the perspective of lesbian culture. I am indebted to Cvetkovich's concepts "archive

lost archive; for a lost time; for a lost object into a space of creativity and political intervention? What if this sense of loss and longing could reorient subjects beyond traditional forms of belonging and social relations? In her discussion of cruel optimism, affect theorist Lauren Berlant explains how melancholia is "enacted in the subject's desire to temporize an experience of the loss of an object or scene with which she has identified her ego continuity" (21). What if it were possible to theorize a different kind of affect; a counter-melancholia of sorts that would enable the subject to free itself from that lost object by precisely questioning the actuality of such experience of loss? In the study *Affective Mapping: Melancholia and the Politics of Modernism* (2008), cultural critic Jonathan Flatley positions history at the centre of his analysis in order to conceptualize melancholia as an affective energy that can enable social transformation: "melancholia forms the site in which the social origins of our emotional lives can be mapped out and from which we can see the other persons who share our losses and are subject to the same social forces" (3). In a similar line of argumentation to Judith Butler's insights on mourning, Flatley proposes to look at melancholia as a site of resistance to hegemonic structures, such as white supremacy, that have historically shaped the lives of subjugated populations. His concept of collective melancholias hence traces the historicity of such affective routes. In related ways, Sara Ahmed discusses figures such as the feminist joy-kill, the unhappy queer, and the angry black woman as instances of what she calls "affect aliens" ("Happy Objects" 39). Yet another example of the affect alien,

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of feelings" and "archive of trauma" in my articulation of Dionne Brand's catalogue of negative affect in her memoir.

melancholic subjects are, in Ahmed's words, "the ones who refuse to let go of suffering, who are even prepared to kill some forms of joy, as an alternative model of the social good" ("Happy" 50). Ahmed contends that these affect aliens become blockage points to the naturalized orientation of bodies towards hegemonic structures of power.

Sharing the urge expressed by many theorists of affect, contemporary queer transCanadian women writers such as Dionne Brand are contributing to the transformation of affect into an aesthetic, ethical, and political matter. For the last two decades, Brand has problematized these "failed orientations" by depicting a variety of bodies that refuse to be pulled by economic neoliberalism, compulsory heterosexuality, or racial imperialism. Drawing on recent interventions in cultural and affect studies (Flatley 2008; Stewart 2007; Ahmed 2004), this section of my chapter examines how affect circulates in Dionne Brand's *A Map to the Door of No Return: Notes to Belonging* (2001), often crossing spatial and bodily boundaries. Brand's memoir, I argue, traces a genealogy of ordinary affects (Stewart 2007) and cross-border pathogeographies as a way to rethink, re-feel, and resist hegemonic historical archives. I borrow Lauren Berlant's concept of "pathogeography" in my analysis to look at how spaces such as the Black Atlantic are depicted as cross-border geographies where affect circulates in ambivalent ways. These spaces, as Brand's memoir illustrates, enable the circulation of longing and desire, while simultaneously disabling the complete realization of such emotional needs[78]. *A Map*, nonetheless, suggests that these affective

[78] I return to the concept of pathogeography in my analysis of Emma Donoghue's short story collection *Astray* in chapter four, particularly with regards to the depiction of the Atlantic Ocean

geographies can be remade through the exercise of writing and reading as embodied practices, together with the reformulation of affective practices and alliances across borders. By doing so, I contend, these pathogeographies tentatively become queer spaces (Tinsley 2008). My analysis thus suggests a departure from psychoanalytical interpretations of affect as a pathology, via Freud, in that the experience of object loss in Brand's memoir does not cripple the subject's identity but indirectly enables the formulation of collective embodied subjectivities.[79]

In the second epigraph to this section, Brand describes the position of the black diasporic subject as inhabiting a cross-border space that exceeds ontological constructions of the self, while simultaneously being trapped by its boundaries: "To live in the Black Diaspora is I think to live as a fiction—a creation of empires, and also self-creation. It is to be a being living inside and outside of herself. It is to apprehend the sign one makes yet to be unable to escape it except in radiant moments of ordinariness made like art" (19). And yet there are those "radiant moments of *ordinariness* made like art" (19, my emphasis) where the potential for artistic creation emerges. Anthropologist Kathleen C. Stewart describes ordinary affects as "an animate circuit that conducts force and maps connections, routes, and disjunctures. They are a kind of contact zone where the overdeterminations of circulations, events, conditions, technologies, and flows of

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as an ambivalent space for migrant populations such as the Irish in the 19th century during the famine crisis.

[79] For a discussion of melancholia as symptomatic of a depressive state leading to passive prostration and lack of meaning see Julia Kristeva's study *Black Sun: Depression and Melancholia* (1989). For a psychoanalytical take on melancholia, via Lacan, see Judith Butler's *Psychic Life of Power: Theories in Subjection* (1997).

power literally take place" (93). An archive of ordinary affects, in Stewart's understanding the term, Dionne Brand's memoir is constructed out of scratches from history, personal recollections of the author's childhood in Trinidad, memories of Grenada and its failures, political commentary, cartography, and poetry. *A Map to the Door of No Return* thus extends and crosses a variety of temporal and spatial boundaries, and by doing so, the memoir assembles an affective archive for black and other vulnerable populations. In one of her recollections, Brand comments on how she came across the ordinariness of suffering[80] through her encounter with books like *The Black Napoleon* that trace the historical struggle of black slaves: "What led me to this book, then, were my senses, my sweet tooth, my hunger, my curiosity [...]. This book filled me with sadness and courage. It burned my skin. [...] I did not yet know how the world took people like me. I did not know history. The book was a mirror and an ocean" (185/186/187). Notice how affect circulates in this passage, not only impregnating the body of the author, but also enabling connections between artistic creation, geography, and history. As she explains, reading such books turned out to be formative moments that shaped her identity, together with her affective responses to knowledge and injustice. This mixture of sad awareness and "sensual knowledge" (188) becomes the ethico-political basis for the adult Brand to interrogate received versions of history and ways of belonging. Responding to Uruguayan writer Eduardo Galeano's famous lines "I'm nostalgic for a country which doesn't yet exist on a map," Brand responds: "Dear Eduardo, I am not

[80] See José Esteban Muñoz's study *Disidentifications: Queers of Color and the Performance of Politics* (1999) for a discussion on melancholia as an integral part of everyday existence for queer and black populations.

nostalgic. Belonging does not interest me" (85). By resisting a sentimentalized nostalgia, Brand manages instead to convey a kind of counter-melancholy that pushes readers to think of the socially-constructed concepts of history and belonging differently[81]. This redefinition, I would argue, involves a rearticulation of the variety of ways in which affect shapes social and bodily spaces and relations[82].

Brand's memoir positions the circulation of hate and fear at the centre of the narrative. Looking back at her childhood memories on the Caribbean island of Trinidad, the narrator expresses a lack of knowledge and yet, there is a sense of shared pain and unhappiness that circulates within the community:

> I knew that everyone here was unhappy and haunted in some way. Life spoke in the blunt language of brutality, even beauty was brutal. I did not know what we were haunted by at the time. Or why it would be imperfect to have a smooth face, or why a moment of hatred would take hold so easily as if the sun had simply come out. But I had a visceral

[81] Feminist historians and sociologists such as Vijay Agnew, Avtar Brah, and Sneja Gunew have rearticulated early versions of diaspora studies and criticism that promoted fixed notions of home and identity. As Agnew contends, it is crucial to interrogate traditional diasporic narratives "where the homeland is perceived nostalgically as an 'authentic' space of belonging, and the place of settlement as somehow 'inauthentic' and undesirable" (195). In similar fashion, Sneja Gunew explains how diasporic studies have been reinvigorated by discourses of the global and the transnational, giving way to more innovative and effective conceptualizations within the discipline (2009). Some of the recent developments in the field include Brah's redefinition of diasporic identity as entailing "networks of transnational identifications encompassing 'imagined' and 'encountered' communities" (196), together with her discussion on 'diaspora space' as a point of confluence of both global and local economic, cultural, political, and affective processes. See Vijay Agnew's *Diaspora, Memory and Identity* (2005) and Avtar Brah's *Cartographies of Diaspora: Contesting Identities* (1996) for further reference.

[82] There is very interesting work being done within the field of Queer Diaspora Studies that dismantles essentialized conceptualizations of national and diasporic identity. For further reference, see Gayatri Gopinath's essay "Nostalgia, Desire, Diaspora: South Asian Sexualities in Motion" (1997), the collection of essays *Queer Globalizations: Citizenship and the Afterlife of Colonialism* (2002), edited by Arnaldo Cruz-Malavé and Martin F. Manalansan IV, and the article "Making Home: Queer Migrations and Motions of Attachment," by Anne Marie Fortier (2003).

> understanding of a wound much deeper than the physical, a wound which somehow erupted in profound self-disappointment, self-hatred, and disaffection. (11)

Loaded with negative affect, black subjectivity is described in terms of an embodied spectrality; a yet to be defined wound that not only haunts the social realm but is also felt in the skin; a scar that impregnates both the subject and the body. In her discussion of "affective economies," Ahmed contends that hate does not reside in a given subject or object but it is economic in that "it circulates between signifiers in relationships of difference and displacement" (*The Cultural* 44). As the narrator in *A Map* explains, hate circulates among different generations of black subjects who share histories of geopolitical erasure and affective precariousness.

Significantly, this affective impulse to know and to trace a past of impossible origins is ingrained in language structures: "What language would describe that loss of bearings or the sudden awful liability of one's own body? The hitting or the whipping or the driving, which was shocking, the dragging and the bruising it involved, the epidemic sickness with life which would become hereditary? And the antipathy which would shadow all subsequent events" (21). *A Map* opens up with the narrator attempting to have her grandfather remember where their ancestors come from; she needs a name, a linguistic structure to make sense of the world around her: "Having no name to call on was having no past; having no past pointed to the fissure between the past and the present. That fissure is represented in the Door of No Return: that place where our ancestors departed

one world for another; the Old World for the New" (5). With no success, the name of this place of impossible origins remains inaccessible to this young girl who craves to be part of a collective history. Her grandfather does not bear to remember, which causes a deep emotional impact on his granddaughter: "the rupture that this exchange with my grandfather revealed was greater than the need for familial bonds. It was a rupture in history, a rupture in the quality of being. It was also a physical rupture, a rupture of geography" (5). Note how the ontological rupture that the narrator experiences traverses the realms of the embodied self with a longing for location. It is in this moment of not knowing where the concept of pathogeography emerges.

In the fascinating article on black Atlantic oceanographies, Omise'eke Natasha Tinsley boldly claims that "the black Atlantic has always been the queer Atlantic" (191). Describing this affective space as a borderland, Tinsley explains how in this pathogeography, "elements or currents of historical, conceptual, and embodied maritime experience come together to transform racialized, gendered, classed, and sexualized selves" (192). This contested, and potentially queer space, is described in similar lines in Brand's memoir. Recalling another moment in her childhood at the beach in Guaya, the narrative voice in *A Map* describes the waters of the Atlantic Ocean as an affective space of both pleasure and longing. From the ocean, described as the centre of the world, she would imagine potential future destinations: "Venezuela was to the southeast, Brazil to the southwest, Britain to the northeast, America to the northwest. A road map, compressed to fit the six-inch scroll of a grape leaf; these were my possible directions and my

desires" (74). Brand's affective encounter with the ocean not only leaves an impression in her younger self but also forces the temporary disorientation of her body. As Ahmed contends, affects are relational, always involving (re)actions or relations of "towardness" or "awayness" in relation to the objects of emotions (*The Cultural* 8). This relationality can enable the subject to engage in a variety of alternative reorientations. Brand's disorientation thus becomes a moment of possibility where the black body resists invisibility by envisioning instead the potential of multilocationality. In the afterword to *Astray* (2012), Emma Donoghue reflects on the implications of being a "twice migrant"[83] and what it seems to her like the arbitrariness of destinations: "Straying has always had a moral meaning as well as a geographical one, and the two are connected. If your ethical compass is formed by the place you grow up, which way will its needle swing when you're far from home?" (262). Besides being a basic tool to help people orient themselves, the image of the compass is a loaded one, as Brand's memoir aptly illustrates. Traditionally associated to white masculinist histories of expansion and exploration, the compass stands as an object that occupies a problematic position within the imaginary of colonized populations, refugees, and other displaced peoples. Brand, however, embraces the ocean as an alternative compass that reactivates the circulation of affect, both disorienting and reorienting her young body towards alternative imagined lives.

[83] The term, coined by Carmen Vöigt-Graf in her essay "Transnationalism and the Indo-Fijian Diaspora: The Relationship of Indo-Fijians to India and its People" (2008), is also used by scholar Terri Tomsky to describe the genealogy of writer Shani Mootoo. As Tomsky explains, the term "helps extend the meaning of diaspora by gesturing towards the complex affiliations to Home(s)—the parenthetical s could here supplement the fetishized *H*—created by multiple displacements and migrations, rather than describing the singular act of direct migration at one point in time to a particular, place" (195). See other related terms like "twice diasporized" and "triply diasporized" as articulated by Stuart Hall (1989) and Carole Boyce Davies (2011) respectively.

In the first epigraph to this section, Kathleen Stewart contends that "ordinary affects are public feelings that begin and end in broad circulation, but they're also the stuff that seemingly intimate lives are made of. They give circuits and flows the forms of a life. They can be experienced as a pleasure and a shock, as an empty pause or a dragging undertow, as a sensibility that snaps into place or a profound disorientation" (2). Following Stewart's line of enquiry, I argue that the Atlantic Ocean becomes an archive of ordinary affects that generates contradictory feelings in the young narrator, who is at once pulled by its power, while being overwhelmed at its vast magnitude. As a result, this affective space both pulls black diasporic peoples into a melancholic return to Africa as an impossible origin, while pushing them away into the search for alternative ties of affiliation and belonging. Ahmed explains how "through repeating some gestures and not others, or through being orientated in some directions and not others, bodies become contorted; they get twisted into shapes that enable some action only insofar as they restrict capacity for other kinds of action" (*The Cultural* 145). Through the repeated exposure to this affective space, the young narrator in *A Map* imagines alternative destinations. Tinsley claims that Brand plumbs "the archival ocean materially, as space that churns with physical remnants, dis(re)membered bodies of the Middle Passage, and [she plumbs] it metaphorically, as opaque space to convey the drowned, disremembered, ebbing and flowing histories of violence and healing in the African diaspora" (194). I would add that the ocean becomes a paradigmatic pathogeography; a paradoxical

space that while enabling the circulation of affects such as longing and desire, it simultaneously disallows the full realization of such emotional needs.

Dionne Brand's *A Map to the Door of No Return* takes both the author and the reader into an affective journey across a myriad temporal and spatial frameworks tracing a web of historical interconnectedness and ruptures. It is within these pathogeographies that the affective subject comes into surface in *A Map*; often astray between past and present routes. Stewart contends that

> The affective subject is a collection of trajectories and circuits. You can recognize it through fragments of past moments glimpsed unsteadily in the light of the present like the flickering light of a candle. Or project it onto some kind of track to follow. Or inhabit is as a pattern you find yourself already caught up in (again) and there's nothing you can do about it now. (59)

Inhabiting and narrating the "residues of past dreaming practices" (Stewart), Brand reflects on the precarious affective routes of history: "I think Blacks in the Diaspora carry the Door of No Return in our senses, [...] We arrive with its coat of arms, its love knot, its streamers, its bugle, its emblem attesting to our impossible origins" (48). Notice how sight is often one of the privileged senses in the memoir, particularly in the references to the Atlantic Ocean: "The word *gaze* only applies to water. To look into this water was to look into the world, or what I thought was the world, because the sea gave one an immediate sense of how large the world was, how magnificent and how terrifying" (*A Map* 7). Again, the act of seeing is contradictorily caught in circuits of fear and desire. And so is the middle

passage described by Brand: "Why consider the Door of No Return? Because it exists without prompting. It exists despite all efforts to obscure it or change it or reinterpret it by its carpenters or its passengers. The Door of No Return is ocular. It is propitious. From it one may reflect, grasp" (72). As a cross-border pathogeography, this metaphorical door occupies a non-place (Augé 1995) while paradoxically being felt everywhere; it allows and disallows; it is haunted by the past while it propels subjects into an uncertain future, always bearing the impressions of multiple historical ruptures on the skin:

> The door casts a haunting spell on personal and collective consciousness in the Diaspora. Black experience in any modern city or town in the Americas is haunting. One enters a room and history follows; one enters a room and history precedes. History is already seated in the chair in the empty room when one arrives. Where one stands in a society seems always related to this historical experience. Where one can be observed is relative to that history. [...] How do I know this? Only by self-observation, only by looking. Only by feeling. Only by being a part, sitting in the room with history. (25)

It is through an affective way of seeing that vulnerable subjects can access a past of shared precariousness and distorted stories. Flatley claims that "there are lots of retribution—reparation feelings and images of unachieved happinesses floating around in that pile of catastrophes we call history" (75). And this archive of negative affect initially emerges when looking back; when tracing the routes of one's diasporic histories, often through melancholia and nostalgia. Arguably,

however, the memoir suggests that the occupation of this affective space may grant a "sensual knowledge" (188), as Brand puts it, that would otherwise be negated to black diasporic populations.

In this sense then, it could be argued that the circulation of "ugly" affects (Ngai 2005) such as pain or loss may be potentially deployed to mobilize aesthetic creation, ethical responsibility, and political action. Fear saturates the section in Brand's memoir that looks back at Grenada in 1999, where she witnessed the failure of revolution: "I had come here in search of a thought, how to be human, how to live without historical pain. It seemed to me then that a revolution would do it" (157). Instead, the narrator describes the horrific spectacle of death in a variety of forms: people being killed and people killing themselves by throwing their bodies down the cliff trying to get away. Witnessing extreme forms of negative affect creates bodily disorientation: "I did not feel as if I was in my body" (165). Interestingly, following a woman who is running away forces the narrator to turn towards another direction, and thus reorient her body into a different space. In a perverse turn of events, the woman is eventually killed, whereas Brand ends up saving her own life. And yet, far from experiencing liberation, this experience scars the narrator's body and mind: "I wanted to be free. I wanted to feel as if history was not destiny. I wanted some relief from the enclosure of the Door of No Return. That's all. But no, it had hit me in the chest and all the wind was gone out of me" (168). Her embodied subject position is dramatically shaken by these precarious encounters in Grenada, thus ultimately turning this space into yet another instance of a cross-border pathogeography.

In similar lines to Flatley's discussion of a non-depressive melancholia, Ahmed claims in "The Contingency of Pain" that

> In order to break the seal of the past, in order to move away from attachments that are hurtful, we must first bring them into the realm of political action. Bringing pain into politics requires we give up the fetish of the wound through different kinds of remembrance. The past is living rather than dead; the past lives in the very wounds that remain open in the present. (*The Cultural* 33)

Brand's memoir, particularly her discussion of the inadequacy of so-called processes of reconciliation, follows Ahmed's impulse to revisit the past, together with other temporal frameworks, in order to transform pain into an effective political strategy. The narrator in *A Map* looks at how strategies of reconciliation fix and as a result, erase, past injustices in historical processes of crime such as the Stolen Generation in Australia, the apartheid in South Africa, or the holocaust in Germany. By traversing geopolitical and temporal frameworks, the memoir traces a genealogy of precarious encounters, questioning the many attempts at failed reconciliations. Calling for action, Ahmed advocates for a collective politics as "a politics based not on the possibility that we might be reconciled, but on learning to live with the impossibility of reconciliation, or learning that we live with and beside each other, and yet we are not as one" (*The Cultural* 39). Brand shares this idea of impossible reconciliations in that the spectres of history are still very much part of the present lives of destitute populations across the globe. Challenging the common argument of the people who refuse to accept

responsibility as a result of "not being there," Brand explains how there is no escape from such injustices: "It never occurs to them that they live on the cumulative hurt of others. They want to start the clock of social justice only when they arrived. But one is born into history; one isn't born into a void" (82). This accumulation of negative affect not only determines how individual subjectivities and collective consciousness are formed in the past and the present, but also how they project into a future yet to come.

In the preface to the study *Time Binds* (2010), Elizabeth Freeman discusses how certain artists manage to resist chrononormative structures, hence succeeding in the queering of temporality. As Freeman contends, "Pure nostalgia for another revolutionary moment, their works seem to argue, will not do. But nor will its opposite, a purely futural orientation that depends on forgetting the past" (xvi). In a similar way, Brand's use of a productive melancholia in her memoir enables those ruptures in history to emerge into the unstable present we currently live under, while simultaneously pointing towards the possibility of reorienting a future for black bodies and black histories. Gregory J. Seigworth, one of the editors of *The Affect Theory Reader* (2010), explains how "affect always points to a future that is not quite in view from the present, a future that scrambles any map in advance of its arrival, if indeed the moment (as a demand of the social) ever fully arrives" (21). In a similar vein, Brand concludes her memoir with a reflection on mapping: "A map, then, is only a life of conversations about a forgotten list of irretrievable selves" (224). This affective mapping, in Flatley's

understanding of the term, points to the interconnectivity of subjectivity, language, and memory in the creation of people's pathogeographies.

In the last pages of *Astray*, Emma Donoghue collects an archive of ordinary affects that gathers in the very life and bodies of the subjects that live on the move:

> Uneasy. Wonder. Melancholy. Irritation. Relief. Shame. Absentmindedness. Nostalgia. Self-righteousness. Guilt. Travelers know all the confusion of the human condition in concentrated form. Migration is mortality by another name, the itch we can't scratch. Perhaps because moving far away to some arbitrary spot simply highlights the arbitrariness of getting born into this particular body in the first place: this contingent selfhood, this sole life. (271)

In this loaded passage, Donoghue not only provides an archive of feeling but also points to the multiple materialities that gather in the bodies of populations gone astray. By doing so, she interrogates received notions of nation, subjectivity, and affect in related ways to Brand's fictional narratives. As critic Maia Joseph observes, "Brand demonstrates an often self-conscious attentiveness to the ways in which her experiences 'impress' her and others, and she describes particular moments when such impressions exceed or subvert the affective relations scripted by dominant tropes or narratives" (80). In *A Map to the Door of No Return*, the author conceptualizes a counter-melancholia that enables the explorations of new forms of collective practices outside the "claustrophobia of individuality" (Donoghue, *Astray* 271). Brand hence manages to imagine "possible collective

futures" (Joseph 76) populated by affective encounters and pathogeographies. "The idea of return," the memoir concludes, "presumes the certainty of love and healing, redemption and comfort. But this is not return. I am not going anywhere I've been, except in the collective imagination. Yes, the imagination is itself a pliant place, lithe, supple, susceptible to pathos, sympathetic to horror" (90). Brand's geographical and affective turns push readers into rethinking our emotional and physical scars, as Ahmed would argue, in a way to distribute "just emotions" understood as those "that work *with* and *on* rather than *over* the wounds that surface as traces of past injuries in the present" (*The Cultural* 202). Grossberg points out that "There always has to be a way both to accept the reality that people live identity but also that there's always the potential for the actualization of other imaginations, of other ways of belonging, of identification, of community" (325). *A Map to the Door of No Return* resists the orientation toward dominant structures of affect and dominant ways of belonging, advocating instead, as I claim in this chapter, for alternative "ecologies of belonging" (Grossberg 325).

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"Painful to Live in Fear, Isn't It?"
Uncertain Futures and Ugly Feelings in Larissa Lai's *Automaton Biographies*

> For years now her early childhood has been coming back to
> her as shocks of beauty, or beautiful shocks.
> Kathleen Stewart, *Ordinary Affects* (17).

> i pride my fear
> i clutch my hate
> my soft youth
> dolls plastic as capital want
> Larissa Lai, *Automaton Biographies* (17).

> More human than human
> Tyrell Corporation Motto, *Blade Runner* (1982).

In the study *An Archive of Feelings: Trauma, Sexuality, and Lesbian Public Cultures* (2003), queer critic Ann Cvetkovich traces the routes of trauma and cultural memory in the shaping of lesbian culture, contending that

> in the absence of institutionalized documentation or in opposition to official histories, memory becomes a valuable historical resource, and ephemeral and personal collections of objects stand alongside the documents of the dominant culture in order to offer alternative modes of knowledge. (8)

What happens to those beings or organisms that have no memory; that belong to unconventional histories; or that have limited access to the archives of dominant culture? In *The Tears of Things*, Peter Schwenger looks at the complex relationship between human beings and physical objects in terms of a kind of melancholy that "for all its links to real and metaphysical death, is a desire, a yearning that refuses to conclude, that is always impelled past conclusion" (175). Drawing on phenomenology, Schwenger differs from what he calls the traditional

lament for the ephemeral object and instead looks at affect in relation to physical objects. As Schwenger contends, "Things are valued not only because of their rarity or cost or their historical aura, but because they seem to partake in our lives; they are domesticated, part of our routine and so of us. Their long association with us seems to make them custodian of our memories; so that sometimes, as in Proust, things reveal us to ourselves in profound and unexpected ways" (3). As an open *jouissance*, this kind of melancholy, as other expressions of affect, circulates across borders, cutting across temporal and spatial boundaries, as we have seen in other sections of this chapter, and often shaping social and bodily spaces. Affect thus "sticks" (Ahmed 2006) to bodies and objects in ways that contribute to the reformulation of the material, ethical and political circuits of power and relationality. By making both human and non-human entities caught up in circuits of affect and thus susceptible to affective relations, Schwenger questions the very locationality of affect, in similar vein to other contemporary theorists (Anderson 2010).

While indirectly referring to cyborg feminist theory, the last section of this chapter draws on recent developments in affect theory to look at how Lai's collection *Automaton Biographies* (2009) problematizes the circulation of affect by introducing "rachel," a racialized automaton, as a subject capable of embodying alternative ethico-political paradigms. By doing so, Lai, in similar ways to Hiromi Goto, not only interrogates the limits of the human but also shows how affects are unevenly distributed among bodies, spaces, and temporalities. More specifically, I put Lai's long poem, "rachel," in conversation with Ridley

Scott's movie *Blade Runner* (1982) to see how fear circulates among racialized and other so-called deviant populations in ways that contribute to the interrogation of received conceptualizations of time and history, often with ethical repercussions.[84]

In the article "The Future Birth of the Affective Fact: The Political Ontology of Threat," philosopher Brian Massumi claims that "We live in times when what has not happened qualifies as front-page news" (52). Writing within the textures of 9/11, this threat from the future, Massumi continues, is never over: "The uncertainty of the potential next is never consumed in any given event. There is always a reminder of uncertainty, an unconsummated surplus of danger" (53). I would argue, however, that this uncertainty can only take place once the possibility of a future is secured. In other words, as mortal creatures, human beings are aware of death as the ultimate threat in the future, but there is always an implied sense of uncertainty in that we cannot have access to when this future event will exactly take place. In the case of the Replicants in *Blade Runner*, however, this is not the case, since they know there is an expiry date for them that has been predetermined by their creator at the Tyrell Corporation. These Replicants are used in the so-called Off-World as slave labour in the colonization of other planets. Interestingly, as Wilson explains, the term "robot" comes from the Czech terms *rab* for "slave" and *robota* for "work" (9). Through the exploitation of their bodies and the lack of control over the space they occupy, slaves represent an extreme form of affective labor and bare life (Agamben 2000).

[84] Note that both Ridley Scott's movie *Blade Runner* (1982) and Larissa Lai's poetry collection *Automaton Biographies* (2009) draw on Philip K. Dick's sci-fi classic *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep* (1968).

As advanced robots, Replicants are manufactured as almost virtually identical to human except for their ability to express emotion. The Tyrell Corporation, however, has made an experiment in the case of Rachael (Sean Young) by implanting fake memories in her organism. This bioengineered Replicant experiences fear, sadness, and other affective responses, thus challenging normative ontological conceptualizations. Larissa Lai's rachel, nonetheless, goes a step further in two ways. On the one hand, she is overtly racialized, which helps providing a critical commentary on the contested role that race plays in the original movie[85]. On the other hand, this 21st century automaton, as I will explain, has been granted further perspective with regards to time in that she is not only able to revisit the past but also capable of offering alternative ethical and political practices to be applied in the future.

By engaging in a dialogue with a variety of cultural references from cyborg theory and writing, Lai's *Automaton Biographies* traces a genealogy that begins in the roaring 1960s, while simultaneously referring to current debates on biotechnology that characterize the first decade of the 21st century. The section entitled "rachel" opens up with two epigraphs. The first one draws from Donna Haraway's "A Cyborg Manifesto: Science, Technology, and Socialist-Feminism in the Late Twentieth Century" (1985), an article that not only marked the beginning of cyborg theory in the 1980s in the U.S., but also became a foundational text in the emerging field of New Materialisms across European and North American

[85] For further reference on the representation of race in *Blade Runner* see the collection *Retrofitting Blade Runner* (1991), edited by Judith B Kerman, and the study *Unthinking Eurocentrism: Multiculturalism and the Media* by Ella Shohat and Robert Stam (1994).

contexts[86]. The second epigraph in Lai's collection introduces the voice of Rachel[87], the Replicant from *Blade Runner*, who states: "Look, it's me with my mother" (11). Who is Rachel? Is she capable of affective engagement? Significantly, the use of the imperative tense displays an affective response towards her alleged mother figure. Thus, as I will explain, this ordinary statement not only challenges biological determinism but also suggests an alternative ontological framework. By introducing Rachel's words as a preface to the collection, Lai is already anticipating the possibility of allowing non-human populations to engage in affective practices thus breaking down the nature/culture divide, while simultaneously challenging traditional forms of humanism. Through her literary intervention, Lai hence contributes to current theorizations that articulate affect as dislodged from an exclusively human dimension and instead, allow for more inclusive conceptualizations of the term.

In the epilogue to the book *An Archive of Feelings*, Cvetkovich raises a question that becomes crucial in my discussion: "Whose Feelings Count?" (278). As an automaton, Rachel is both a subject and an object that experiences "ugly feelings" (18), as she herself puts it. We are then slowly witnessing how a machine; an object might be looking at us. As the Replicant Roy unforgettably puts it in *Blade Runner*, "if only you could see what I've seen with your eyes." Simply by changing the possessive pronoun into the second person singular, Roy

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[86] Other theorists in this field include philosopher Rosi Braidotti and feminist critic Iris van der Tuin, both based at the University of Utrecht, and physicist Karen Barad, based at the University of California, Santa Cruz. For further reference see the collection of essays *New Materialisms: Ontology, Agency, Politics* (2010), edited by Diana Coole and Samantha Frost, together with Janet Bennett's study *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things* (2010).

[87] In the movie *Blade Runner*, the Replicant's name is spelt "Rachael." Lai, however, spells it "Rachel" in the epigraph at the opening of the collection. The author then refers to her protagonist as "rachel." I will follow this usage in my analysis.

not only raises key ontological issues around the body but also points to complex systems of economic property and exchange. The lack of affect usually attached to the machine is also subverted by Lai's automaton who not only feels but is also able to provide a critical commentary about the injustices that are taking place in the world. The long poem "rachel" opens up with an ironic comment about the contemporary climate of global crisis: "2019 and all's well" (13). The collection was written in 2009, only a decade before this date, so Lai seems to be pointing at the idea that the future is no longer that far away. In a sense, the future is already here in that, for Lai's generation, some of the traits in biotechnology and nanotechnology proposed by sci-fi artefacts in the 1980s are now part of our everyday life, particularly in a North American context.

The first decade of the 21st century has been characterized by a series of socio-political, technological, and cultural events that far from providing populations with a sense of certainty and safety, have instead somehow given humanity an expiry date. In the essay "Future Asians: Migrant Speculations, Repressed History and Cyborg Hope" (2004), Lai discusses some of the events that characterize current times:

> Some of the major world events that occurred or that I became aware of during the writing of *Salt Fish Girl* were the cloning of Dolly the sheep, the arrival of three rusty ships from China on the West Coast of British Columbia carrying around 600 Chinese migrant labourers, Monsanto's suing of a farmer whose canola crop, probably through natural pollination, had picked up some of Monsanto's altered DNA, the patenting of slightly

> modified basmati rice by a large Texas corporation, [and] the construction of Celebration, a fully planned ur-American town, by Disney. (171-72)

While utterly critical about the impact of uneven globalization and the on-going consequences of events such as 9/11 and the war on terror, Larissa Lai's dystopian writing somehow reorients Massumi's concept of a threatening and menacing future into a space of potential and possibility, particularly though the characterization of rachel as an embodied being capable of formulating alternative ethical positions and relations.

Lai's rachel challenges essentialist versions of the human by displaying nostalgia towards the past; towards the moment of her birth which is in itself a construction; a non-event in biological terms: "i tower my mythic birth" (13). Lai, however, criticises traditional forms of passive social behaviour in that rachel's nostalgia contains critical enquiry: "i search my memory's lineage / for signs of suture [...] this melancholy pisses me off" (20/30). Her nostalgia thus functions in a similar way to Jonathan Flatley's insights on a politicized melancholia. In more active ways than Ridley Scott's Rachael, Lai's automaton traces the past looking for those gaps, those untold stories that break with teleological conceptualizations of history and the human. The sutures that rachel describes go beyond individualistic accounts of the world's histories, while simultaneously helping her track a path of impossible origins. In her discussion of affect in everyday life, Kathleen Stewart contends that "it's as if the subject of extreme vulnerability turns a dream of possible lives into ordinary affects so real they become paths one can actually travel on. Abject and unlivable bodies don't just become 'other' and

unthinkable. They go on living, animated by possibilities at work in the necessary or the serendipitous" (116-117). And it is in this "unthinkable" way that rachel, via Lai, writes her automaton biography, a kind of memoir similar to Brand's in that they both radically trouble the concept of origins:

> Too much has been made of origins, [Brand complains] All origins are arbitrary. This is not to say that they are not also nurturing, but they are essentially coercive and indifferent. [...] And so if I reject this notion of origins I have also to reject its mirror, which is the sense of origins used by the powerless to contest power in a society. (*A Map* 64/69)

It is interesting to note that, from the perspective of affect theory, Brian Massumi also resists the idea of interpreting contemporary events such as 9/11 as points of origin. Instead, as I mention in my introduction, he considers this moment in history as a cross-border event; a threshold capturing a variety of ruptures and relations of power, old and new. What if this liminal moment were used instead by people living under the subjection of the power mechanisms that Massumi addresses? What if the pull towards the future were stronger than the pull towards the past? Rejecting the myth of origins, the Replicant Pris in *Blade Runner* cleverly states: "I think ... therefore I am." In this way, she brings forth the concept of "embodied thought" that Rosaldo (1984) and other theorists of affect propose.

In a sequence full of potential for a queer reading, the prodigal son Roy (Rutger Hauer) gives the kiss of death to his creator in an extreme close-up, as he desperately craves for a future that will never arrive: "I want more life, father"

(*Blade Runner*). In *The Melancholy Android* (2006), Eric G. Wilson discusses the figure of the android as inextricably linked to the figure of its master: "In mediating on androids as doubles of psychological states, I inevitably often treat machines as if they embody the mental dimensions of their creators" (5). My analysis, however, distances itself from this line of argumentation, which prevails in the literature, and instead suggests reading the figures of the automaton and its creator as separate subjects with independent systems of knowledge and mattering bodies. The automaton in Lai's long poem "rachel" resists becoming a projection of her master and instead, insists on her agency and independence to the point that she playfully writes her own acknowledgements at the end of the book[88].

The change from the first person singular into the first person plural in the third stanza of Lai's poem directly forces readers to engage with the idea of the collective. Rachel is no longer an isolated being but feels instead as belonging to a community, which in itself implies an affective response towards the world around her. The reader and the critic then wonder about who are the members of this collective. There is a reference to the "wisdom of inward sisters" (13), so there is suggestion of this being a feminist community. And if it is, what kind of feminist politics is it advocating? Lai's racialized post-cyborgian figure displays affective responses and attempts to propose an alternative engagement with the world:

> i dream an ethic
>
> pure as lieder

[88] In order to acknowledge her embodied agency, I have deliberately used the feminine singular pronoun to refer to rachel in Lai's collection.

pale as north

moth before industrialization (13)

Despite embodying the machine itself, rachel's ethic paradoxically develops by looking back at a past before industrialization. And it is not just tracing the past but "dreaming" and thus indirectly participating in a form of affective mapping. In the study on the cultural politics of emotion, Sara Ahmed discusses the sociality of emotion in terms of the concept of affective economies. The circulation of affect, Ahmed explains, is always intertwined with processes of economic exchange and as such, it is related to the notions of productivity and time efficiency. As such, it involves a clearly marked power dynamics in the dialectic human vs. machine. Note how rachel's life is determined from its very conception as an "enterprise" that needs to be perfect in order to be useful and productive as a social good:

a chilly mortal

but mortal still

i'm all business

here to demonstrate perfection

my father's enterprise

rations my emotional response time

pupil is the empty space

through which light passes (14)

And yet, her father figure, the master, becomes a failed Pygmalion in that he does not succeed in meeting the expected morality attributed to human beings: "he

hides what he can't bear / i well against him / emotional calfskins / his killing jar" (15). Overwhelmed by shame and cowardice, this father figure is the locus of negative affect. And yet, the one who cannot reproduce is rachel given that her body is unable to bear futurity: "my body ticks out / its even rhythm too flawless / for birth" (16). Despite reproduction not being allowed in strictly biological terms, rachel's potential ethic stands for a promise of alternative futures in that she is capable of choosing the ways to orient herself: "our father's lawful / monsters *to turn or not to turn*" (39, my emphasis). In *Queer Phenomenology*, Ahmed discusses how emotions involve affective forms of (re)orientation: "It is not just that bodies are moved by the orientations they have; rather, the orientations we have toward others shape the contours of space by affecting relations of proximity and distance between bodies" (2). According to Ahmed then, orientation is "about how the bodily, the spatial, and the social *are entangled*" (181). I believe that Larissa Lai is not only critiquing masculinist ontological conceptualizations but also advocating for an ethic of inclusivity characterized by a redistribution of affect. In other words, I claim that Lai's portrayal of rachel as a racialized embodied automaton allows for alternative conceptualizations of how an ethics of affect would look like in contemporary times.

With regards to the discussion of affective temporality, a term that recurs in the literature is *anticipation*. Ahmed, for instance, discusses how fear involves an anticipation of hurt (2004). In *Blade Runner*, it is the Replicant who teaches the human the implications of enduring an existence ultimately determined by fear for extinction: "Quite an experience to live in fear, isn't it?" Roy explains.

Similarly, rachel's body in Lai's poem has been scarred by the bare affect that characterizes contemporary social relations: "this sensitive surface / scarred by light" (32). Rachel, nonetheless, resists victimization by showing awareness of her own embodiment:

> i marvel my limbs' articulation
>
> warmth my heart makes from nothing
>
> for no one but the hand
>
> that winds me. (17)

Notice how there is an affective response that establishes a connection between the movement of her body and her origins. Her knowledge of bodily space then expands into an awareness of the social terrain:

> this rage i told you
>
> i toy my own mind
>
> quick computation brings *ugly feelings*
>
> terror the old man
>
> is not my father
>
> is god in his heaven
>
> and what's right with the world? (18, my emphasis)

The last line in this stanza confirms the ironic opening of the collection where the world today is far from being well[89]. In similar fashion to Dionne Brand's poetry collections *Inventory* (2006) and *Ossuaries* (2010), Lai's *Automaton Biographies* introduces a female figure as witness to the contemporary world. Which

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[89] Lai may also be referencing Robert Browning's *Pippa Passes* (1841), a dramatic piece where a young and innocent woman sings "All's right with the world!," as she wanders through Italian lands. I am indebted to Diana Brydon for this intertextual echo.

populations are allowed to bear witness today? Are these female characters mere spectators, indulged in voyeuristic pleasure? Are they instead alternative populations capable of introducing new ways of engaging with today's troubled present? Brydon claims that "Brand's practice of affective citizenship begins from the emotional register in which injustice lodges itself in the very body of the poet as a special kind of witness" (991). In Lai's collection, it is a racialized post-cyborgian subject that bears witness to today's calamities:

> i see double
>
> roy told him
>
> if only you could see
>
> what i've seen with your eyes
>
> mine slant half-bred
>
> i foe my love
>
> law fascinates
>
> its big guns grieve (28)

Through the interrogation of the limits of the human, Lai's poetry collection, as I claim in this chapter, proposes alternative orientations of the subject thus mobilizing socio-political, affective, and ethical landscapes.

In one of the lines in the long poem, rachel explains: "my heart exudes a kind of love / a kind of mourning" (16). In today's panorama of global crisis, queer transCanadian women writers are problematizing the poetics and politics of mourning, as I have suggested in this dissertation. There is a passage in Dionne Brand's long poem *Ossuaries* (2010) that echoes Lai's poetry in that it poses

certain questions about the limitations of mourning and the need for new calls for action. Whereas Brand's text challenges Judith Butler's insights on the affective responses to loss and its potential for new reconfigurations of the social and the political, Lai's poem instead opens up to this idea. Likewise, though set in the socio-political context of the 1980s, *Blade Runner* seems to suggest alternative affective landscapes, particularly in the figure of Roy and his memorable last lines in the movie: "All these moments will be lost in time ... like tears ... in rain. Time to die." Roy's struggle for survival and his subsequent feeling of loss at accepting his doomed future does not prevent him from saving the life of his opponent, the Blade Runner Dereck. Ahmed conceptualizes what she refers to as "strange encounters" as bodily encounters, which suggests that "the marking out of a boundary lines between bodies, through the assumption of a bodily image, involves social practices and techniques of differentiation" (90). Following Ahmed's insights, I would read this scene in the movie as a "strange encounter" between two wounded male figures, which indirectly suggests a reorientation of affect away from necropolitics (Mbembe 2003) into a reconfiguration of gender and social relations. As Dionne Brand aptly contends, life is "a collection of aesthetic experiences as it is a collection of practical experiences, which [...] if we are lucky we make a sense of. Making sense may be what desire is. Or, putting the senses back together" (*A Map* 195). The Replicants in *Blade Runner* and the automaton in Lai's collection are seeking to make sense of the world, posing crucial ontological questions about the implications of both affecting and being affected by the pathogeographies surrounding them.

***

In the concluding pages of the memoir *A Map to the Door of No Return: Notes on Belonging*, Dionne Brand reflects on the commodification of desire claiming the following: "We live in a world filled with commodified images of desire. Desire clings to widgets, chairs, fridges, cars, perfumes, shoes, jackets, golf clubs, basketballs, telephones, water, soap powder, houses, neighbourhoods. Even god. It clings to an endless list of objects. [...] it is petrified in repetitive clichéd gestures" (195). In these four lines, Brand already encapsulates some of the key concepts that I have addressed in this chapter: how affect circulates across material and immaterial bodies; the multiple ways in which the affective realm is intertwined with the economic, the aesthetic, the technological, and the ethical; and finally, how ordinary affects accumulate in everyday life shaping the world around us in myriad ways. More specifically, this chapter has looked at the ways in which contemporary queer transCanadian women's writing traces and assembles a variety of cross-border archives where circuits of affect systematically shape bodily, spatial, and temporal spaces. Their fictional narratives thus depict the subtleties and porous nature of affect in ways that shatter a multitude of binary oppositions with regards to nature, culture, language, and the human. By doing so, the literary and cultural *oeuvre* of these women writers is favouring novel forms of "border-thinking" and "border-feeling" by understanding writing as an "everyday embodied practice, and one that is generative of affect" (Moore 185).

Chapter Four

Queer TransCanadian Women's Writing in the 21st Century: Assembling a New Cross-Border Ethic

> This foregrounding of assemblage enables attention to ontology in tandem with epistemology, affect in conjunction with representational economies, within which bodies interpenetrate, swirl together, and transmit affects and effects to each other.
>
> Jasbir K. Puar, *Terrorist Assemblages* (205).

> self-righteous, let's say it, fascism,
> how else to say, border,
> and the militant consumption of everything,
> the encampment of the airport, the eagerness
> to be all the same, to mince biographies
> to some exact phrases, some
> exact and toxic genealogy
>
> Dionne Brand, *Inventory* (17).

In his groundbreaking theorization of alternative border epistemologies, semiotician and cultural theorist Walter D. Mignolo urges the emergence of new ways of knowledge to counteract colonial legacies and neocolonial interventions in today's unevenly globalized world. Mignolo thus advocates for what he refers to as "border-thinking" or "border gnosis" (2000), not as a new form of hybridity, but as "an intense battlefield in the long history of colonial subalternization of knowledge and legitimation of the colonial differences" (12). While acknowledging Mignolo's invaluable contribution to the field of "border studies," particularly his analysis of the creative potential of subalternized knowledges, my project proposes to combine epistemological and ontological efforts in order to gesture towards the formulation of a new cross-border ethic as illustrated in queer transCanadian women's writing in the 21st century. As a point of departure, this chapter attempts to unravel the multidirectional trajectories, circuits, and ruptures

involved in the contact zones; in the borders between bodies, spaces, and affective terrains as portrayed in a number of contemporary texts. These "border flows," as I claim in my project, mobilize and transform normative conceptualizations of gender, time, and space, creating unexpected alliances between material bodies, and thus often reshaping social, political, and ethical realms. More specifically, this final chapter seeks to unpack the concept of "cross-border ethic" by examining how the literary production of Dionne Brand, Hiromi Goto and Emma Donoghue, particularly their 21st century work, engages with the unexpected, the (un)timely, and the paradoxical nature of borders.

Employing recent interventions in Deleuzian philosophy (Puar 2007; De Landa 2006), the first section in this chapter discusses Dionne Brand's ethical turn in the poetry collection *Inventory* (2006) in terms of what I refer to as cross-border assemblages. In her theorization of assemblage, Jasbir K. Puar argues that,

> as opposed to an intersectional model of identity, which presumes that components—race, class, gender, sexuality, nation, age, religion—are separable analytics and can thus be disassembled, an assemblage is more attuned to interwoven forces that merge and dissipate time, space, and body against linearity, coherency, and permanency. (*Terrorist* 212).

I then propose to examine Dionne Brand's long poem as an assemblage in that through the use and interrogation of language, it remaps material and affective territories, while proposing a deterritorialized politics of location. In *Inventory*, Brand exposes how so-called war machines, particularly in their current manifestations as processes of uneven globalization, incarceration, and

surveillance technologies, sustain and reify material, biopolitical, and affective boundaries. These cross-border assemblages, I argue, show how biopolitical and affective structures are embedded in contemporary experiences of the border, such as racial profiling or the designation of certain bodies as deviant or terrorist (Puar 2008).

In related ways, Hiromi Goto's novel *Darkest Light* (2012), the companion to the earlier *Half World* (2010), further illustrates how biopolitical forces shape the circulation and reification of material borders, shunning certain bodies from the possibility of sustaining affective communities. In the second section in this chapter, I draw on recent interventions in biopolitics and affect theory to examine how Goto's novel proposes a cross-border ethic as a strategy to counteract those "necropolitical assemblages" that seem to govern contemporary societies (Puar 2007; Mbembe 2003). The dispersion of temporal, spatial, and other material borders in *Darkest Light* signals how certain populations, despite being stripped of biopolitical currency, are capable of activating change. Suggesting alternative logics of desire and embodiment, Goto's cross-border material ethic gestures towards new spaces of ethical and political intervention beyond social critique and artistic representation. And time, I argue, plays a crucial role in these contested debates, hence the need to locate the concepts of temporality and chronology at the centre of my analysis.

In similar ways to what she does in *The Woman Who Gave Birth to Rabbits*, Emma Donoghue's collection of short stories, *Astray* (2012), portrays a variety of geopolitical border-crossings propelled by economic, affective, and

biopolitical ruptures across multiple temporal and spatial frameworks. Drawing on the Foucauldian concept of the ethical imagination, the last section in this chapter examines how bodies gone astray shape social relations and affective spaces in Donoghue's collection. As social anthropologist and gender theorist Henrietta L. Moore contends, "the ethical imagination becomes a means to explore the historical refiguring of technologies of the self and of self-other relations, with their constitutive engagements with thought, fantasy and affect" (18). Following Moore's approach, I suggest employing the ethical imagination as a cross-border concept from which to look at Donoghue's short stories in that it contains the possibility of making the cultural, the political, and the affective meet in productive ways. The proto-nomadic subjects (Braidotti 2011) portrayed in these narratives, I argue, occupy a borderline position between a contested past and the pull of the future, which provides a propulsion in unpredictable directions (Puar 2008).

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"I Am Your Spy Here, Your Terrorist, Find Me"
Cross-Border Assemblages in Dionne Brand's *Inventory*

> The assemblage's only unity is that of a co-functioning: it is a symbiosis, a 'sympathy'. It is never filiations which are important, but alliances, alloys; these are not successions, lines of descent, but contagions, epidemics, the wind.
>
> Gilles Deleuze and Claire Parnet, *Dialogues II* (69).

> then there's the business of thoughts
> who can glean with any certainty,
> the guards, blued and leathered, multiply
> to stop them,
> palimpsests of old borders, the sea's graph on the skin,
> the dead giveaway of tongues,
> soon, soon, the implants to discern lies
>
> from the way a body moves
>
> Dionne Brand, *Inventory* (16).

The so-called "War on Terror," which has become one of the many perverse outcomes of 9/11, has not only reified geopolitical frontiers through intensified border security worldwide, but has also generated new biopolitical borders in the form of a tightened governance of migrant populations and their bodies (Kuntsman and Miyake 2008). Racialized populations, more pervasively after September 11, are systematically delayed, and sometimes held up, by border patrols that subject their bodies to various surveillance assemblages under the name of security and protection (Hier 2002). This "biopolitics of racism," as social anthropologist Henrietta L. Moore aptly contends, "goes well beneath the skin" (173). As I mentioned in my introduction, crossing a geopolitical border not only involves a spatial and temporal shift but also generates a bodily and affective response with both political and ethical repercussions.

Particularly in poetry collections such as *Ossuaries*, Dionne Brand has problematized the permeability of the borders between the human body, the

technological sphere, and the natural worlds as a strategy to signal the violent impact of structures of power on vulnerable populations. Drawing on recent interventions in Deleuzian-inflected queer and affect philosophy, this section examines Dionne Brand's poetry collection *Inventory* (2006) in terms of what I refer to as "cross-border assemblages" (Puar 2007; De Landa 2006). In this long poem, Brand exposes how so-called war machines, particularly in their current manifestations as processes of uneven globalization, incarceration, and surveillance technologies, sustain and reify material, biopolitical, and affective boundaries:

> lines of visitors are fingerprinted,
> eye-scanned, grow murderous,
> then there's the business of thoughts
> who can glean with any certainty,
> the guards, blued and leathered, multiply
> to stop them,
> palimpsests of old borders, the sea's graph on the skin,
> the dead giveaway of tongues,
> soon, soon, the implants to discern lies
>
> from the way a body moves (16)

In these lines, Brand gestures towards how corporeality, biopolititics, and affect are already embedded in contemporary experiences of the border, such as racial profiling or the designation of certain bodies as deviant or terrorist. By portraying the inextricability of corporeality, technology, and affect, I argue that Brand's

fierce poetry proposes a cross-border ethic that cuts across epistemological and ontological structures, while simultaneously advocating for alternative ways of knowing and being in the world. In her article on *Inventory*, critic Cheryl Lousley proposes the concept of "planetary ethics" as a way to address the collection's attempt to redefine cosmopolitanism "from below."[90] As Lousley claims, "Brand's depiction of global ecological relations combines an ethical demand for respectful or appropriate ways to inhabit the living world and an ethical demand that the locales where people live and work be inhabitable, socially and ecologically" (49). This turn to ethics involves a careful attentiveness to the materiality of human and more than human forms, including ecological landscapes as embodied subjects. While supporting Lousley's claims with regards to the imperative to attend to the agency of all materialities, I would like to shift the attention beyond the local/global paradigm, and instead, look at Brand's ethical turn in terms of what I refer to as cross-border assemblages.

In his theorization of assemblage, Manuel De Landa begins with the following thesis: assemblages are the product of historically specific processes. Drawing on Deleuze's insights, De Landa's theory discusses assemblages in terms of the material and expressive variables that form them, together with the processes of territorialization and deterritorialization in which these components are involved. Even though processes of territorialization can directly affect actual spatial boundaries, De Landa claims that territorialization

[90] For an in-depth articulation of the concept "cosmopolitanism from below," see Paul Gilroy's influential study *After Empire: Multiculture or Postcolonial Melancholia?* (2004).

> also refers to non-spatial processes which increase the internal homogeneity of an assemblage, such as the sorting processes which exclude a certain category of people from membership of an organization, or the segregation processes which increase the ethnic or racial homogeneity of a neighbourhood. Any process which either destabilizes spatial boundaries or increases internal heterogeneity is considered deterritorializing. (13)

Through the simultaneous usage and interrogation of language, Brand's poetic assemblages remap material and affective territories, while proposing a deterritorialized politics of location. The narrative in *Inventory* bounces between spatial and temporal frameworks in ways that are echoed in her recent long poem *Ossuaries.* From Miami to Cairo, from a living room somewhere in North America to Milan, the poem contains the ruptures generated by a variety of historical episodes across a myriad temporal landscapes. And the female body, as I argue in the first chapter of this dissertation, is often depicted as a toxic space where political, ethical, and ecological failures gather:

> machine and body, shield and tissue,
> the highway worked itself into her shoulders
> and neck, now she was trembling, tasting
> all the materials the city stuffs in its belly
>
> now she was concrete and car, asphalt and oil,
> head whirring like any engine,
> becoming what they were all becoming (*Inventory* 45-46)

Composed of material and affective components, both the female body represented in the text, and the poem itself, stand as assemblages containing an inventory of toxic genealogies, from nuclear catastrophes to the on-going global war on terrorism:

> you find yourself, any one,
>
> anyone
>
> you say it's all bullshit, it all
>
> doesn't matter, *U.S. engagement in*
>
> *Afghanistan* ribbons its way along TV screens,
>
> you wonder, was this the same telecast
>
> so many years ago,
>
> uranium enriching in your stomach,
>
> delicate postules (68)

With the exception of Vietnam, the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq are so far the longest wars in the history of the U.S. Brand's poem, however, refuses to address these conflicts in isolation by instead pushing readers to find interconnections with other forms of war-machinery in the form of border control, surveillance strategies, political passivity, and public conformity. By doing so, as I claim in this chapter, *Inventory* becomes a cross-border assemblage where politics, ethics, and poetics meet. Jasbir Puar aptly contends that a "foregrounding of assemblage enables attention to ontology in tandem with epistemology, affect in conjunction with representational economies, within which bodies interpenetrate, swirl together, and transmit affects and effects to each other" (205). By positioning

corporeal, biopolitical and affective structures at the centre of attention, Brand proposes a cross-border ethic that interrogates how bodies shape and are shaped by other bodies, while simultaneously being involved, and often complicit, in the circulation of affective economies of oppression and dominance.

Inventory offers a grim portrayal of human existence where an entrenching culture of decay and hyper-artificiality reigns: "the wealth multiplies in the garbage dumps, / and the quiet is the quiet of thieves / there are cellphones calling no one, / no messages burn on the planet's withered lungs" (41). The poem, in this sense, depicts a wasted land that resembles the notion of the "desert of the real" developed by Žižek (2002), and evoked by pioneering films such as *The Matrix* (1999) by the Wachowski brothers. The narrative introduces a woman who sits in front of her television every day and night to contemplate the chaos and destruction that characterizes our contemporary globalized world. Though tied to the act of looking, this woman resists the binary opposition between the real and the virtual by constantly questioning the limitations of bearing witness and the veracity of the media. Paradoxically, her inventory of the world signals a saturation of negative feelings (Ngai 2005), while simultaneously diagnosing the failure of desire and pleasure as activators of social change and political transformation (Moore 2011). While waiting, this woman writes a list that begins with the war in Iraq, where suicide bombers, shootings, and car bombings accumulate: "the numbers so random, / so shapeless, apart from their shape, their seduction of infinity / the ganglia and meninges, the grey matter / of the cerebrum, the viscous peritoneal cavity" (26). These lines approach these innumerable deaths

through the very material realities of the corpses, the body parts, and the organs that compose these monstrous scenarios. And yet, there is a space that separates "us" from "them," a constructed ethical line that constantly reassures and comforts us:

> what foundations, what animus calms, we're
> doing the best we can with these people,
> what undeniable hatred fuels them, what else
> can we do, nothing but maim them,
>
> we do not deserve it, it's out of the blue,
> the sleeplessness at borders, the poor sunlight,
> the paralyzed cars, they hate our freedom,
>
> they want the abominable food from our mouths (27)

By locating guilt and hatred elsewhere, the realities of genocides such as the one taking place in Iraq remain outside normative ethico-political frameworks, thus safeguarding our affective comfort zones. As Žižek and others have argued, coverage of disasters happening in the so-called Third World often incorporates actual footage of the event so that, in theory, audiences in the Global North can be mobilized. These images, however, are only ephemerally consumed thus turning this moment of bearing witness into one of utter passivity. *Inventory* however relocates shame and fear within the geopolitical borders of the Global North by gesturing towards the systematic depiction of death as spectacle. As the narrative voice ironically puts it,

> the broken fingers, pricked and bruised,
> misformed ribs and the famished babies
> for the world's most famous photos [...]
>
> let us forget all that, let us not act surprised,
> or make coy distinctions among mass
> murderers, why ration nuclear weapons,
> let us all celebrate death (6/ 35)

These stanzas make human populations directly responsible for sustaining this form of necropolitics through the capitalization of spectacularity. Political philosopher Achille Mbembe explains how the ultimate expression of sovereignty resides in the power to dictate who may live and who must die. This pervasive necropolitics, as Agamben has further argued, takes shape through systematic global instances of state violence, torture, and capital punishment (2005). Drawing on Mbembe's insights, Puar reinvigorates theoretical approaches to queer theory by stressing how biopolitics not only delineates which queer subjects live or die, but *how* they do it. And her argument can be applied to how vulnerable populations across the globe are systematically stripped of rights by systems organized by necropolitical structures. *Inventory* suggests that these perverse assemblages have shattered our ethical approximation to the world, particularly in this climate of global crisis. Half way into the poem, the narrative voice suddenly shifts into the first person in an exercise of letter writing: "take this letter, put it on your tongue, / sleep while I keep watch, / know that I am your spy here, your terrorist, / find me" (37). With irreverence, this woman directly challenges readers

to face terror in the shape of a threatening figure that, particularly after 9/11, has come to represent and embody all the evils of contemporary times. In *Terrorist Assemblages* (2007), Puar articulates a new form of homonationalism, where some queer subjects become complicit with U.S. nationalist projects through their involvement on the war on terror, and their construction of Muslim sexuality through Orientalist discourses. This form of homonationalism builds up from a combination of biopolitical, affective, and corporeal forces that target certain racialized queer populations as a threat to the nation. Puar thus urges critics to rethink queer theory by "conceptualising the ways life and death are regulated simultaneously through race and sexuality" (7). And this is precisely what Dionne Brand, together with other contemporary queer transCanadian women writers, has been discussing for the last two decades, particularly in her poetry collections. As I claim in the first chapter of this project, Yasmine, the main character in *Ossuaries*, is depicted as an activist who lives underground, bearing witness to a variety of socio-political revolutions across temporal and spatial frameworks. Historical violences materialize in the body of this racialized woman who is then forced to live a life of confinement, away from community. Targeted as a potential terrorist, this activist remains hidden until the right time to act emerges. Yasmine poses a threat to nationalist discourses not necessarily in terms of her sexuality but in terms of her race and political associations. It could be argued that in the portrayal of both Yasmine and the unnamed narrator in *Inventory* as potential terrorists, Brand indirectly exposes the pitfalls of U.S. gender exceptionalism that builds on the narrative of victimization of the non-Western

woman as one that needs to be rescued. By doing so, the poem further poses the question about what is our complicity in the very sustenance and reification of these discourses and structures of power.

Brand's poetry boldly suggests that human beings as such form a paradoxical community where no clear boundaries between victims and perpetrators are delineated[91]. As implied in *Inventory*, we are systematically exposed to violence while simultaneously being complicit in it:

> and the forests we destroyed,
> as far as
> the Amazonas' forehead, the Congo's gut,
> the trees we peeled of rough butter,
> full knowing, there's something wrong
> with this [...]
>
> we did all this and more (7)

The insistence on the verb "to know" stresses the importance of how systems of knowledge are fully integrated into power structures, thus highlighting the ethical implications of this collective sense of historical violence. The poetic "we" here suggests that current forms of collectivity have failed in their very nature as forces of resistance against structures of power. Instead, collective alliances have been co-opted by a perverse form of passive politics that pervades the public and the private spheres with several implications:

[91] In the 2005 interview "Sites of Articulation," Larissa Lai discusses her interest in the figure of the traitor claiming that "our hands are always dirty" (Morris 23). In similar lines to Brand's, Lai's work recurrently explores the complicities of human communities in systems of control and exploitation.

> there were roads of viscera and supine alphabets,
> and well, fields of prostration,
> buildings mechanized with flesh and acreages
> of tender automobiles
>
> heavy with our tiredness, solid with our devotion
> after work we succumbed
> headlong in effusive rooms
>
> to the science-fiction tales of democracy (7-8)

The sterility of the private realm is emphasized through the continuous reference to the passivity that signposts everyday life. Thus, those "fields of prostration" are no longer exclusively positioned within the public sphere but now occupy a borderline position that traverses public and private experience. In her discussion of affective citizenship, cultural critic Diana Brydon explains how "Brand redefines the role of emotion and affect in political life, in part by refunctioning how they have been manipulated through the media" (1002). As a result, the disaffection that characterizes society at large has turned the possibility of intimacy into an almost impossible realization.

Brand's poem suggests that social and political exhaustion affects and shapes spatial and biopolitical boundaries, together with material bodies, with paradoxical effects. I would argue that it is in this space of material interconnectivity where an alternative cross-border ethic can be shaped. In *Dialogues II*, Gilles Deleuze defines assemblage as

> a multiplicity which is made up of heterogeneous terms and which establishes liaisons, relations between them, across ages, sexes and reigns—different natures. Thus the assemblage's only unity is that of a co-functioning: it is a symbiosis, a 'sympathy'. It is never filiations which are important, but alliances, alloys; these are not successions, lines of descent, but contagions, epidemics, the wind. (69)

Thinking through Deleuze's words, alliances are what matter in assemblage formations and these are understood as "contagions" and "epidemics" (69). It is no coincidence that Brand's poem addresses Katrina in one of the final sections in the collection:

> the surface of the earth, how it keeps springing back,
> for now, and the irregular weather of hurricanes,
> tsunamis, floods, sunlight on any given day,
> anywhere, however disastrous at least magnificent
>
> and moments when you rise to what you might be, (*Inventory* 89-90)

As a paradigmatic instance of the agency of the natural world, hurricanes and similar disasters belong to the unexpected realm of the world. Material feminist theorists like Nancy Tuana remind us that bodies affect and are affected by other bodies; human materialities affect and are affected by more than human materialities. As a result, toxicity, viscosity, and contagion circulate between bodies in unpredictable ways. This porosity can allow us to flourish but it can also destroy us. Thus when human and natural bodies act and interact in unexpected ways, the result can be lethal. *Inventory* subtly suggests that it is the waiting that

paradoxically condemns us, while simultaneously enabling unexpected outcomes. The question then remains: are we willing to take the risk and consider what the unexpected may bring?

In her discussion of Brand's collection, Lousley claims that "the poem is an exercise in taking an account or inventory of the accumulating losses of the twenty-first century" (37). While agreeing with Lousley's take in terms of the poem's depiction of the world as doomed by forces of negative affect, I do think there is a sense of possibility ingrained in Brand's poetry, particularly in the very rare references to the realm of the utopian:

> I wish I had beautiful legs
>
> to get me to another planet,
>
> to run in the lustrous substances of all that's left out,
>
> all that may have (*Inventory* 70)

Even though these lines signal an ephemeral moment of hope, I am more intrigued by the subtle references to the realm of the unexpected. Allusions to popular culture pervade the collection, often used as vehicles to indicate the limitations of countercultural movements in the 1960s. And yet, some of the names of these artists remain untainted by failure but instead point towards a moment of possibility and potential change. In one of the lines, the narrative voice mentions American poet and musician Cecil Taylor, who is considered one of the pioneers of free jazz. Well-known for his experimentalism and his energized tunes, Taylor proposes a musical style that involves an embodied approach, together with a high degree of improvisation. This moment of improvised

creativity that Brand subtly references interests me in that it can be taken as an opportunity for the unforeseen, the unplanned, and the unexpected to arrive. And yet, Brand refuses to provide an easy way out of our failures: "I have nothing soothing to tell you, / that's not my job, / my job is to revise and revise this bristling list, / hourly" (100). Hence her work carefully avoids ascribing hope as a comforting solution, leaving readers in a complicated position.

So is there an alternative? Can literature offer an effective politico-ethical scenario that goes beyond social critique? As a literary and cultural scholar, I systematically struggle to overcome the limitations of representation by focusing, more attentively, on how materiality crosses over and cuts across the private and the public spheres. I find Dionne Brand's poetry particularly useful for this task in that her work systematically pushes readers beyond epistemology and the reliability of language structures. As she claims, "whatever language we might have spoken / is so thick with corrupt intentions, / it persuades no one" (43). And yet, as I mention in my introduction, I find Brand's poetic language highly persuasive, particularly in the ways her literary assemblages problematize the crossing of multiple boundaries between materialities, often allowing for the interrogation of the ethical roles of both societies and individuals in the shaping of power structures. Consequently, Brand's cross-border assemblages, I argue, open up a space where an alternative onto-epistemological ethics may tentatively be formulated.

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Necropolitical Assemblages and Cross-Border Ethics in Hiromi Goto's *Darkest Light*

> In the economy of biopower, the function of racism is to regulate the distribution of death and to make possible the murderous functions of the state.
>
> Achille Mbembe, "Necropolitics" (17).

> As time, as space, seemed to stretch, elastic and ungoverned, uncertainty gnawed inside Gee's chest.
>
> Hiromi Goto, *Darkest Light* (215).

In his new approach to social ontology, Mexican-American philosopher Manuel De Landa explains how the main theoretical alternative to organic totalities is what Gilles Deleuze calls assemblages understood as historically specific "wholes characterized by *relations of exteriority*" (10). These assemblages have material and expressive components, together with territorializing and deterritorializing axes. As De Landa insists, assemblages are characterized by a mixed heterogeneity that allows the parts that contain them to be autonomous: "Relations of exteriority also imply that the properties of the component parts can never explain the relations which constitute a whole" (11). And yet, the autonomy of the parts does not exclude the multiple interactions or "intra-actions" with the whole. In other words, wholes are more than the sum of their parts. Drawing on Deleuzian-inflected theories of assemblage, together with Achille Mbembe's insights in the biopolitical realm, this section examines Hiromi Goto's novel *Darkest Light* in terms of what I refer to as a multitude of "necropolitical assemblages" (De Landa 2006; Mbembe 2003). Recent interventions in the contested field of biopolitics explain how today's social fabric is characterized not only by *who* might live or die, but also, as Puar reminds us, by

the conditions in which populations live or die. In this regard, as I have already suggested in this dissertation, the term "necropolitics" signals how biopolitics works in today's world of global crisis by shifting the attention away from life structures into how death is capitalized as a productive source of capitalist intervention (Cazdyn 2012). In similar ways to Brand, Goto's *oeuvre* shares the preoccupation expressed by contemporary political theorists with how systems of power operate full force on the bodies of certain vulnerable populations through violence, torture, and other forms of dominance. Depicted as deviant or monstrous, the human and non-human beings depicted in *Darkest Light* are often stripped of political rights and thus forced to live and die outside the social, economic, and cultural spheres of our public world. Goto's critique, however, not only consists in the recreation of dystopian worlds that show the negative effect of the abuse of power, but also gestures more directly to the workings of those necropolitical impulses above described. As I claim here, one of the strategies that the author deploys in her work involves the systematic interrogation and reformulation of material and affective borders as a way of challenging hegemonic structures of power. Further signalling alternative logics of desire, embodiment, and social relations, Goto's cross-border material ethic therefore gestures towards new spaces of ethical and political intervention beyond systemic critique and artistic representation.

Also marketed as a young adult novel, Hiromi Goto's *Darkest Light* sets off with a similar premise to that posed in its companion piece, *Half World*. For a long time, there were three Realms that functioned in equilibrium, sustaining

balance for all living beings: the Realm of Flesh, Half World, and the Realm of Spirit. After death, creatures would awake in Half World only to relive their greatest trauma. Once fear and pain were transcended, beings would be ready to become Spirit momentarily, untroubled by material cares, until once again, they had to return to the Realm of Flesh. Without a clear reason, this time of wholeness was interrupted and the three Realms were severed from each other. As a result of being endlessly forced to experience extreme forms of physical and emotional suffering, the creatures that were trapped in Half World became monstrous figures. The realm of Half World is therefore a space where the boundaries between life and death blur, giving way to monstrous bodies that are intriguingly capable of performing both good and evil deeds. Most of the living creatures inhabiting this space, however, succumb to the instincts of their deviant bodies and often engage in acts of cannibalism, mutilation, and death. Given that Half World is a territory where creatures endure their utmost traumatic experiences, I will argue that this is certainly an affective space, where terror, fear, and pain circulates, thus shaping the public and personal relations between its inhabitants. By critically examining the impact of border-crossing at the material, biopolitical, and affective levels, Goto's novel problematizes ethical and socio-political relations, practices, and structures in myriad ways. When the three Realms were united, the wholeness was sustained by the interconnections between the different parts of the system. As such, I would claim that the three Realms worked as an assemblage. Then, however, the isolated parts lost connection with the whole, becoming radically independent: "The Spirits, cut off from mortality and Flesh,

began losing all memory, all knowledge of the other Realms. Growing cooler and more distant, they forgot they were part of a greater pattern" (3). It is in this moment of lost connectivity when the assemblage collapses. De Landa explains how "the postulation of a world as a seamless web of reciprocal action, or as an integrated totality of functional interdependencies, or as a block of unlimited universal interconnections, has traditionally been made in opposition to linear causality as the glue holding together a mechanical world" (19). And in this world characterized by assemblages of reciprocity, chance and risk play a crucial role. I closed the previous section in this chapter by pointing at what I read as Dionne Brand's subtle call for the unexpected. *Darkest Light* cogently illustrates, particularly in the characterization of Gee, how Hiromi Goto also engages with this tendency to explore the unpredictability of world systems in a more direct and straightforward manner[92].

As explained in the first chapter of this dissertation, Goto's novel *Half World* portrays a girl called Melanie who goes through a series of tribulations to save her mother's life and reunite the three Realms. Melanie fights the despotic tyrant Mr. Glueskin, a posthuman creature who rules Half World, and who, unexpectedly, has a body that is able to reproduce. Taking Mr. Glueskin's baby with her, "a Half World infant born to Life" (4), Melanie succeeds in her task and returns to the Realm of Flesh alive. *Darkest Light* is set some years after this episode occurs. The baby is now a problematic 16-years old called Gee, who lives

[92] Many contemporary theorists of affect have stressed the need to turn to ontology in order to rethink human life and human bodies in relation to other non-human materialities, thus gesturing to the decentring of the human subject. In such projects, new forms of temporality emerge and with them, the concepts of the unpredictable and the "not-yet" occupy a central position in the discussion (Van der Tuin 2011; Moore 2011).

with old Ms. Wei, the lesbian librarian that also has a crucial rule in Goto's first book. Reserved and queerly odd, Gee was unofficially adopted by Melanie and Ms. Wei, now referred as Big Sister and popo/grandmother respectively. Echoing the character of Miranda in Larissa Lai's *Salt Fish Girl* (2002), Gee's body repulses people as if it gave off "a kind of smell" (19) that for some unknown reason keeps others away from him: "With his irises as dark as his pupils, almost everyone's reaction to them lingered somewhere between fear and disgust. What with his pale, pale skin and his dark eyes, he knew he repelled people somehow. And this knowledge had formed him, too" (18). His body does not stick to normative definitions of corporeality and so his physical appearance determines the future affective encounters with other teenagers and schoolmates. Approximation and distance are crucial elements in discussions around affect, as I claim in the third chapter in this dissertation, so when an affective encounter occurs, social space shifts (Ahmed 2004). The way Gee's body is perceived by other people keeps him isolated from the community, shaping his identity and preventing him from establishing any sustainable affective relationship. Material feminist theorist Susan Hekman explains how

> Human bodies in social groups require viable identities, but they can only obtain those identities from the social script extant in the society in which they live. The definitions of the subject in any particular society either give the individual body a viable identity or they do not. Either I become a subject or I do not. If I am excluded from subjecthood, I am deprived of an identity that can provide me with a possible life in my society. (113)

Even though his sense of identity has been crippled as a result of his isolation, Gee's expulsion from a normative socio-affective fabric has also enabled him to develop a certain intuitive knowledge about the ways bodies affect and are affected by the interaction with other bodies. As Michael Hardt aptly puts it, "Affects require us, as the term suggests, to enter the realm of causality, but they offer a complex view of causality because the affects belong simultaneously to both sides of the causal relationship. They illuminate, in other words, both our power to affect the world around us and our power to be affected by it, along with the relationship between these two powers" ("Foreword" ix). Gee systematically scrutinizes his grandmother's bodily reactions with careful detail: "Popo's hands trembled, ever so slightly, when she raised them. Gee watched the thin skin in her neck move as she swallowed the water. The lines upon her cheeks, the wrinkled ridges on the bridge of her nose, the corners of her eyes. The slight tremor in her hands" (24). Gee's attentiveness to materiality not only involves human but also animal bodies and objects. When he drinks some chicken broth, he stares at the skin of the fat floating at the surface (26) and then, when he browses some postcards, he describes how they feel silky (27). Gee's bodily affective responses move beyond mere curiosity and, as the narrative advances, he begins to recognize the contact-zones between human and nonhuman materialities as sites of agency and interdependency, a claim that has been articulated by material feminist theorists in the last decade (Alaimo 2010; Tuana 2008). By doing so, Goto's protagonist begins to construct an alternative form of corporeal citizenship that resembles the one developed by Jack in Emma Donoghue's *Room*.

Half World, as I claim in chapter one, is portrayed as a posthuman ethnoscape populated by monstrous creatures trapped in their most utmost fears with no sense of change of futurity. *Darkest Light*, however, gives readers a more detailed sense of who some of these characters are, their motives, and particularly, how their grotesque bodies affect and are affected by other bodies. After an initial prologue, the novel opens up with two inhabitants of Half World: Ilanna, half female and half eel, and Karu, half male and half bird. Hungry, these monstrous characters wander the dark streets of this destroyed territory, searching for food and engaging in conversation about the troubles of their times: "The edges of her Half World *wavered*. A flicker between solid and immaterial. Ilanna shuddered. Clenched her will, seized it, and her world held solid once more. Her cycle was calling her back" (7). Feeling desperate without her mentor and lover, the gruesome Mr. Glueskin, Ilanna senses change in the horizon; she feels the arrival of her beloved messiah. This kind of intuitive knowledge subtly associates her to Gee, which complicates the classification of Goto's novel in Manichean terms, thus blurring the ethical boundaries between good and evil. Interestingly, Ilanna's body is a body that leaks: "The wet fabric of her dress clung to her icy flesh, seawater streaming down her body, leaving a wet trail behind her. Perpetually" (7). Note how the materiality of the clothes fuses with her half animal-half human skin, systematically dissolving body boundaries. In the collection of essays *Thinking Through the Skin* (2001), contributors from different disciplinary backgrounds look at how skin is lived both as a boundary and a point of connection. As editors Sara Ahmed and Jackie Stacey claim in the introductory

chapter, "These diverse approaches to thinking about the skin as a boundary-object, and as the site of exposure or connectedness, invite the reader to consider how the borders between bodies are unstable and how such borders are already crossed by differences that refuse to be contained on the 'inside' or the 'outside' of bodies" (2). Reading the skin as bodyscape certainly resonates in Goto's *Darkest Light* beyond discussions around corporeality in that skin is also approached in the novel as a site of affect. Karu seems to be hesitant around Ilanna's behaviour and physical body. He remains close to her and yet, his body reacts to the stickiness of the eels "Karu shuddered. Ilanna could see the human skin on his arms pimpling with revulsion and longing" (9). It is well known in the literature that affect circulates around bodies, objects, and other materialities, often shaping and altering the space surrounding them. In her discussion on hate, Ahmed claims that "The re-forming of bodily and social space involves a process of *making the skin crawl*; the threat posed by the bodies of others to bodily and social integrity is registered on the skin. [...] the skin comes to be felt as a border through the violence of the impression of one surface upon another" (*The Cultural* 54). The eels in Ilanna's body are a threatening presence not only to Karu but to Ilanna herself; if they don't get fed regularly, she risks being consumed by them. I would argue that Goto is indirectly posing a critique against human beings as predatory creatures with insatiable impulses that irreparably lead not only to the destruction of the world that surrounds us, but also to the annihilation of our own material bodies. As we know, however, predators exist across the human and the animal species, so danger and risk permeate the surface and the depths of the world as we

know it. Ilanna engages in cannibalism, to Karu's disgust, not just to satiate her needs but to feed her eels and more importantly, because she was told by Mr. Glueskin that eating other Half World creatures extended your own cycle: "What does it matter anyway, bird, beast or human. Once eaten, they all return to the start of their Half World trauma once more" (14). Her justification is based on the fact that these beings are already dead so in a way, she is not killing them.

Ilanna's characterization is further complicated when readers learn that she is not just a perpetrator but also a victim, in this case, of the actions of a man. In a horrific act of betrayal, her lover had murdered her by throwing her into the sea, where other creatures feasted on her body:

> The eels reached her first, to tear the flesh from her arms, to eat her tongue ... She had woken in the Half World sea, [...] still tied to the anchor. There Ilanna remained, eaten half alive, eternally, by flounders, skates, eels and octopi. Giant-clawed crabs, the fury of shrimp, the snapping, ripping teeth of sleeper sharks [...] She cycled through betrayal and death, betrayal and death, until she knew nothing else. (8)

Suffering is certainly an ordinary affect in terms of its shared commonality and universality (Grossberg 2010). Bearing witness to collective forms of suffering can move populations into political action and yet, perversely, it is this very commonality of suffering that can reproduce political passivity and paralysis. In a paradoxical way, it appears that the suffering of a particular individual can shake us more intensely, thus shaping social relations in unexpected ways. In other words, when affect circulates in proximity, it moves us in unpredictable

directions. And Goto is particularly skilful in problematizing the ethical implications of this multidirectionality of affective responses and interconnections. Ilanna's ethical ambivalence is subtly shared by Gee. Initially depicted as a reserved teenager who loves and helps his grandmother in their little store, he nonetheless hides an unidentified emotion that breeds inside him: "When he was very little he didn't know what the feeling was called, but he always knew it was there, and sometimes it would flare up with the darkest light, so much so that he'd be filled with trembling. He never knew if this trembling was fear or excitement. He did not want to look at it so very closely" (17). Note that trembling seems to be a physical reaction to the affective response of both fear and excitement. And yet, the boundaries between the bodily and the affective reactions are blurred with regards to the impossible causality between them, as affect theorists claim. Brian Massumi explains how "Fear is the anticipatory reality in the present of a threatening future. It is the felt reality of the nonexistent, loomingly present as the *affective fact* of the matter" (54). And in a way, Gee's body anticipates a future threat that does not come from elsewhere but from within.

The ethical dilemma posed in *Darkest Light* echoes some of the questions that are raised in the rest of Goto's *oeuvre*, as I explain in chapter two: what happens to the sustenance of democratic societies when the boundaries between good and evil are no longer fixed? Gee's narrative journey, in similar ways to Saruyi's in *The Water of Possibility*, involves not only the crossing of a series of geographical boundaries, but also the interrogation of several ethical and affective

borders. Feelings of guilt and shame shape Gee's subjectivity from childhood. Not only does his body become a source of embarrassment, as I previously mentioned, but his very existence seems to be predicated by the circulation of negative affect: "A wave of guilt lapped at Gee's consciousness. Was it his fault that they were so isolated? Was it his fault that his popo didn't have a girlfriend? That Older Sister never came home?" (31). These "darker feelings," as Gee calls them, are located at the core of both his subjective and bodily experience. In her analysis on affect and performativity, Sedgwick claims that

> The forms taken by shame are not distinct 'toxic' parts of a group or individual identity that can be excised; they are instead integral to and residual in the processes by which identity itself is formed. They are available for the work of metamorphosis, reframing, refiguration, *trans*figuration, affective and symbolic loading and deformation, but perhaps all too potent for the work of purgation and deontological closure. (63)

Can these forms of negative affect mobilize action, as Ngai suggests? It is interesting how the feelings of guilt circulate in the first section of the novel. Their store was vandalized one night, and this incident contributed to the weakening of popo's health. Since Gee was not home that night, he initially blames himself for his grandmother's deterioration. Unable to cope with these feelings, Gee first transfers his guilt into Winston, the teenager who vandalized their store, turning these feelings into revenge. In what he defines as an act of justice, Gee decides to destroy his car. Still unable to make sense of his own

existence, he then begins to blame his grandmother for hiding the truth from him about his real origins. These forms of affect are thus never located in a specific site but systematically circulate, thus shaping social and affective relations in the narrative.

Gee develops a relationship with Cracker, a troublesome proto-queer Neo Goth teenage girl, who seems curious about him. A defender of queer justice, as she explains, Cracker feels some familiarity with Gee that prompts her to help and accompany him in his quest. Interestingly, she suffers from a heart problem, which brings into the narrative the representation of disability. Cracker's potential vulnerability further associates her to Gee in that both their bodies are depicted as non-normative in related ways. In his journey, Gee also encounters an enormous cat who has loyally been popo's guardian and life companion. The cat's task is now to aid Gee in his search by leading him into the truth of his origins in Half World: "The past will always try to catch up with you, no matter how far you flee. You cannot run away from yourself. [...] The past is inside you already" (105). Gee will then need to come to terms with the fact that trauma, pain, and suffering are not only feelings that reside inside him, but also forms of affect that circulate and shape Half World. In her innovative study on ordinary affects, anthropologist Kathleen Stewart claims that "The affective subject is a collection of trajectories and circuits. You can recognize it through fragments of past moments glimpsed unsteadily in the light of the present like the flickering light of a candle. Or project it onto some kind of track to follow. Or inhabit is as a pattern you find yourself already caught up in (again) and there's nothing you can do about it now"

(59). Gee's journey, on the one hand, involves the acquisition of knowledge regarding the trajectory of his own existence; who is he and where does he come from. On the other hand, this journey into "being" is described as an embodied experience, where materialities play a crucial role. Finally, Gee will need to also learn to track past, present, and future routes in order to "become" an affective subject, in Stewart's conceptualization of the term.

In an early episode in the novel, Gee's body begins to act with an extreme form of agency that is stronger than his will. When he is in the middle of destroying Winston's car, with Cracker's help, suddenly the owner of the vehicle appears. Instead of avoiding trouble, as his grandmother had raised him, Gee's body takes over: "Minute cracks, spreading outward, finally weakening, a howling rage bursting through the seams. Roiling, swelling with sickening stench, sour, mildewed and noxious" (68). Notice how his bodily response is also an affective one, where rage materializes through the very porosity of his corporeality. The senses seem to have taken over Gee, leading him into unexpected action and behaviour. Suddenly, his body radically transforms: "The skin from Gee's palm had spread, webbed, stretching thin between his fingers, white and elastic. Fingers, palm, elongated and pliant, his hand covered the boy's entire face, wrapping around half his skull to tenderly cover both ears. Gee could feel the loose skin flap in and out of the boy's open mouth as he desperately sucked for air" (69). With grotesque spectacularity, the materiality of Gee's body acquires an extreme form of power that can potentially kill him. As described earlier with regards to Ilanna's body, Goto depicts certain forms of corporeality that threaten

to destroy their own material bodies. In other words, these monstrous bodies spread, expand, and contort in unexpected ways and as such, they cannot be contained, controlled, or managed. In this way, they become assemblages of a monstrous trans-corporeality. Intriguingly, when Ilanna crosses the gate into the Realm of the Flesh searching for Gee, one of her eels betrays the other one by offering it as a toll. Her mutilated body still functions despite having removed one of its pseudo prosthetic-organic limbs. Trying to escape, Gee and Cracker then have to pay the toll as well, in this case, to enter Half World. To their surprise, Gee does not hesitate and bites off his own finger: "His teeth [...] cut through his finger as if it were made of Plasticine. His mouth dropped open. The digit fell to his feet. [...] No blood. No pain. His flesh was white all the way through—as though his matter was not flesh, was not human ..." (127). Seconds later, his skin begins to stretch, replacing the missing place with a new pinkie. Gee's body not only cuts across the human vs. non human divide, but it also crosses material and affective borders. Feeling no pain or other forms of physical suffering grants his body with a power beyond human nature. This uncontrollable force may not necessarily lead to the improvement of the social good, but it can also potentially destroy the social fabric. In one instance, Gee uses the flexibility of his skin to save Cracker's life. The flexibility of his flesh is later used in a more suspicious way when Gee decides to attach the eel that used to be part of Ilanna's body into his own arm. This transfer of bodily parts is only possible because of their individual agency. In other words, as an assemblage, the whole does not determine the nature of the parts. The eel, however, cannot be trusted, so this new

part of the assemblage introduces a variable of risk. Since its previous owner is Gee's enemy, the motives of the eel remain unclear. There is the possibility that the eel might have been reattached to Gee's body as a "surveillance assemblage" (Hier 2002), keeping their bodies under control and thus potentially jeopardising their safety.

Gee's body challenges normative conceptualizations of corporeality and embodiment in that it is composed of both organic and other kinds of materialities. Craving to be normal, Gee initially resists the unknown possibilities that his own body seems to offer: "Normal...What was he that he could bite off his finger so painlessly? That his limbs stretched as easily as elastic. What about his bones!" (130). In a scene that unavoidably echoes the sci-fi classic *Blade Runner*, Gee is terrified when he realizes that it is beads of wax that drip down his face instead of "normal" tears, as he puts it. In Foucauldian fashion, Gee is reminded by figures like Cracker or the White Cat about the intricate relationship between power and knowledge, and the central position of the body in this intra-active nexus. Acquiring knowledge about his own body will help Gee choose between alternative ethical possibilities. Initially, Gee shows a utilitarian approach to friendship: "He needed people who would help him, not hold him back. What was the point of having a friend if she served no purpose?" (134). His loyalty towards Cracker oscillates throughout the narrative. At times, she is perceived by Gee as a friend but as his body transforms and his desires change, she begins to be perceived as an object of consumption. Part of the transformation that Gee undergoes in his journey involves not only changes in his personality and ethical

dilemmas, which are universal traits in these kinds of rites of passage, but also an extreme alteration of his embodiment, his senses, and his affective forms of relationality. In short, Gee's very human materiality is questioned and transformed until he ultimately metamorphoses into a new corporeal being[93]. What he describes as sick feelings begin to saturate his body from the moment he enters Half World. Oppressed by a combination of fear, anxiety, impatience, and anger, Gee struggles with his own subject position in that posthuman ethnoscape, with the kind of alliances he should make, and with the corporeal and affective materiality of his body. Gee's physical responses towards other beings begin to take an agency of their own; he is unable to control his emotions and begins to lose management over his own body. Repeatedly Gee starts to smile and involuntarily laugh at other people's suffering, which points to a transformation of his affective system: "A feeling—not unpleasant, it tingled in his nape and pimpled his skin with emotion. Like a name on the tip of the tongue. Like the dream that fades upon waking. He clutched at the elusive strands of the unmemory, willing it to rise to the surface" (142). These ugly feelings (Ngai 2005) shape both the spaces he occupies and the alliances or "sympathies" that he forms throughout the narrative, to borrow Deleuze's term in the first epigraph to this section.

Constantly immersed in the sound of bombing, Half World resembles current scenarios of war across the globe, where chaos prevails and humanity is

[93] Shape-shifting is a recurrent trait in sci-fi, fantasy, and other related literary and film genres. Goto's *oeuvre*, however, particularly the novels *Half World* and *Darkest Light*, seem to point to more radical ways of transformation that include the activation of change in ontological, corporeal, and sensorial systems.

scarce: "Sometimes explosions shook the air. [...] The echo of their footsteps chased their heels. [...] As time, as space, seemed to stretch, elastic and ungoverned, uncertainty gnawed inside Gee's chest" (215). Wandering through this wasteland of death and destruction brings again the concept of necropolitical assemblage to the forefront of the analysis. As De Landa claims,

> On a first, horizontal axis, an assemblage comprises two segments, one of content, the other of expression. On the one hand it is a *machinic assemblage* of bodies, of actions and passions, and intermingling of bodies reacting to one another; on the other hand, it is a *collective assemblage of enunciation*, of acts and statements, of incorporeal transformations attributed to bodies. Then, on a vertical axis, the assemblage has both *territorial sides*, or reterritorialized sides, which stabilize it, and *cutting edges of deterritorialization*, which carry it away. (121)

The war space depicted in *Darkest Light* is constantly deterritorialized and reterritorialized by the repetition of negative affect like suffering, trauma, and ultimately death. Significantly, matter, space, and time become elastic parts of this assemblage of necropolitical flows that lack government. On the one hand, I would argue that this reiteration of death in Goto's narrative points to the understanding of affect as performative, in Judith Butler and Eve K. Sedgwick's conceptualizations of the term. On the other hand, the negative affect that saturates Half World in terms of terror, pain, and suffering, seems to have also led its inhabitants to disorientation in spatial terms. Maps are useless in this "illogical" and "irrational" space, as Gee calls it, given that none of them offer the

same directions. Each creature has designed its own map according to their experiences and as a result, all maps are different. Consequently, this unknown territorial assemblage cannot be mapped, since it is constantly subjected to processes of deterritorialization and reterritorialization. One of the first things that Gee and Cracker notice when they enter this new world is that normative chronological time and spatial structures are systematically resisted: "He took one more step down to join her, yet when the ball of his foot touched the rock surface, he had the oddest sensation that he'd just climbed upward. He wobbled with confusion" (139). Echoing M. C. Escher's graphic work *Relativity* (1953), normal laws of gravity do not seem to apply in this landscape, thus provoking Gee's and Cracker's bodily and spatial disorientation. Known for his depiction of impossible objects such as the Penrose triangle, Escher's work offers some interesting connections with Goto's portrayal of impossible subjects and impossible materialities. Beyond mathematics and scientific interpretations, at a basic level what an impossible object creates are feelings of ambiguity and incredulity in the eyes of the beholder. Cracker and Gee are systematically perplexed at the population inhabiting Half World; impossible creatures with monstrous bodies and yet, human behaviours. When the impossible becomes visible then a feeling of disorientation follows, affecting systems of knowledge and values. This allows for new epistemologies and ontologies where what "was not" now "seems to be". In other words, the impossibility of the past becomes the apparent reality of the present, according to perception and experience.

And yet, temporality also seems to be dismantled in Half World: "He glanced at the walls for a clock. He had no idea how much time had passed [...]. Time seemed odd, stretching and contracting" (169). In similar ways to bodies, temporality is here perceived as elastic, malleable, and porous, in contrast to the way it works in the realm of the flesh. A preliminary idea of the past begins to blur only to be substituted by an alternative past time yet to know. The unknown becomes the familiar when Gee slowly begins to remember a different life, a former body, and a past identity as Mr. Glueskin. Tempted by the possibility of ownership, Gee now feels the need to search for the past in the hope of achieving social status and material gain. When they reach the Mirages Hotel, Gee is received as the prodigal son returning to his homeland. Served with reverence and fear by the members of the staff, Gee now feels a renewed sense of authority that he wants to savour. Interestingly, this new appetite for power is accompanied by a growth in desire and a craving for pleasure. The devotion for the re-appeared Mr. Glueskin is shared by Ilanna, who addresses him as a saviour and as a liberator: "*You* were the one who first woke from your Half World trance. When everyone else was still stuck in their stupor of suffering, you tore free from yours. You discovered that eating other sufferers extended your Half Life [...] You set me free from *my* suffering. And that's why I'll love you forever" (162). Ilanna's affection for Gee is highly sexualized and tied to the idea of eating other bodies. Consumption and sex are thus equivalent to freedom, and it is through this affective economy how these characters are drawn together. Ilanna's Medusa-like body both attracts and repels Gee: "Something sharp stabbed through his jeans,

abrading his skin. Gee glanced down. Ilanna's toenails were covered with barnacles. Was that a small oyster? He shuddered with revulsion. Longing" (164). Her monstrous corporeality not only stands as a source of abjection but also, in typical psychoanalytic fashion, as a supply of pleasure and desire[94].

Entering the space of impossibility that is Half World provokes dramatic changes in Gee's sensorial system, suddenly being overwhelmed by an insatiable appetite for something indescribable. Something that was not possible in the realm of the flesh now seems to be occurring: he feels the urge to eat other beings. In vampire-like fashion, Gee is drawn first to Cracker's blood: "The brilliant colour, the rich, complex odour—he could practically hear the cells tinkling their soft music. His tongue grew sticky with want" (225). Though ultimately resisting his craving for human flesh, Gee succumbs to eating alive rats as a source of strength: "A surge of energy rippled from his belly outward to all his extremities. Delicious shivers of power shot through his nerves, faster than electrons, finer than light. His very cells vibrated with the sensation, a harmonics beyond sound" (241). This ethically controversial act grants Gee with satisfaction that is only ephemeral, leading to utter guilt and shame, and the self-questioning of his humanity. Echoing the moral dilemmas posed by post-apocalyptic narratives such as Cormac McCarthy's *The Road* (2006), Gee/Mr. Glueskin is torn between restraining himself from engaging in cannibalism, or instead, succumbing to the predator drive of Ilanna and the eels, and enhance his power[95]. Cracker explains

[94] See Almeida (2009) and Latimer (2006) for a Kristevan approach to Hiromi Goto's portrayal of monstrosity and abjection in her work.
[95] While indirectly drawing on them, Goto's novel proposes a reversal to the Zombie-inspired literary and film traditions. Even though Gee's corporeality partly consists of non-human

that to be conflicted is at the core of "the human *condition*" (213), so it could be argued that Gee's moment of hesitancy is paradoxically what makes him human. Similarly, Karu, the man-bird that initially accompanies Ilanna in her wanderings, is now changed. He made the decision to stop eating other creatures thus putting at risk his own survival. What is most interesting, from the perspective of an analysis of corporeality and embodiment in the novel, is the fact that Gee finds a strategy to help other creatures survive that involves a different kind of cannibalism: "White chunks on the floor. His flesh. His glueflesh [...]. He snatched up a small chunk. It felt like firm tofu...His skin crawled. Yet Gee held the flesh in front of Lila's mouth, and prayed that she would eat" (237). By feeding the eel with parts of his own body, Gee subverts the idea of consumption pointing to alternative ways of sustainability. The narrative suggests that one person's waste can mean another person's possibility of life, so it is in our own hands to decide how to shape the world we inhabit.

Furthermore, one of Ilanna's aims is to dissolve the barriers between the Realms in order to secure the power of the creatures in Half World. This approach to territorial borderlessness is contested in the narrative in that Gee ultimately has the capacity to secure the stability of the three realms precisely by ensuring that the boundaries between them are clearly delineated. This final take in *Darkest Light* supports my analysis of the narrative in terms of assemblage theory in that, as previously argued, each part needs to have sufficient independence to precisely secure the equilibrium of the whole. As the cynic White Cat puts it in the novel,

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materiality, his value system seems to be human, after having been raised by Ms. Wei in the realm of the flesh. In turn, the flesh that is being consumed in Half World, despite originating as human, is already dead matter.

"The universe does not place value upon the workings of individual components. The universe only seeks balance" (198). Ilanna's idea, however, consists in letting Half World flood the boundaries to the other Realms so that all becomes subject to its dominance and power. In this sense, Goto's resistance to a borderless world points to her critique of liberal ideologies of free trade and current theories of uneven globalization. Goto is in a way fighting old struggles in terms of posing a social critique of the unequal distribution of resources under global capitalism, which jeopardizes the sustenance of egalitarian social and political realms. And yet, *Darkest Light* seems to fight these familiar wars with new strategies, particularly by envisioning novel forms of the "ethical imagination" understood as a primary site of social and cultural intervention (Foucault 1998; Moore 2011). The ethical, as explained by social anthropologist Henrietta Moore, via Foucault, must remain distinguishable from mere obedience and transgression (15), and this is a lesson that the (anti)hero learns in his journey: "In the cycling of the Realms, where everyone passed through Half World, there was no reward for being a good person. Mr. Glueskin had seen the truth of that in his passage through this Realm. There was no angelic chorus for behaving well. No reward for not inflicting hurt upon others" (271). Challenging religious value systems and indoctrination, Goto resists providing her narrative with a moral purpose. At the end of the narrative, Gee realizes that he needs to remain in Half World so as to ensure that the equilibrium between the realms is maintained. Through Gee's actions, Goto's novel challenges received conceptualizations of home and belonging in that these past sites of comfort and knowledge are sacrificed for the possibility of change in

an uncertain future yet to come. Furthermore, *Darkest Light* relocates materiality between corporeal and biopolitical borders, thus raising intricate questions about the interconnections between art, fantasy, power, and ethics. By doing so, Goto's narrative reorients the readers' attention away from normative temporal frameworks, hegemonic systems of value, and uneven circuits of economic exchange, towards alternative logics of desire, embodiment, and affect.

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Assembling a Future of Affective Politics: Cross-Border Ethics in Emma Donoghue's *Astray*

> Always becoming, will never be
> Always arriving, must never land.
> Shani Mootoo, *The Predicament of Or* (81).

> Like a bad concert hall, affective space contains dead spots
> where the sound fails to circulate.
> Roland Barthes, *A Lover's Discourse*: *Fragments* (167).

As illustrated in the work of the queer transCanadian women writers that I discuss in this dissertation, the first decade of the twenty-first century has proved to be a troubled one, with crises of all sorts spilling out and cutting across socio-political, economic, and cultural realms. Old epistemologies seem to no longer hold, and thus social critique strives against its limitations. In the midst of economic collapse and ecological degradation, it seems that part of the world, as we knew it, has gone astray. According to the *OED*, "to go astray" means to become lost or mislaid. Apart from the geographical signification, the adverb

"astray" also means falling "into error or morally questionable behaviour" (*OED*). One of the many outcomes of the war on terror targeting places such as Iraq or Afghanistan has involved the displacement of civil populations, leaving growing numbers of refugees to wander every day through roads of poverty and in many cases, death. Similarly, it seems that reason has gone astray in other border zones in the world such as Gaza or Lebanon where, as I mention in my introduction, human rights are systematically suspended. Intriguingly, the etymology of "astray" originates with the verb *estraier*, based on Latin *extra* for "out of bounds" and *vagari* for "wander" (*OED*). I would then argue that the populations described in the previous examples have gone astray in that their bodies systematically occupy spaces that remain out of normative bounds in terms of race, nation, gender, or economic position. By doing so, these bodies gone astray engage in the deterritorialization and subsequent reterritorialization of the spaces they occupy, thus potentially opening up spaces of critique.

Theorists across the social sciences and the humanities are striving to resist the apocalyptic tone that characterizes some current discourses of socio-political critique by gesturing instead towards designing new ontologies and new affective routes to reshape self-other relations by finding new commonalities and shared materialities (Braidotti 2013). While acknowledging persistent difficulties, social anthropologist and gender theorist Henrietta L. Moore stresses the need to "envisage and theorize what links human agency and human subjectivity to forms of the possible, to ways of living that open up new ways of being" (13). Prioritizing the ethical and the affective, Moore and others are trying to

rearticulate fantasy, pleasure, desire and hope as sites of possibility to renew self-other relations, and to create new connections across human and non-human materialities. Drawing on Foucauldian analysis of the ethical imagination, this section of my chapter looks at how Emma Donoghue's recent short-story collection *Astray* (2012) depicts an assemblage of bodies that not only *go* astray, but also *become* and *feel* astray, thus complicating normative modes of being and affect. By doing so, Donoghue dislodges the term "stray" from normative ideologies that have been historically used to both target suspicious groups and control deviant populations. In similar ways to what she does in the collection *The Woman Who Gave Birth to Rabbits*, Donoghue's strategy involves the crossing of temporal frameworks, which helps to trace a genealogy of bodies gone astray. In short, the collection establishes a matrix of connectivity where forces of power and resistance flow across temporal and spatial boundaries often mobilizing bodies gone astray and activating circuits of affect with ethical and social repercussions.

Far from privileging only those bodies that are allowed to move in imaginary versions of a borderless world, Donoghue allows for the so-called 99% to become astray by precisely highlighting the ordinariness of being astray; feeling out of bounds; following alternative pathways that not only shape the present but also introduce the future as a site of renewed possibility. In *Terrorist Assemblages*, Puar resists Lee Edelman's rejection of futurity as a productive site and instead, proposes a future of affective politics: "Opening up to the fantastical wonders of futurity, therefore, is the most powerful of political and critical

strategies, whether it is through assemblage or to something as yet unknown, perhaps even forever unknowable" (222). My work thus employs political philosophy and queer theory that favours an approach to "going astray" as a site of becoming; of flows and trajectories not necessarily involving physical movement *per se*. I thus indirectly show how Donoghue's stories interrogate problematic figures like the wanderer or the *flâneur*, which have become equivalent to cosmopolitan privilege and, I would argue, to a very normative way of seeing subjects as always embodying "able" bodies that move[96].

In the study *Still Life: Hopes, Desires and Satisfactions* (2011), Moore offers a thought-provoking analysis of the interconnections between artistic expression, social critique, and political intervention in the context of contemporary discussions of globalization. Placing fantasy and desire at the centre of self-other relations, Moore deploys the concept of the ethical imagination as a way to approach social transformation given that it is "one of the primary sites of cultural invention (Foucault, 1998), precisely because it deals with the self in its relations with others, both proximate and distant, and as such provides for historical possibilities" (16). In her discussion, Moore stresses the need to combine strategies from within the epistemological and the ontological realms: "While we must always have regard for the kind of interpretative talk the ethical imagination makes possible, we need to attend equally to the importance of affect, performance and the placement and use of the body" (16). Moore thus shares the

[96] I am referring to poets, such as Charles Baudelaire in 19th century France or T.S. Eliot in the modernist tradition, whose work is populated by privileged white male bodies that become privileged observers of the world through the act of wandering. See Walter Benjamin's *Charles Baudelaire: A Lyric Poet in the Era of High Capitalism* (1983) for an approximation of the *flâneur* as the product of modernity and industrialization.

need to reconnect human subjectivity to the material world in order to activate change in the line of many contemporary feminist and affect theorists (Alaimo 2010; Braidotti 2006; Massumi 2002). As she explains, affect theory "displaces the centrality of the human subject, but reconnects it to the vitality of the world, where the potential for change resides in radical forms of relationality and indeterminacy" (14). And yet, while acknowledging the centrality of the material, Moore remains cautious about completely disregarding language and knowledge as conducive to social transformation. Instead, her work proposes a combined onto-epistemological approach to agency and difference by understanding writing as an "everyday embodied practice, and one that is generative of affect" (185). As Moore aptly puts it, "the ethical imagination becomes a means to explore the historical refiguring of technologies of the self and of self-other relations, with their constitutive engagements with thought, fantasy and affect" (18). Following Moore's approach, I suggest employing the ethical imagination as a cross-border theoretical and methodological site from which to look at Donoghue's literary interventions in that it contains the possibility of making the cultural, the political, and the affective interact in productive ways.

Traversing the boundaries of time and space, Donoghue's collection *Astray* cuts across several centuries and various continents to provide readers with an assemblage of cross-border stories. Taking up again the genre of historiographic metafiction, Donoghue also blurs the boundaries between history and fantasy in similar ways to what she does in the previous collection *The Woman Who Gave Birth to Rabbits*. The back cover of the book explains how *Astray* offers readers a

"history for restless times," and in fact, I would argue that it is through the act of looking back to previous historical moments that her stories manage to offer a critical commentary on contemporary times. At a first glance, the collection is seemingly structured in a linear way with each section ordered under the headings "departures," "in transit," and "arrivals and aftermaths." The stories themselves, however, resist temporal and spatial causality by offering instead an archive of timely matters populated by an assemblage of bodies gone astray in myriad ways. With the phrase "archive of timely matters" my analysis argues that Donoghue's collection traces a genealogy of moments in history that are characterized by crisis, change, and the mobility of population. The stories traverse the American Civil War, colonial England, the Irish famine, border disputes across the U.S.-Mexican border, the crash of the New York exchange in 1893, and the subsequent strikes across the U.S. Interestingly, it is easy to find many connections between these moments in history and contemporary recent history with on-going disputes across the U.S.-Mexican border, the recent revolutions in several Arab countries, the economic crisis in 2008, and the multitude of strikes that followed across the world. On the one hand, *Astray* traces a genealogy of crises that goes accompanied by a critique of literal and symbolic systems of confinement and their repercussions on the body of vulnerable populations. The stories, on the other hand, trace the struggles of human and non-human actors that constantly fight for the Aristotelian ideal of the "good life" understood, in my view, as the right to agency and critical citizenship[97].

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[97] Happiness constitutes an integral part of Aristotle's conceptualization of the good life in his *Nichomachean Ethics*. Recent social and cultural theorists convincingly argue that happiness is

When a body goes astray, a spatial shift occurs. As a result, borders are unsettled. This moment of boundary-crossing, however, does not only involve geopolitical territories but also affective landscapes. Interestingly for the purposes of this section, the noun *Emotion* comes from the Latin verb *ēmovēre* meaning "to remove, to shift, to displace" (*OED*), as I point out in the first epigraph to this section. My analysis then looks at how affect circulates in Donoghue's stories in ways that shape bodies and spaces across different historical temporalities thus giving way to further rearticulations of the ethical imagination. In her discussion of the Foucauldian concept of "problematization," Moore reminds us that "it is always more than a work of thought or reflection. It also involves affect, emotion, the placement of the body, fantasy, and relations with objects, technologies and the material world" (21). As such, I would add, certain forms of artistic endeavour, as illustrated by contemporary queer women writers like Donoghue, problematize the intrinsic relation between these factors, hence allowing for the possibility of shaping different worlds, while simultaneously opening up the world around us in alternative ways. The ethical imagination, Moore continues, has scalar dimensions therefore simultaneously enhancing the connections to those most proximate and those more distant. This approach then allows for the interrogation of how intimacy circulates across private and public domains.

As I argue in my first chapter, Donoghue subverts the boundaries between the private and the public realms in novels like *Room* by providing her characters with a kind of corporeal citizenship that allows for the transformation of social

becoming "an object of knowledge, a performance indicator and a form of governance" (Moore 25). From the fields of queer and affect studies, see Lauren Berlant's "Cruel Optimism" (2006) and Sara Ahmed's *The Promise of Happiness* (2010) for a critique of today's imperative to be happy.

and affective relations in a society characterized by surveillance and control. Similarly, in the short story "Man and Boy," Donoghue continues her critique of systems of imprisonment by now centering her narrative around issues of animal rights in the context of late 19th century Britain. The story is inspired by the reports that circulated at the time about an elephant called Jumbo who, after having been held captive for many years at the London Zoo, is sold and moved to the U.S. to tour in diverse spectacles and circuses. Donoghue fictionalizes the account by focusing on the intimacy that develops between this creature, as he is referred to, and his keeper, Scott. Told in the first person, the narrative is partly structured as a monologue addressed to the animal in confessional mode. After he hears the news about the elephant being transferred because of his demented rampages, as they are called, Scott approaches the creature under his care: "You don't care for confinement, that's all, and who can blame you?" (6). It is interesting how the narrative insists on providing the animal with human features, affective responses, and agency. For seventeen years, Scott has taken care of the animal, feeding him, talking to him, consoling him, thus creating a shared intimacy between the two. Echoing the mother/son dyad in Donoghue's controversial novel *Room*, it is now the relationship between a human and a non-human in captivity that becomes the centre of attention: "you may be the most magnificient elephant the world has ever seen, due to falling so fortuitously young into my hands as a crusty little stray, to be nursed back from the edge of the grave and fed up proper" (9). However, the intimacy between keeper and animal raises the suspicions of the owner at the zoo and the potential American buyer: "Made

half pet, half human, [...] by all these treats and pattings and chit-chat. Is it true what the other fellows say, Scott, that you share a bottle of whiskey with the beast every night, and caterwaul like sweethearts, curled up together in his stall?" (12). The affective relationship between Jumbo and his keeper is thus rendered deviant and perverse by external sources of authority that fail to see other kinds of relationality as healthy or productive.

Scott's care for the elephant goes beyond daily tasks proper of a keeper in that he also educates and tries to give the creature advice on behaviour: "Oh, Jumbo. You might just settle down. Your feelings do you credit and all that, but there's no good in such displays. You must be a brave boy" (10). Accused of terrorizing some people and destroying property, the elephant is no longer valuable and thus needs to be sold. It seems that the elephant is now governed by "ugly feelings" that have turned him into an undesirable being with uncontrollable passions (Ngai 2005). The excess in his affective responses causes the owner to adopt an ethically dubious resolution, which might potentially endanger the very life of the animal. Under the promise of spectacularity and fame, Jumbo will be part of a touring show across the United States where he will be contemplated by thousands of hordes as a source of consumption. In this case, mobility is not welcomed but instead criticized in that it is sustained by the instrumentalization of the creature's body for commercial purposes. Furthermore, the narrative stresses the fact that it is against his will that the animal is being transferred: Jumbo disobeys, refuses to move, and expresses dissent against all the rules imposed to him by regulatory figures of control. Shifts in subjectification activate agency and

the ethical imagination in favour of the sustenance of the "good life," Moore explains (140). Donoghue's story then seems to advocate for the application of the right to a good life to be extended across human and non-human beings. By blurring the boundaries between human and animal categories in terms of biopolitics and affect, Donoghue manages to raise concerns around the agency of non-human beings and the ethical repercussions of such examples of trade.

This story ends with Scott's words promising to take care of the elephant and watch for his safety across the Atlantic Ocean, thus leaving the narrative with an open ending pointing towards a future of possibility for their queer companionship to function. In the collection *Astray*, the ocean becomes an affective space of both uncertainty and possibility, so I would like to take up again the concept of pathogeography that I discuss in chapter three in order to analyse the Atlantic as a contested space that has historically been saturated by the circulation of affect. The ocean is haunted by the ghostly presences of numerous historical episodes of dispossession and opportunity, such as indentureship, slavery, displacement, and immigration, as Dionne Brand's memoir *A Map to the Door of No Return* illustrates. The role that fantasy plays in the conceptualization of this affective space is crucial in the discussion, so therefore, the ethical imagination occupies again a central position in my analysis. Donoghue's stories "Onward" and "Counting the Days," both set in the mid 19th century, imagine the crossing of the Atlantic ocean as a pathway to escape prostitution and starvation, respectively. Consumed by rage, Caroline, the main character in "Onward," endures a precarious life in London sustained by prostituting her body in order to

take care of her baby daughter and her brother. Having no time to feel shame, Caroline strives to move forward despite feeling that she lives in the "crack" between two worlds, as she puts it. Propelled by a sense of survival, Caroline has always oriented her body towards the future, no matter how uncertain this might be: "The road never seemed to fork. She's put one foot in front of another, and this is where they have lead her, [...] Onward, onward, because backward is impossible" (29). Her mobility does not involve the sense of waste and lack of productivity inspired by figures such as the *flâneur* but instead, this woman's movement is caught up in circuits of capital and affect that have prevented her from actually moving away from that situation. Through the act of prostitution, the woman's body has therefore become entangled with the production and circulation of affective economies (Ahmed 2004).

Despite uncertainty and risk, Caroline decides to reorient her life towards the possibility of a better future by moving to somewhere else like Canada. As Caroline explains, this potential crossing of the Atlantic is seen as an opportunity towards the fulfillment of a good life: "Her throat locks on the syllable. To really live. Not walled up" (36). Notice how her words also reflect her embodied response towards this possibility of life without being imprisoned. The toll that Caroline needs to pay in order to have access to this journey, as her brother explains, is that of storytelling in that she will have to narrate the reasons why she needs to leave: "Sell her story, instead of her body? [...] Caroline's pulse is in her ears, as fast as the wheels of a train, as loud as a ship's engine. Not on and on, but out and away. To let out the truth, and then sink it under the waves" (38). As the

passage illustrates, affect not only circulates within bodies but also spills "out and away" into other bodies, objects, and in this case, geographical, socio-political, and affective spaces. Interestingly for the purposes of my argument, writing is depicted as an embodied act that activates affective responses propelled by the image of the ocean as a pathography of secret longings and renewed possibilities.

Similarly, the ocean is depicted as an uncertain affective space in the story "Counting the Days." In this case, however, the story accumulates a variety of negative emotions leading to an unhappy outcome. A woman leaves Northern Ireland, escaping from one of the most devastating episodes of famine, to be finally reunited with her husband in Canada after some years of separation. With her two children, Jane embarks on the *Riverdale* to cross the Atlantic, which is the last frontier that stands between her and her husband Henry. The story, on the one hand, portrays her musings and expectations while in transit. Simultaneously, the narrative, on the other hand, shows how Henry is dying of cholera. His body is slowly deteriorating, thus forcing him into paralysis: "Such weakness is slackening his limbs today. His stomach churns; he leans against the wall. [...] His nerves are spiders' webs beneath his skin. Have the months of vagabonding and working hand to mouth taken such a toll?" (79). Once again, the narrative insists on disassociating mobility with privilege but instead potentially conducive of death through contagion as a result of the circulation of disease.

Desperate, Henry's thoughts are filled with rage: "anger serves Henry, devours whatever stands in his way: tiredness, inertia, despair, and loneliness. Plowing through six-foot snowdrifts, anger has burned in his gut and kept him

warm, or warm enough to keep walking anyway" (80). Anger seems to have occupied both his body and his mind as a result of the feelings of dislocation and isolation that he has experienced as an emigrant. In the provocative study *Ugly Feelings* (2005), cultural critic Sianne Ngai stresses the need to recuperate negative affects such as irritation or anxiety as potential sites of critical productivity. Circuits of emotional negativity, Ngai claims, can conduce to ironic distance and as such, they are more likely to produce aesthetic and political ambiguities. Jane's observations while she is crossing the Atlantic actually gesture towards this moment of productivity that Ngai mentions. Initially, Jane is also overwhelmed by fear, in this case, generated by the actual moment of border-crossing: "What kind of a woman would be more loath to go than to part, more afraid of the crossing than the separation?" (80). And yet, she is able to begin the journey carrying with her an assemblage of negative feelings:

> Sometimes she hates Henry for going on ahead, for being able and willing to do without her in a strange land. But this is how Jane knows her kin, by an occasional flash of a resentment so intimate that she never feels it for outsiders: the maddening itch of the ties that bind. (82)

Far from enhancing the separation from her husband, Jane's ugly feelings actually allow for a different kind of imagined improved relationship. And again, fantasy plays a crucial role in these moments of possibility in that both Jane and Henry repeatedly visualize and imagine a future together. Donoghue's story, however, resists the imperative of the happy ending and instead closes with Henry's death as Jane disembarks in Canadian shores: "His skin is cold and wet like a fish; the only

water left in his body is on the outside. [...] He is sinking down below all human things. He is sliding into the ocean" (88). The narrative seems to signal those affective gaps and dysphoric feelings (Ngai 1; Barthes 167) implicitly associated with the crossing of a pathogeography such as the Atlantic Ocean. Going astray then, this story suggests, also involves a risk in that these bodies are often trapped in literal and symbolic spaces, where access to sociopolitical and cultural intervention is limited. In other words, bodies that become astray often inhabit contested spaces where the ethical imagination might be temporarily suspended.

In turn, some of these spaces of the imagination are initially portrayed in *Astray* as sites of possibility from which to counteract moments of crisis. Fantasy, for instance, plays a crucial rule in the conceptualization of territories like the Yukon, which became idealized in the late 19th century with the so-called gold rush. As the narrative voice in "Snowblind" puts it, "the Yukon was the place to be" (95), particularly after the U.S. had been struck with a strong economic crash and the wave of strikes that followed. These spaces, however, seem to resist the presence of these gold diggers through the strong agency of natural forces. Trapped in a cabin due to the extreme low temperatures, the two protagonists in the story fight against gangrene and other difficulties in this enclosed space. Echoing *Room*, the Outside is now capitalized, which points at the clear separation of spatial borders in that particular time. It is well known that gold rushes helped shape North American frontiers at the turn of the 19th century and so it seems that Donoghue is adding her fictional account to this historical episode of border making. Instead of focusing on the positive outcome of some of these

foundational histories, the narrative instead positions the body at the centre of attention by pointing to how confinement and physical deterioration are crucial components in this type of border-crossing in a settler-colony setting.

In her discussion of processes of subjectification, Moore explains how "Culture, power and ideology may work to produce subject positions, but they do not determine how individuals will identify with and inhabit different subject positions at different times, nor how they will be involved in the transformations of discourses and power over time" (80). Donoghue's stories illustrate how vulnerable populations have historically been subjected to biopolitical structures of power that have systematically instrumentalized their bodies as products of exchange. Within these circuits of power and control, affect plays a crucial role, particularly in the ways it shapes bodily and social spaces and relations, and more importantly, in the ways it becomes an activator of resistance thus enabling the possibility of change and social transformation. As I argue in this section, Donoghue's collection assembles a cross-border archive that traces a genealogy of bodies gone astray, often propelling a reorientation from contested territories such as the national, the family, or the heterosexual matrix and into novel forms of relationality and affect. By doing so, I would argue that her work, in similar ways to other contemporary queer transCanadian women writers, proposes alternative ways of thinking astray, of feeling astray, of "becoming" astray (Mootoo 2001), that could contribute to the creation of a future of affective politics yet to come (Puar 2007).

Coda:

The Posthuman Predicament and the Borderlands of the Possible

> If we had a keen vision and feeling of all ordinary human life,
> it would be like hearing the grass grow and the squirrel's heart beat,
> and we should die of that roar which lies on the other side of silence.
> George Eliot, *Middlemarch* (1871).

> A posthuman ethics for a non-unitary subject proposes an enlarged sense of inter-connection between self and others, including the non-human or "earth" others, by removing the obstacle of self-centred individualism.
> Rosi Braidotti, *The Posthuman* (49-50).

> To survive the Borderlands
> you must live *sin fronteras*
> be a crossroads.
> Gloria Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/*La Frontera: *The New Mestiza* (217).

By assembling heterogeneous approximations from the critic, the writer, and the theorist, this dissertation proposes *transdisciplinarity* and *cross-border alliances* as essential tactics for a renewed examination of the role of the Humanities, more generally, and the responsibility of the literary and cultural intellectual, more specifically, in the 21st century. The porosity of the borders between academic disciplines, across and beyond the Humanities, is now a growing reality, and we see proof of this process in conferences, centres of research, and other institutions that advocate transdiciplinarity as a core component[98]. The theoretical approaches employed in this project, particularly recent developments in material feminist theory, affect studies, and assemblage theory, all share a commitment to the productive possibilities of cross-border alliances between disciplines. Similarly, as illustrated in the texts analyzed in this

[98] The Somatechnics Research Network, composed of over 500 scholars, researchers, and activists from diverse fields such as Biology, Law, Philosophy, Cultural Studies, Bioethics, and Gender Studies, is a fitting example of the current move towards transdisciplinarity in and beyond academia. For further information see: http://www.lgbt.arizona.edu/somatechnics

dissertation, contemporary queer transCanadian women writers such as Dionne Brand, Emma Donoghue, and Hiromi Goto address and question how literal and symbolic boundaries affect the everyday lives of multiple communities across the world. Racialized, sexualized, and gendered populations, in particular, are systematically subjected to necropolitical structures of power that turn their bodies into paradigmatic examples of vulnerable subjectivity and embodiment (Butler 2004). The illegal workers depicted in *Borderless*, the prostitutes in *Slammerkin*, the hidden activist in *Ossuaries*, the proto-queer teenagers in *Darkest Light*, the refugee in *What We All Long For*, or the racialized cyborg in *Automaton Biographies*, are all instances of the paradoxical workings of contemporary processes of uneven globalization. The bodies of these populations are often rendered disposable by normative structures of power, while simultaneously being consumed by the neoliberal machine that perpetuates a "global coloniality of being" (Tlostanova 2013). Significantly, however, these very bodies also represent the potential of the multitude in the transformation of these very structures through their counter-conduct. As Foucault aptly claims, to become other than what we are requires an ethics and politics of counter-conduct understood as the moment when "breaking all the bonds of obedience, the population will really have the right, not in juridical terms, but in terms of essential and fundamental rights, to break any bonds of obedience it has with the state [...], rising up against it" (*Security* 356). This is precisely what contemporary queer transCanadian women writers such as the ones examined in this project are striving to convey in their work by pushing the limits of representation and by

saturating the text/screen with bodies that are rendered unrepresentable by normative structures of power. This ethic of dissent, I argue, radically questions the limits of the category of the human, together with the humanist framework, understood as a normative civilizational model sustained by "lethal exclusions and fatal disqualifications" (Braidotti, *The Posthuman* 15). Thus, by extension, I propose a careful consideration of the posthuman predicament as a potential analytical and creative framework that could take my examination of contemporary queer transCanadian women's writing into unexpected territory.

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The first decade of the 21st century has witnessed the "slow death" (Berlant 2007) of several manifestations of "humanism" and "the human" and its replacement by novel conceptualizations of the "posthuman" (Braidotti 2013; MacCormack 2012; Barad 2003). In her articulation of the posthuman predicament, feminist philosopher Rosi Braidotti contends that "the common denominator for the posthuman condition is an assumption about the vital, self-organizing and yet non-naturalistic structure of living matter itself" (2). Out of a mixture of deception and anger towards the conduct of human beings as active contributors to the structural violences that dominate today's world, the posthuman framework has been welcomed by several academics, who have described it as "the new frontier in critical and cultural theory" (Braidotti, *The Posthuman* 2). While being aware of the dangers of submitting to the compulsive need to refashion terminologies in academia, my project engages with the posthuman as a cross-border concept from which to critically rethink not only

bodies but also temporal and spatial structures. At several points throughout this dissertation, I examine how contemporary queer transCanadian women writers, particularly Hiromi Goto and Larissa Lai, have reimagined posthuman materialities and spatio-temporal ethnoscapes (Appadurai 1996) as a way to interrogate the limits of humanism and dismantle the normative ideologies associated with it. In her formulation of the posthuman condition, Braidotti claims that it provides "an opportunity to empower the pursuit of alternative schemes of thought, knowledge and self-representation. [It] urges us to think critically and creatively about who and what we are actually in the process of becoming" (*The Posthuman* 12). Following her insights, I claim that the posthuman framework cuts across corporeal, biopolitical, and affective borders simultaneously, and as such, occupies a central position in the theorization of the cross-border ethic formulated in this project. Goto's posthuman sensibility, Donoghue's transhistorical assemblages, and Brand's cross-border material poetics all attend, in different ways, to a renewed understanding of relationality beyond those "lethal binaries" (Braidotti 37) that saturate our systems of thought and pervade our everyday lives with damaging consequences.

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In her articulation of posthumanist performativity, physicist and feminist theorist Karen Barad aptly claims that "Particular possibilities for acting exist at every moment, and these changing possibilities entail a responsibility to intervene in the world's becoming, to contest and rework *what matters and what is excluded from mattering*" (827, my emphasis). All of the cultural artefacts that I examine in

this dissertation actively contribute to formulating new counter-hegemonic ethical and political positions through alternative accounts of human and non-human materialities. As I contend in the first chapter, Dionne Brand's long poem *Ossuaries*, Hiromi Goto's novel *Half World*, together with her short story "Stinky Girl," and finally, Donoghue's novel *Room*, question and rearticulate the boundaries of materiality, embodiment, and corporeality in myriad ways. By doing so, these writers posit a feminist and anti-capitalist critique of current issues such as the impact of economic globalization on both environmental degradation and the bodies of non-normative populations. As Barad further contends, "Agency is about the possibilities and accountability entailed in reconfiguring material-discursive apparatuses of bodily production, including the boundary articulations and exclusions that are marked by those practices in the enactment of a causal structure" (827). Following this line of enquiry, my project looks at how the work of these queer transCanadian women writers contribute to the formulation of a combined onto-epistemological approach to agency and difference, where the body occupies a central position.

Political philosophers Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri contend that every reference to economic production and reproduction cannot forget the centrality of bodies. Corporeal resistance, as they claim, produces subjectivity in a complex dynamic with the resistances of other bodies: "This production of subjectivity through resistance and struggle will prove central [...], not only to the subversion of the existing forms of power but also to the constitution of alternative institutions of liberation" (*Commonwealth* 31). History, in fact, is

determined by the biopolitical antagonisms and resistances to biopower. In this sense, Hardt and Negri call for a political anthropology of resistance where revolutionary action has to be conceived on the biopolitical horizon. Are the writers discussed in this project on the road to building a revolutionary biopolitics? Even though this might seem slightly farfetched, their work, as I strive to demonstrate in chapter two, engages with technologies of biopower and biopolitical strategies of resistance in ways that enable the possibility of envisioning a genealogy of dissent against hegemonic structures. In the conclusion to the well-known essay "Precarious Life," Butler advocates for new systems and regimes of intelligibility in the contemporary world that would allow for voices of dissent to express themselves:

> We would have to interrogate the emergence and vanishing of the human at the limits of what we can know, what we can hear, what we can see, what we can sense. This might prompt us, affectively, to reinvigorate the intellectual projects of critique, of questioning, of coming to understand the difficulties and demands of cultural translation and dissent, and to create a sense of the public in which oppositional voices are not feared, degraded or dismissed, but valued for the instigation to a sensate democracy they occasionally perform. (*Precarious* 151)

In both their written and visual work, Hiromi Goto, Emma Donoghue, Dionne Brand, together with other multitude of contemporary queer transCanadian women writers, are aligning themselves with other voices like Butler's that are

fiercely calling for a radical reconfiguration of social and biopolitical relations in our unevenly globalized world.

What I would refer to as the poetics and politics of affect also plays a key role in this transformation of social-political and ethical relations. Following concepts such as *encounter* (Gregg and Seigworth 2010)*, orientation* (Ahmed 2004), and *anticipation* (Massumi 2010), chapter three looks at how contemporary queer transCanadian women's writing mobilizes feelings and emotions in novel ways that might contribute to the reconfiguration of aesthetic and ethical practices. Lauren Berlant defines cruel optimism as "the condition of maintaining an attachment to a problematic object *in advance* of it loss" (21). In my discussion of Brand's *What We All Long For* and Donoghue's *Slammerkin*, I claim that these novels engage with these "compromised conditions of possibility" (Berlant, "Cruel" 21) in that the promise of an affective community appears as a possibility and yet, the sustenance of these very communities is always already under threat, never secured. By tackling these tensions and contradictions, the texts discussed in the third chapter problematize current configurations of social relations and power structures, particularly in the context of emerging or contemporary global cities. In related ways, Brand's memoir, *A Map to the Door of No Return*, and Lai's poetry collection, *Automaton Biographies*, interrogate the limits of affect in relation to "the human" understood as a category of exclusion and Eurocentrism. Braidotti claims that "Moving beyond the paralysing effects of suspicion and pain, working across them is the key to ethics" (134). The texts examined in the third chapter do work with and across negative affects such as

fear and loss as a way to propose alternative orientations of the subject through the mobilization and redefinition of socio-political, affective, and ethical boundaries. By doing so, the authors that I analyze in this project are assembling a new *cross-border ethic* that suggests new forms of relationality and creates unexpected alliances between material bodies, often reshaping the cultural and the sociopolitical fabric. It is therefore of uttermost priority for the public intellectual today, regardless of her disciplinary affiliation, to interrogate, to question, and to "think again" about how the border becomes a contested site where the corporeal, the biopolitical, and the affective realms of every day life gather. With this aim in mind, the last chapter employs recent interventions in assemblage theory, via Puar (2007) and De Landa (2006), particularly, in order to fully develop the concept of cross-border ethic that I propose, through an examination of the literary production of the four queer transCanadian women writers discussed in this dissertation.

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When a CIA drone enters occupied space in the Middle East, bombarding the population and destroying the territory, a new form of posthuman border-crossing occurs. As unmanned aerial vehicles, these contemporary machines become the very materialization of necro-power at work (Braidotti 2013). Paradoxically, these posthuman objects are employed for the surveillance and control of material bodies and populations, often in contested border territories. The impact of these new forms of posthuman machinery is unpredictable. Simultaneously, however, the last few years have seen the unexpected alliances between the bodies of oppressed populations fighting against the corruption of

governments in places such as Turkey and Brazil. These novel forms of resistance, in their heterogeneity across the axes of gender, race, sexuality, and class, are composed by new posthuman multitudes with the potential to activate change in our troubled times. As I claim in this project, queer transCanadian women writers such as Hiromi Goto attend to the paradoxical and transgressive potential of these posthuman alliances in their 21st century work. And the porosity of borders, with all its dangers and potentialities, occupies a central position in the formation of these new assemblages between human and more than human materialities and bodies. As I suggest in the introduction, this dissertation emerges out of a sense of urgency about the imperative to turn to the Arts and the Humanities, particularly to contemporary queer transCanadian women's writing, to find alternative bodily and affective circuits in a paradoxical moment of both sociopolitical, economic, and ethical turmoil. I am critically aware of the fact that this project might be considered by some an exercise in cruel optimism, as understood by Berlant (2006). And yet, I cannot but believe that the public intellectual today needs to be willing to try to find creative ways to activate change, desire, and transformation. As political theorist Wendy Brown contends, we live in a time that features "capacities for destruction historically unparalleled in their combined potency, miniaturization, and mobility, from bodies wired for explosion to nearly invisible biochemical toxins" (20). These necropolitical impulses, nonetheless, as the work of the writers discussed in this project illustrates, can be questioned, and often dismantled, through poetic, aesthetic, and cultural practice. Braidotti explains how "Posthuman critical thought does not aim

at mastery, but at the transformation of negative into positive passions" (*The Posthuman* 134). I often wonder about how many of these positive passions are yet to be formulated in our everyday lives as 21st century academics. This dissertation thus ultimately invites readers and critics to embark in a risky but pleasurable journey where the realms of the unexpected and the unpredictable await; a crossing, if you wish, into the borderlands of the possible.

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