Challenging Aesthetics: The Politics of Universalism

by

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Abstract

In this dissertation, I identify an aesthetic tradition in settler[1] literary texts that parallels the settler state's political response to such policies as multiculturalism and Reconciliation.[2] I argue that modern Canadian fiction in English continues the tradition of romantic art in Hegel's strict sense. In particular, I examine the political impotence of what I call "Canadian romantic inwardness," which models a subject who retreats from the social world into the realm of deep feeling. I demonstrate this by extending Hegel's aesthetic model of reconciliation and his concept of "romantic fiction"[3] (592) to the works of five authors writing in Canada - Michael Ondaatje, Fred Wah, Rohinton Mistry, Joseph Boyden and Eden Robinson.[4]

In "Chapter One: *Reconciled Universalism*: Michael Ondaatje's *In the Skin of a Lion* (1987), *The English Patient* (1992), *Anil's Ghost* (2000)," I examine three of Ondaatje's novels to introduce how what Fredric Jameson calls the "romance mode" (1975 154) operates through appeals to universalism to entice aspirants away from political engagement, which functions to leave systems of oppression in place.

In "Chapter Two: *Hybrid Universalism*: Fred Wah's *Diamond Grill* (1996)," I explore whether *Diamond Grill* disrupts or facilitates the settler state's implementation of

[1] Please see Page 1 of "Introduction" for a full explanation of my deployment of this term.

[2] Throughout this dissertation, I use the upper case "Reconciliation" to refer to the Canadian government's approach to distinguish it from the work of the TRC or RCAP, for example, and the lower case "reconciliation" for all other purposes.

[3] According to Hegel, "romantic fiction is chivalry become serious again, with a real subject matter" (592), *LA Vol. I.,* 1975.

[4] While I am indebted to Chris Bracken's "Reconciliation Romance: A Study in Juridical Theology" (2015), which applies a similar critique in the juridical realm, I extend Hegel's model of reconciliation to settler texts and government policies such as multiculturalism.

racial politics. I analyze Homi Bhabha's concept of hybridity as a universalized condition and explore whether the text situates the racialized subject as responsible for the management of politics deployed by the settler state.

In "Chapter Three: *Reified Universalism*: Rohinton Mistry's *A Fine Balance* (1995)," I ask if Mistry's text universalizes Hegel's aesthetic model as a political threat to existing historical conditions. Although the text is set in India and appears to have nothing to do with Canada, I suggest support from state initiatives like the Writing and Publications Program (WPP) helps create the post-national context for novels like Mistry's to express national values without explicitly referring to the nation.

In "Chapter Four: *Colonial Universalism*: Joseph Boyden's *The Orenda* (2013)," I explore whether the novel functions as a literary example of a colonial text "going native." I suggest the text engages in what Scott Lyons refers to as "a bad kind of historical revisionism" by "reading our present desires into the past" (*X-Marks* 123) through an overreliance on the *Jesuit Papers* as source material that universalizes a version of an Indigenous subject amenable to Reconciliation efforts.

In "Chapter Five: *Gothic Universalism*: Eden Robinson's Monkey Beach (2000)," I suggest the text displaces Canadian romantic inwardness through what Christopher Bracken calls a "gothic inversion" to expose the horrors of colonial violence that the settler state has inflicted on Indigenous peoples.

In the "Conclusion: *Grounded Normativity*," I explain that romantic inwardness is not a new phenomenon and demonstrate how it is normalized as a form of universalism in such state policies as multiculturalism and Reconciliation. I conclude that as an aesthetic tradition, and as a valourized mode of being, it threatens to promote the

incommensurability of settler/Indigenous relations by not adequately addressing the historical conditions of colonialism. I conclude by suggesting that demystifying romantic fiction can expose its continued relevance in literary texts written in Canada and help improve the relationship between settlers and Indigenous peoples.

For Lucinda

"Cast your dancing spell my way

I promise to go under it"

And

Larry Kootnikoff

(1936-2021)

"The heart always finds its own...it comes back"

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Introduction

"If I horrify you, I am sorry, I spell horror a little differently"

~ Joshua Whitehead [5]

"In politics, love is a stranger…" ~ Hannah Arendt [6]

In this dissertation I identify an aesthetic tradition in literary texts written in Canada that parallels the settler[7] state's political response to such policies as multiculturalism and

[5] "Writing as a Rupture: A Breakup Note to CanLit" (2018 196).

[6] This quote is from a letter Arendt wrote to James Baldwin in response to his 1962 *New Yorker* article, "Letter from a Region of My Mind." The full sentence is, "In politics, love is a stranger, and when it intrudes upon it nothing is being achieved except hypocrisy." See Arendt, "The meaning of love in politics," 2019.

[7] I prefer using "unsettled scholar" adapted from Rita Wong's *undercurrent* (2015) to identify myself as a settler who does not accept the current arrangements between the settler state and Indigenous peoples. For the scope of this dissertation, I use "settler" and acknowledge its nuances and complexities within the context of the settler state's ongoing dispossession of Indigenous peoples. Daniel Heath Justice notes, "some current cultural commentators object to the use of 'settler' to describe non-Indigenous populations, seeing it as more of an insult than an accurate description of historical and contemporary relations with Indigenous peoples and lands. White-identified critics see it as prejudicially reductive and dismissive, while critics of colour raise important questions about the conflation of willing immigration with forcible transport through the trans-Atlantic slave trade or the flight of refugees from brutal conditions in their home countries" (10). Nevertheless, he adds, "No matter what the reasons were or are, the results have generally the same (sic) for the People: displacement and alienation from land and relations" (11). He concludes, "We must honestly and clearly name that history before we can untangle the complications that different newcomer populations have brought into that relationship, or before we can look for the alliances and connections between marginalized communities" (12). Glen Coulthard "recommends that scholars return instead to the older language of 'colonizer,' which, he argues, returns us to a discussion of colonialism that attends specifically to structures of power, and doesn't sweep all newcomers into the same status, an understanding that there are many ways of being in relation to this land, and that not all newcomers are colonial agents" (in Justice 12). See Justice, 2018. According to Tuck and Wang, the settler state utilizes "external forms and internal forms of colonization simultaneous to the settler colonial project. This means, and this is perplexing to some, that dispossessed people are brought onto seized Indigenous land through other colonial projects. Other colonial projects include enslavement, as discussed, but also military recruitment, low-wage and high-wage labor recruitment (such as agricultural workers and overseas-trained engineers), and displacement/migration (such as the coerced immigration from nations torn by U.S. wars or devastated by U.S. economic policy). In this set of settler colonial relations, colonial subjects who are displaced by external colonialism, as well as racialized and minoritized by internal colonialism, still occupy and settle stolen Indigenous land. Settlers are diverse, not just of white European descent, and include people of color, even from other colonial contexts. This tightly wound set of conditions and racialized, globalized relations exponentially complicates what is meant by decolonization, and by solidarity, against settler colonial forces (7). See Tuck and Wang, 2012.

Reconciliation.[8] I argue that modern Canadian fiction in English continues the tradition of romantic art (in Hegel's strict sense). In particular, I examine the political impotence of what I call "Canadian romantic inwardness," which models a subject who retreats from the social world into the realm of deep feeling, or what my project identifies as "romantic inwardness." I identify how this process operates by extending Hegel's concept of "romantic fiction"[9] (*LA I* 592) to the works of five authors writing in Canada - Michael Ondaatje, Fred Wah, Rohinton Mistry, Joseph Boyden and Eden Robinson. To be clear, the focus of my critique is on romantic fiction as a literary form, which includes romantic inwardness and the doctrine of "personal-perfection" or "election" (Auerbach 136). I do not mean to suggest the authors are consciously promoting its tenets. I approach these texts as cultural artifacts that can reflect the dominant ideas of the contexts from which they emerge in what Fredric Jameson refers to as society's "political unconsciousness" (1981 19). As cultural artifacts these literary texts mirror a similar process occurring in the political realm of the settler state. As evidence of this I offer Glen Coulthard's critique of Charles Taylor's deployment of Hegel in his essay, "The Politics of Recognition," and segments of speeches by then prime ministers Pierre Trudeau and Stephen Harper addressing multiculturalism and Reconciliation, respectively. The connecting thread that binds these discourses together is a valorization, or amplification, of romantic inwardness. I attempt to make the case that this is a uniquely Canadian phenomenon by citing Margery Fee's research on how romantic nationalism in Canada (1987) has been deployed to unify a young country with a national literature. Through national efforts like the *Massey Royal Commission* of 1951, a

[8] Throughout this dissertation, I use the upper case "Reconciliation" to refer to the Canadian government's approach to distinguish it from the work of the TRC or RCAP, for example, and the lower case "reconciliation" for all other purposes.

[9] According to Hegel, "romantic fiction is chivalry become serious again, with a real subject matter" (592), *LA Vol. I.,* 1975**.**

particular type of literary text is encouraged, one that will express the ideals and values of what it means to be Canadian with the aim of distinguishing the nation from the United States and Britain. This literary text is one that is focused on unifying the nation and on creating subjects who model the inward orientation of ideal citizens. This pedagogical function resembles Hegel's romantic fiction which is centered on "the education of the individual into the realities of the present" (*LA Vol. I.*, 593) in order to be a productive participant in society, or as he puts it, to be "as good a Philistine as others" (*LA Vol. I* 1975 593).

One guiding principle of this dissertation is that demystifying romantic inwardness will contribute to the decolonization of Canadian literary texts. By applying a critical perspective to the canonical texts of my project I hope to illuminate the aporias that plague the relationship between the settler state and Indigenous peoples in order to better understand the incommensurability that threatens contemporary efforts at Reconciliation. As scholars it behooves us to reappraise popular texts from time to time to determine if they might yield new, productive insights that can enhance our praxis.

Critical Perspectives

The origins of my project begin with the death of my uncle, Harry Kootnikoff, who died in 1962 at seventeen before I was born. His experiences inspired three Masters degrees[10] as I attempted to understand what had happened to him. The answers I uncovered provided me with a critical perspective concerning what it might mean to be Canadian. Harry was a *Svobodniki*, or a Freedomite, the name adopted by members of the "splinter fringe group" (Ewashen Par. 13)

[10] Masters in Applied Linguistics, 2003; Masters in Journalism and Media Studies, 2006; and Masters in Fine Arts (Creative Writing), 2010.

called the Sons of Freedom Doukhobors,[11] a Christian sect from Russia that immigrated to Canada at the turn of the twentieth century.[12] The Freedomites resisted assimilation and clashed with authorities over the education of their children. They recognized the pedagogical power public schools had to inculcate children with the norms and values of the state, particularly the valorization of war, which was one of the Freedomites' main concerns. In the 1950s, the RCMP forcibly removed approximately two hundred Freedomite children between ages seven and fifteen from their families, some in the early morning hours of darkness, to be "Canadianized" (*Righting the Wrong* 10)[13] in a residential school at New Denver, British Columbia. Among these children was my uncle, who was abducted at eleven as part of the RCMP's "Operation Snatch" (Chunn, 2002 272).[14] Four years after being released from the residential school, on a Friday evening in mid-February 1962, Harry and four of his friends were driving to Nelson from Trail when a bomb he had been holding in his lap accidently detonated. He died instantly. The explosion was so severe it shattered the windows of the surrounding homes in the town of Kinnaird and blew the roof off the Chevy Sedan they were riding in (Williams 1962). Rather

[11] In the 1941 war pamphlet series, *The New Canadian Loyalists,* the Doukhobors are described as "the most indigestible of any racial group admitted into Canada" (in Mackey 63-64). See Mackey, 1999.

[12] After arriving in Canada, the Doukhobors fractured into three groups – Independents, Community Doukhobors and the Freedomites. See McLaren, 2005.

[13] See *Righting the Wrong*, Ombudsman Report, Province of the British Columbia, 1999.

[14] "Operation Snatch" resembles the "Sixties Scoop" of Indigenous children, but on a much smaller scale. The "Sixties Scoop" involved the apprehension of Indigenous children beginning in 1951 and it continued through the 1980s to become the Millennium Scoop, which included the removal of thousands of Indigenous children "without their parents' consent and often without their knowledge." See Fachinger, 2019. See also the *TRC Summary Report* (p.72), 2015, and Martens, 2020.

than "Canadianize"[15] my uncle, his experiences behind the fence at the residential school radicalized him.

This personal episode is my entry point into this project. Learning about my uncle's experiences provided me with insights into what it means to reside outside the dominant narrative of a community. This helps to explain the critiques of my project's texts. I approach them as individual works that convey their own aesthetic practices while at the same time reflecting the dominant preferences of the contexts from which they have emerged. As Edward Said writes about his own practice:

> My method is to focus as much as possible on individual works, to read them first as great products of the creative or interpretative imagination, and then to show them as part of the relationship between culture and empire. I do not believe that authors are mechanically determined by ideology, class, or economic history, but authors are, I also believe, very much in the history of their societies, shaping and shaped by that history and their social experience in different measure. (1994 xxii)

The texts of my project have provided me with pleasure and enjoyment throughout my years as both a student and educator. I believe the authors have the autonomy to recognize in what ways they may have been shaped by their history and contexts. Therefore, in some cases they may be critiquing romantic inwardness and the lack of political engagement it affords, while in other cases they may be unconsciously reproducing it. Whatever the case, it is beyond the scope of this study to evaluate the authorial intent behind the texts. What I hope to identify are patterns and make connections between what Said calls "culture and empire" in ways that can

[15] As Timothy Stanley notes, "collective remembering in Canada […] has failed to come to terms with the centrality of genocide, of racism, and of their ongoing effects in the process of making people and things Canadian" (112). See Stanley, 2019.

make visible how aesthetic practices like romantic inwardness continue to influence peoples' lived realities. I also hope that a deeper understanding may emerge about what it might mean to be Canadian. In an English literature classroom for example, I envision a conversation between Ondaatje's *In the Skin of a Lion* and Robinson's *Monkey Beach* over how romantic inwardness could shape what it means to be Canadian or not. I believe such opportunities can lead to substantial discussions over issues such as Reconciliation and decolonization that can benefit all people living in Canada.

Universalism

This project has been a long time in the making. Allow me to briefly explain how it has taken shape. I began my dissertation in 2012 during the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's investigations into residential schools. As a member of a settler family who had his uncle abducted by the settler state, I felt uniquely positioned to explore how residential schools have been used as "civilizing missions"[16] to justify the inhumane treatment of Indigenous peoples. As I examined the texts, I began identifying an aesthetic that seemed to dismiss political engagement. Was good fiction apolitical? Was there a link between this trend and colonial violence? I turned to Immanuel Kant's *Critique of Judgment,* which theorizes a "disinterested" (5:210 95) aesthetic that relies on the evacuation of politics. I explored his formula and found it to be based on a difference blindness designed for universal accessibility to apprehensions of beauty. Upon reading Immanuel Wallerstein's *European Universalism: The Rhetoric of Power*, I began to develop a critique of what he refers to as "a partial and distorted universalism" (xiv) aligned with European sources of power. I then investigated Jacques Rancière's concept of the

[16] See the TRC Executive Summary (50), 2015.

"distribution of the sensible"[17] to explain how certain obstacles such as race, gender, or class, create different apprehensions of what beauty can yield. However, I found that regardless of difference an apolitical universalism seemed to prevail as an aspirational goal. My focus then expanded from Kant's aesthetic model that presumes universalism, to one that included the allure of universalism itself. After reading Christopher Bracken's "Reconciliation Romance: A Study in Juridical Theology" 2015) it became apparent to me that this apolitical universalism was romantic inwardness as manifested in Hegel's notion of "romantic fiction" and it exerts a profound influence over settler sensibilities through what Fredric Jameson refers to as the "romance mode" (1975 154).[18] My project is now focused on romantic inwardness as a form of universalism emanating from values such as individualism and self-responsibility that the settler state instrumentalizes through affective appeals as a way of extending its authority. The settler state's version of universalism resembles what Charles Taylor calls "particularism masquerading as the universal" (1994 44), which creates conditions that can problematize efforts to reconcile with Indigenous peoples.

Cultural Artifacts

People come together through the cultural artifacts that they love and learning to love some things over others is a social/political process. The institution known as Canadian literature, also known as CanLit,[19] is among other things, a pedagogical apparatus in that it

[17] As Rancière notes, "I call 'distribution of the sensible' a generally implicit law that defines the forms of partaking by first defining the modes of perception in which they are inscribed" (36). See Rancière, 2010.

[18] Jameson writes, "a mode [...] is not bound to the conventions of a given age, nor indissolubly linked to a given type of verbal artifact, but rather persists as a temptation and a mode of expression across a range of historical periods, seeming to offer itself, if only intermittently, as a formal possibility which can be revived and renewed" (142). See Jameson, 1975.

[19] Throughout this dissertation, I use both the abbreviated "CanLit" and the extended "Canadian literature" to refer to literary texts written by Canadians. I also refer to both the CanLit industry denoted by publishing companies,

teaches us what it is to be Canadian and makes us into Canadians at the same time. There is a kind of novel that comes to be CanLit which has certain characteristics that can be mapped historically against the other forms of public policy – like the 1969 White Paper, the *Bilingualism and Bicultural Commission* of 1969, and official multiculturalism of 1971 – which are also pedagogical in the sense that they tell "us" who we are and in so doing, create an "us." This is what I refer to as a settler *sensus communis*.

As Jameson notes above, literary texts can reproduce the dominant ideas of their contexts and may alter them through a process of mutual determination in which both artifact and context shape each other. By reproducing and responding to their contexts, the texts of my project reveal a correspondence between the aesthetic tradition of romantic inwardness and government policies like multiculturalism and Reconciliation. As I hope my dissertation will demonstrate, romantic inwardness has been one of the guiding principles organizing what Eve Haque refers to as "difference and belonging" (31) in Canada. The texts of my project reflect this process. For example, Patrick Lewis' choice at the end of *In the Skin of a Lion* to abandon politics in favour of a domestic life, or *Diamond Grill*'s representation of the racialized subject taking personal responsibility for the policies of the settler state, show how romantic inwardness can be prioritized at the expense of real-world conditions. Moreover, Dina Dalal's assertion in *A Fine Balance* that "Government problems" do not "affect ordinary people like us" (75), and the configuration of personal empowerment as complicity in colonialism in Boyden's *The Orenda,* situate romantic inwardness as a significant factor within these settler texts. However, as I will argue in "Chapter Five: Gothic Universalism: Eden Robinson's *Monkey Beach* (2000)," Robinson displaces romantic inwardness through an inversion Bracken terms, the "reconciliation

media organizations, and award-giving entities like the Scotiabank Giller Prize, as well as it being an area of academic study. See McGregor, Rak, and Wunker (2018).

gothic" (Bracken, 2015 7).[20] As a result, *Monkey Beach* exposes the horror of the colonial violence the settler state inflicts on Indigenous peoples during the period I call the "Multicultural Reconciliation era" that starts in 1998 and continues to the present. Joshua Whitehead's quote that opens this section implies that horror often conveys different meanings for settlers and for Indigenous peoples. As *Monkey Beach* suggests, the colonial practices that have benefited settlers continue to dispossess Indigenous peoples today.

Three of the seven novels of my project are set outside Canada. Ondaatje's *The English Patient* is set in Europe, *Anil's Ghost* is set in Sri Lanka, and Mistry's *A Fine Balance* is set in India. The apparent lack of a Canadian context reveals the ways in which romantic inwardness can adapt to different locations and situations. By making the connections between these texts and the Canadian context from which they emerge, I hope to make visible how prevalent romantic inwardness can be when formulated under settler conditions. If romantic fiction and its accompanying quality of inwardness are portable then this may help make my case that they are active in the contemporary Canadian context. As Said suggests, scholars of literary texts should:

> take seriously our intellectual and interpretative vocation to make connections, to deal with as much of the evidence as possible, fully and actually, to read what is there or not there, above all, to see complementarity and interdependence instead of isolated, venerated, or formalized experience that excludes and forbids the hybridizing intrusions of human history (1994 96).

When I "make connections" among the texts that are set in other locales than Canada while acknowledging the portability of romantic inwardness, I can read what is "not there" to

[20] While I am indebted to Christopher Bracken's "Reconciliation Romance: A Study in Juridical Theology" (2015), which applies a similar critique in the juridical realm, I extend Hegel's notion of romantic fiction to settler texts and government policies such as multiculturalism.

consider how they shape the settler state and the behaviour of its inhabitants. For example, when Mistry's *A Fine Balance* portrays Dina Dalal as a benevolent mother-like figure rather than a small-holding capitalist, I identify the obfuscation of economic relationships as a function of romantic inwardness, which I can then connect to other occurrences in policies and in texts set in Canada. The scene with Fred Wah Sr. and his racist "customers" in *Diamond Grill* (29), for example, or the lack of references to a fur trade in *The Orenda,* shield capitalist relations from scrutiny by valourizing romantic inwardness, which is an attribute of romantic fiction. As literary artifacts, all the texts of my project – whether they are set in Canada or not – convey the norms and assumptions of the context from which they were published and first received i.e.: Canada. Over the course of my five chapters, I explore how romantic fiction as defined by Hegel has influenced English literary texts written in Canada and how romantic inwardness continues to impact settler attempts to organize difference and belonging in Canada.

Diverse Texts

Of the five authors I have chosen, three have been identified with non-European diasporic communities – Ondaatje with the Sinhalese in Sri Lanka, Wah with the Chinese in China, and Mistry with the Parsis in India. These authors represent multicultural diversity and the expectation is they might provide an alternative perspective to enhance the character of the nation. However, as Smaro Kamboureli notes writing in 2007, "the 'face' of mainstream Canadian literature may have changed irrevocably, but the intricate and hard questions raised by the politics of difference and representation persist" (2007 xiii). My project was motivated in part to test whether this perspective was accurate, and if so, why? How is it possible that diversity could yield sameness? Chapters One, Two and Three explore these questions and others.

"Chapter Four: Colonial Universalism: Joseph Boyden's *The Orenda,*" attempts to uncover how Boyden was able to successfully appeal to the CanLit establishment and what it was that he conveyed to garner their support and recognition. My final chapter, "Gothic Universalism: Eden Robinson's *Monkey Beach*," conveys a different perspective on the nation than the other texts of my project. After reading Christopher Bracken's paper, "Reconciliation Romance: A Study in Juridical Theology" and Robinson's short story collection, *Traplines*, I was motivated to apply a similar method to *Monkey Beach* in order to discover what it might yield.

My reason for not including more Euro-Canadian settler literature in a dissertation that critiques an aesthetic tradition associated with Euro-Canadian society is that soon after I began my research, I started identifying European themes in the texts. *A Fine Balance*, for example, relied on a realism that harkened back to such nineteenth-century authors as Balzac and Tolstoy; Wah's *Diamond Grill* and Boyden's *The Orenda* emphasized an individualism that resembled what Lucien Goldmann refers to as belonging "to that classical bourgeois tradition of thought whose essential values were the *individual* and *freedom*" (original italics, 26) found in Kant and the later German romantics that impacted Hegel. Ondaatje's texts revealed references to the romance genre and the grail quests. As a result, I opted to rely on references to romantic nationalism and Hegel's notion of romantic fiction as examples of how a Euro-Canadian ethos has been present from Canada's inception. This ethos has also been expressed by scholars whose work I make ample use of like Northrop Frye and Charles Taylor.

Romantic Inwardness

In the texts I have assembled, romantic inwardness is presented as a refuge or haven from the inequities and harsh conditions of the external world. I would like to emphasize that the qualifier - "romantic" – is intended to distinguish the type of "inwardness" to which I refer. I do not mean to suggest that inwardness is inherently apolitical. I recognize that there may be powerful political positions taken through an inward turn. However, in the context of Hegel's romantic fiction, this inward turn becomes a "romantic" one that is by design apolitical. It offers fulfillment as an inward quest for self-knowledge and self-actualization. Attend to yourself, the theme goes, and the world will take care of itself. For Hegel, this theme is reconciliation:

> The diffusion of this self-contemplation of spirit, of its inwardness and self-possession, is peace, the reconciliation of spirit with itself in its objectivity – a divine world, a Kingdom of God, in which the Divine (which from the beginning had reconciliation with its reality as its essence) is consummated in virtue of this reconciliation and thereby has true consciousness of itself. (*LA Vol. I* 521-522)

But the world will not take care of itself; it requires deliberate engagement which is something romantic inwardness and by extension, romantic fiction, is unable to provide. Hegel's *Lectures on Aesthetics* helps explain this problem. Interestingly, this text has not received the same critical attention as his *Elements of the Philosophy of Right* or *The Phenomenology of Spirit*, for example. As he writes, "The true content of romantic art is absolute inwardness, and its corresponding form is spiritual subjectivity" (*LA Vol. I* 519). Romantic fiction is an aspect of romantic art and the problem, according to Hegel, is that "the inherently infinite subjective personality is in itself irreconcilable with the external material and is to remain unreconciled"

(574). A reliance on aesthetic practices like romantic inwardness to address political dilemmas will inevitably fail.

Hegel's *Aesthetics* explore how romantic art is meant to convey the divine and allow people to reflect on its beauty and feel its love. This is a vital process of apprehending an ethical life. As Hegel writes, "the Divine is the absolute subject-matter of art" (607). As he explains, the Christian God:

> emerges from itself into a relation with something else which, however, is its own, and in which it finds itself again and remains communing and in unity with itself. This being at one with itself in its other is the really beautiful subject-matter of romantic art, its Ideal which has essentially for its form and appearance the inner life and subjectivity, mind and feeling. (533)

"This life in self in another," Hegel continues, "is, as feeling, the spiritual depth of love" (533). He concludes that it "consists in giving up the consciousness of oneself, forgetting oneself in another self, yet in this surrender and oblivion having and possessing oneself alone" (539–540). This form of love is based on an idea that the divine resides in everyone and that individuals should recognize it in one another. However, the settler texts of my project forfeit this mutuality for individual self-fulfillment. Moreover, self-fulfillment is presented as though external factors have no influence. For example, Patrick Lewis from *In the Skin of a Lion*, as mentioned above on pg. 6, abandons his commitment to the social justice issues he shared with his former lover, Alice Gull, for a life of inwardness with Clara and Alice's daughter, Hana, as though his former desire for political violence had no impact on the condition of these relationships.

According to Hegel, the ways in which human civilizations have attempted to represent the divine have changed and evolved over time. Art passes through three phases – symbolic, classical, and romantic. Symbolic art, such as Zoroastrianism or Hinduism, strives to express spirit in appearances but remains indeterminate, classical art like ancient Greek sculpture, reconciles spirit itself to appearances, and romantic art turns spirit inwards to be "reconciled with itself in itself (*LA Vol. I* 527). For Hegel, the history of aesthetics is a movement from symbolic and classical art, towards its realization in an absolute form. When the Christian religion emerges as a factor in world history, the progression towards an ultimate purpose takes a significant turn inwards, which Hegel characterizes as "romantic art." Romantic art coincides with Christianity and includes four stages: Christian painting, Chivalric poetry, Shakespearean drama, and what he called the "modern, bourgeois epic" (*LA Vol. II* 1092),[21] also known as "romantic fiction." It is this fourth stage, romantic fiction, which I have identified as enduring to become a factor in CanLit. Hegel's reference to "chivalry" is an allusion to the romance genre represented by such authors as Chrétien de Troyes from the twelfth century. Hegel attaches a pedagogical or conforming function to the role of romantic fiction which operates to prepare citizens for "the realities of the present" (*LA Vol. I* 593). Although Hegel never explains in detail how this might work, my project is an attempt to try. The implication is that virtues like chivalry play an important role. These virtues essentially involve conduct like electability and romantic inwardness that combine to make up what Fredric Jameson identifies as the romance mode. I will explain this, but first will attempt to situate Hegel in the Canadian context.

[21] The Knox translation of "*die moderne bürgerliche Epopoë*" reads, "modern popular epic," but Speight, citing Knox, translates it as "modern, bourgeois epic" (24). See Speight, 2010.

Hegel And Canada

My deployment of Hegel is not without precedent in the Canadian context. As Susan Dodd notes, "Hegel has been a striking presence in Canadian political philosophy especially since the Second World War," citing the work of James Doull, Emil Fackenheim, George Grant, Henry S. Harris, and Charles Taylor (3). She adds, "Hegel's vision of modern freedom – especially the mutual interdependency of individual and collective goods – expressed the philosophical aspect of Canada's nation-building ethos in the second half of the twentieth century" (3). This has involved "recent shifts in what we might call Canada's self-image, starting with the nation-building ethos of the post-war era, and opening into a new self-questioning, exemplified in the 2015 Truth and Reconciliation Commission report on the residential schools for Aboriginal children" (4). I take this "ethos" to be a reference to other government initiatives as well as the TRC - like Medicare - that embody a "community-based politics as a counter to the liberal-capitalism of the postcolonial, globalizing world" (3)." This mix of the public sector with private entrepreneurship resembles the ethos of Rowland Harris, the Commissioner of Public Works from *In the Skin of a Lion*. In that novel, he functions as a foil to the millionaire, Ambrose Small, highlighting a distinction between different approaches to capitalism.

Charles Taylor's work in particular has had a significant political impact in Canada. His essay, "The Politics of Recognition" (1994), which draws on Hegel's theory of recognition, has contributed to the discourse on Canadian multiculturalism. He writes:

> A number of strands in contemporary politics turn on the need, sometimes the demand, for *recognition*. The need, it can be argued, is one of the driving forces behind nationalist movements in politics. And the demand comes to the fore in a number of ways in today's politics, on behalf of minority or "subaltern" groups, in some forms of feminism and in

what is today called the politics of "multiculturalism." (25)

Once Taylor identifies a "need" for recognition, he offers a "thesis" for it: "The thesis is that our identity is partly shaped by recognition or its absence, often by the *mis*recognition of others, and so a person or group of people can suffer real damage, real distortion, if the people or society around them mirror back to them a confining or demeaning or contemptible picture of themselves" (25). He goes on to address "indigenous and colonized people":

> Recently, a similar point has been made in relation to indigenous and colonized people in general. It is held that since 1492 Europeans have projected an image of such people as somehow inferior, "uncivilized," and through the force of conquest have often been able to impose this image on the conquered. The figure of Caliban has been held to epitomize this crushing portrait of contempt of New World aboriginals. (26)

Taylor asks, "How did we get started on this?" and proceeds to reference "Hegel […], with his famous dialectic of the master and the slave" (26) from *The Phenomenology of Spirit*. Yellowknives Dene scholar Glen Coulthard first deployed Taylor's essay in the context of Reconciliation with his article, "Subjects of Empire: Indigenous Peoples and the 'Politics of Recognition' in Canada" (2007), and more recently in *Red Skin, White Masks: Rejecting the Colonial Politics of Recognition* (2014), in which he suggests that Taylor's essay neglects such historical conditions as colonialism and focuses too much on inward factors like his portrayal of recognition. As Coulthard explains, "Taylor tends to focus on the recognition end of the spectrum too much, and as a result leaves uninterrogated colonialism's deep-seated structural features" (35). Taylor's essay assumes a particular type of recognition that depends on "identity" or a "picture" (25) that has been imposed on colonized peoples against their will. While these factors may be significant, they are what Frantz Fanon calls the "psycho-affective" (2004 148)

conditions of colonialism in contrast to "historical conditions" (2008 62). In fact, this focus is one of the reasons why I have deployed Hegel's *Lectures on Aesthetics*. When Taylor "focus[es] on the recognition end of the spectrum too much" (Coulthard 2014 35), he is referring to what my project identifies as aesthetics, but in a political context. Moreover, according to Fanon, Hegel's form of recognition that Taylor is referencing "is not posited as a source of freedom and dignity for the colonized, *but rather as the field of power through which colonial relations are produced and maintained*. This 'is the form of recognition,' Fanon suggests,' that Hegel never described'" (in Coulthard 17). What Fanon recognizes in Hegel, and what Coulthard identifies in Taylor, is a lack of attention to historical conditions such as colonialism. This is precisely what my project identifies as an over-emphasis on romantic inwardness in the settler texts of my project, which model a subject who retreats from political engagement into deep feeling as a structural imperative of Hegel's romantic fiction. If what I identify on the aesthetic plane in these literary texts parallels what is occurring on the political plane, then the settler texts of my project might yield significant insights into contemporary relations between Indigenous peoples and the state.

In *Red Skin, White Masks* (2014), Coulthard demonstrates that Taylor's influence extends beyond recognition politics and continues to influence discourses around the government's Reconciliation efforts in the context of colonialism. While not explicitly naming Taylor, Coulthard targets "the liberalized appropriation of Hegel that continues to inform many contemporary proponents of identity politics" (16-17). While Coulthard credits Taylor for citing Fanon, specifically their mutual reference to "the debilitating effects associated with *mis*recognition" (32-33), Coulthard suggests Taylor's essay suffers from a "failure to adequately confront the dual structure of colonialism itself" (33). While Fanon already critiques Hegel in the

context of colonialism, Taylor's deployment of Hegel is treated in a similar fashion by Coulthard. He writes, the "vision of a reconciled relationship premised on mutual recognition […] ultimately situates Indigenous lands and political authority in a subordinate position within the political and economic framework of Canadian sovereignty" (119). Nevertheless, it is this inadequate form of recognition that begets Reconciliation. According to Andrew Schaap, "In societies divided by a history of political violence, political reconciliation depends on transforming a relation of enmity into one of civic friendship. In such contexts the discourse of *recognition* provides the ready frame in terms of which reconciliation might be conceived" (2004 523). As I hope to show, the common factor is too much of a focus on the aesthetic virtue of romantic inwardness, which exacerbates tensions in what Fanon refers to as the dual structure of colonialism.

Hegel's *Aesthetics* helps explain the problem of romantic inwardness within the context of Taylor's configuration of recognition. Understanding the limits of a psycho-affective or aesthetic focus on recognition at the expense of historical conditions - and how that appears to lead to Reconciliation within the Canadian context - is vital to a project such as mine that seeks to define the limitations of romantic inwardness in literary texts and in the broader Canadian context.

The Romance Mode

Hegel's notion of romantic fiction is heavily indebted to the tropes of the romance genre that emerged in the twelfth century. According to Hegel, "romantic fiction is chivalry become serious again, with a real subject matter" (*LA Vol. I* 592). As the final stage of romantic art, romantic fiction is based on idealized attributes of human conduct such as "chivalry" that operate as codes for inward focused subjects on which to model behaviour. Hegel's romantic fiction,

therefore, yields connections to the romance genre and Jameson's notion of the "romance mode" (1975 154). According to Jameson, a mode "is not bound to the conventions of a given age, nor indissolubly linked to a given type of verbal artifact, but rather persists as a temptation and a mode of expression across a whole range of historical periods, seeming to offer itself, if only intermittently, as a formal possibility which can be revived and renewed" (142). This helps to explain Hegel's utilization of the romance, as well as my project's suggestion that it appears in contemporary literary texts written in Canada. Jameson recognizes Northrop Frye as giving the "fullest account of romance as a *mode*" (1975 138). As with romantic inwardness, an essential feature is its portability – it can be adapted to a variety of circumstances.[22] As Frye notes:

> there is a genuinely 'proletarian' element in romance […] which is never satisfied with its various incarnations, and in fact the incarnations themselves indicate that no matter how great a change may take place in society, romance will turn up again, as hungry as ever, looking for new hopes and desires to feed on. The perennially child-like quality of romance is marked by its extraordinarily persistent nostalgia, its search for some kind of imaginative golden age in time or space. (1969 186)

Conventions like romantic inwardness and electability, appearing in the romances of their progenitor, Chrétien de Troyes, can operate as enticements or appeals on which to model behaviour. These have been formalized into codes of chivalry [23] regarding how to live in the

[22] I want to stress the aleatory occurrence of this process. The appearance of romantic inwardness and the romance mode in different historical eras is not a deliberate attempt to recreate the past, but is a chance convergence of events that, in the case of the Canadian context, emanate from a settler *sensus communis*.

[23] "Chivalry consists of models of courteous behaviour that are part of formal or informal moral codes of conduct that make interpersonal behaviour more civilized.[…]. Chivalry is not only imposed on people by rules and regulations, but, if successfully socialized, also comes from within, in which case a person is not merely behaving in a civilized manner, but he or she is civilized, or at least he or she is regarded as civilized according to the standards of the specific society he or she lives in. In other words, people live by their code of conduct not just because of

world based on a doctrine of "personal-perfection" (Auerbach 136) aimed at achieving the status of "one of the elect" (136). Through a series of tasks, the candidate progresses until they complete their quest and obtain their desired goal. Bruce Meyer suggests the romance is a "school" that helps readers achieve "moral perfection" (194). For example, as I hope to demonstrate in Chapter Two, *Diamond Grill* presents inwardness as a form of personal responsibility which the text elevates as a preferable quality for the racialized subject to embody in order to succeed within the contemporary Canadian context. As Frye writes, "In every age the ruling social or intellectual class tends to project its ideals in some form of romance" (1969 186).

As noted previously, Hegel uses the term - "bourgeois epic" (*LA Vol. II* 1092) – to refer to romantic fiction and to designate literary texts that are degraded forms of the classical epics of ancient Greece and are therefore suited to the "prosaically ordered" (1092) modern world. Like the ancient epics, the texts of my project - as expressions of romantic fiction - are meant to convey admirable qualities of what it means to be Canadian. According to Hegel, the "bourgeois epic" involves "the education of the individual into the realities of the present" (*LA I* 593). This pedagogical function helps condition people to prioritize a retreat into romantic inwardness in the modern Canadian context.

By definition, the romance mode requires inwardness and a retreat from political realities in order for it to be realized. Frye identifies the "central form of quest-romance" as involving a "dragon-killing theme" (1969 189). He adds, "The presence of a mythical structure in realistic fiction, however, poses certain technical problems for making it plausible, and the devices used in solving these problems may be given the general name of *displacement"* (136). Following the concept of "displacement," which according to Frye, is "The adaptation of myth and metaphor to

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coercion but because of conviction or internalized, institutionalized behaviour" (292-293). See Moelker and Kümmel, 2007.

canons of morality or plausibility" (365), the dragon can represent any number of obstacles in the way of a hero obtaining her goal. Within the contemporary context of an inward quest, these may include such individual pitfalls as greed, selfishness, or addiction. These "dragons" must be overcome for the hero to achieve the grail of self-knowledge or fulfillment. Once the successful aspirant meets the requirements, she can achieve the status of electability. At the end of *The Orenda*, for example, the Indigenous characters, Bird and Gosling, retreat into deep feeling in the aftermath of their nation's destruction, which is portrayed as an inevitable historical event rather than as a human occurrence. This reification of historical conditions is an attribute of electability that the text models for its audience.

Frye references such "courtly-chivalric" (Auerbach 138) romances as the "Grail cycle" (Frye, 1969 196) first established by Chrétien de Troyes in such stories as *The Story of the Grail*. This story is centered on Perceval, a youth who becomes enthralled when he first comes across the embodiment of chivalry - a group of knights - while walking in the forest. He later tells his mother they "are more beautiful […] than God and all His angels" (in Chrétien and Staines 344). Following Frye's theory of displacement, this brief scene can be read as emblematic of the reverence the modern settler subject reserves for the guiding ideals of the romance mode such as inwardness, individualism, and electability. Perceval then sets out on his quest to join the knights and become one of the elect. The romance conjures a world where an individual from humble origins like Perceval can transcend the world of experience to achieve electability through his own efforts. As Bracken notes, "The romance promises the elect of any era hope of redemption through self-transformation" (2015 7). I explore whether affective appeals entice aspirants away from political engagement by prioritizing inwardness at the expense of preserving existing political structures. Auerbach notes, the romance's "emphasis on inner values" (139) offers "an

escape into fable and fairy tale" (138) that ultimately "serves no political function" (134). The romance mode that characterizes the texts in chapters one through four creates a world where, according to Auerbach, it is "decidedly unfavorable" for the apprehension of "reality in its full breadth and depth" (142). I ask if this focus on the individual and a retreat from the social world into romantic inwardness masks the "full breadth and depth" of the historical conditions currently structuring the settler state. In the following chapters I explore how the romance mode operates through Hegel's notion of romantic fiction to facilitate individuals achieving the status of electability in order to become loyal citizens.

Canadian Settler Romance

Since Canada's inception in the nineteenth century there have been numerous efforts to manage difference and belonging through such appeals to romantic inwardness as those produced by a national literature. According to Margery Fee, this literary endeavor has its origins in the romantic nationalism of J.G. Herder. She writes, "the impact of European Romantic nationalism on Canadian literature and criticism was firmly established in Canada well before 1890" (in Lecker 4). Fee notes a "central tenet of this theory is that great literature is the expression of the national soul" (in Lecker 4). She adds:

> "Romantic" designates a period between 1770 and 1832 […] during which this literary theory was developed. The ideas about national literature deployed by Canadian critics like Dewart and Lighthall can be traced back to German philosophers and critics such as Johann Gottfried Herder (1744–1803) and Friedrich von Schlegel (1772–1829) [...]. Romantic nationalism has had a long afterlife, however, particularly in settler colonies, and still frames the study of national literatures. (2015 227)

According to Fee, "For Romantic nationalists, a national literature constitutes a land claim" (2015 1). In the Canadian context, it can be seen as an attempt to dispossess Indigenous peoples of land. This form of nationalism has its origins in Europe of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries where it emphasized connections to climate, geography, a common language, and to a literature Herder called, "the archives of a nationality" and "the imprints of the soul" (in Wilson 115). With the passing of the Official Languages Act in 1969 [24] and introduction of Canada's multiculturalism policy in 1971, Canadian literature adapted to reflect a new focus on diversity, but as I hope to demonstrate, romantic inwardness continued to exert a significant influence. As Fee notes, from Edward Hartley Dewart's *Selections from Canadian Poets* (1864) and William Douw Lighthall's *Songs of the Great Dominion* (1889), to later government initiatives like the establishment of *The Canada Council for the Arts (*1957*)* and the Writing and Publications Program (1977),[25] literary texts have been intimately connected to the various political and aesthetic apprehensions of the Canadian settler state up to and including the present.

"The Soul of the Nation"

A main premise of this dissertation is that the aesthetic practices of romantic fiction have come to govern the politics of the settler state to the detriment of relations with Indigenous peoples. One of the ways this has occurred has been through the instrumentalization of royal

[24] In fact, the Official Languages Act formalized the primal place of the English and French languages, and by extension, their cultures, in the Canadian context.

[25] According to Brendan McCormack, "the WPP is a key context for understanding how the government has actively shaped Canada's literary culture with its policy of multiculturalism." The WPP "was not only a *parallel* funding program designed to support ethnic minority writers specifically and advance equity (fairer access to resources) within literary publishing, but also a *direct* government intervention into Canadian literary production to support and promote national multiculturalism." See McCormack, 2018.

commissions[26] in the area of social science research[27] to facilitate what Hegel refers to as "the education of the individual into the realities of the present" (*LA Vol. I* 593). In "A History of Royal Commissions," Thomas Lockwood notes that a royal commission[28] can help "prepare the way for a predetermined Government policy" (172), while acknowledging it "is probably one of the most used but least understood phenomena in Canadian history" (173). The publication of the Massey commission's report in 1951, according to Ioan Davies, "was the first time that a public document was issued inviting the Canadian public and its legislators not only to theorize about the culture, but to involve theory in practice'' (6). The use of royal commissions[29] has helped to normalize settler state interventions into the shaping of culture for the purposes of encouraging, in the words of the Massey commission, "national feeling" and "common understanding." Massey's Mandate reads:

> That it is desirable that the Canadian people should know as much as possible about their country, its history and traditions; and about their national life and common achievements; that it is in the national interest to give encouragement to institutions which express national feeling, promote common understanding and add to the variety

[26] Some examples include the Aird *Royal Commission on Radio Broadcasting* (1929), Massey-Lévesque *Royal Commission on the National Development in the Arts, Letters, & Sciences* (1951), and the O'Leary *Royal Commission on Publications* (1960). See under "Report of the Royal Commission" in Works Cited.

[27] Jane Jenson notes "It is, therefore, useful to analyse the ideas and practices of royal commissions as representative bodies of a particular sort, in which expertise – especially social science research – has occupied a major position since World War II" (40). See Jenson, 1994.

[28] According to Jenson, royal commissions "may be involved in generating new representations of history, of the present community and of available futures that both educate and may very well empower" (47-48). See Jenson, 1994.

[29] According to Lockwood, from 1956 to 1966 "over fifty commissions" (199) were operating. See Lockwood, 1967.

and richness of Canadian life, rural as well as urban. (*Report of the Royal Commission on National Development in the Arts, Letters and Sciences*, Sec 4 "Mandate")

As Druick notes, "the Massey commissioners were bound up in a set of problems that connected culture to media and education" (160). This link to pedagogy in the promotion of a "common understanding" involves what I identify as the cultivation of individuals - what Hegel calls "the education of the individual" (*LA Vol. I* 593) - into ideal or "electable" citizens through the deployment of romantic fiction. According to Jenson, royal commissions, "have often been locales for some of the major shifts in the ways that Canadians debate representations of themselves, their present and their futures. Such representations are crucial, not only to policy-making, but to politics in the largest sense because they set out the terms of who we are, where we have been and what we might become" (40).

During the 1950s and 1960s, the focus of these cultural commissions was on promoting a "national feeling"[30] and a "common understanding" predicated on the form of nationalism mentioned above that had its origins in Europe of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Herder espoused a form of "romantic nationalism" that "can be traced to the struggle for German unification" (Fee, 1987 17) at the beginning of the eighteenth century when Germany was "a masterpiece of partition, entanglement, and confusion" (in Wilson 113). Herder also feared Germany was surrendering to the foreign influences of the French in the aftermath of its revolution. Canadian writers and critics have also expressed similar views regarding connections to the landscape and a need for unity in order to distinguish Canada from the U.S. and Britain.[31]

[30] According to Jenson, royal commissions "may be involved in generating new representations of history, of the present community and of available futures that both educate and may very well empower" (48). See Jenson, 1994.

[31] As Fee notes, for example, both Atwood's *Survival* and Frye's *The Bush Garden* "are infused with Romantic nationalist critical ideas that focus on the distinctiveness of Canada, particularly its landscape" (5). See Fee, 2015.

The romantic nationalism of Herder eventually took a different shape in Canada but the emphasis on culture, and particularly literature, to express as Fee notes, "the soul of the nation" (in Lecker 4), eventually found its voice in the cultural commissions and literary movements of the 1950s and 1960s. With the aid of The Canada Council (1957) and the New Canadian Library series,[32] the royal commissions helped to foster a Canadian form of romantic nationalism. According to Friskney, "the NCL was a […] paperback series of literary reprints that gathered together works either written by Canadians or set in Canada and first issued between the eighteenth and twentieth centuries. The series had two principal architects: English professor Malcolm Ross (1911– 2002), its general editor, and Jack McClelland (1922– 2004), its publisher" (3). Lecker adds, the NLC "gave a boost to the teaching of Canadian literature in high schools and universities" (2013 16).

In 1967, however, Canada's immigration policy was changed to include a point-based evaluative system that made it easier for non-European immigrants to enter (Haque 37). This marks a break with the romantic nationalism of thematic critics and authors like Frye and Atwood who wrote as though they were explicitly addressing a singular soul, or psyche of the nation. This change in immigration policy was followed by the passage of the Official Languages Act of 1969, which institutionalized bilingualism and dispelled the notion of one language defining the nation. Finally in 1971, then Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau declared Canada's official multiculturalism policy, which shifted the focus to diversity as a defining virtue of the nation, changing romantic nationalism's hegemonic logic into a heterogenous appeal.

[32] The NCL was "[l]aunched on 17 January 1958" (3). See Friskney, 2007.

New Categories

According to Roberts, when Michael Ondaatje won a Governor General's Award in 1970 for *The Collected Works of Billy the Kid,* it was regarded as "a text so difficult to categorize that a new category – 'Prose and Poetry' – was invented to celebrate it" (Roberts, 2011 24). As a literary embodiment of the new era, *Billy the Kid* is a Canadian text without reference to anything remotely Canadian. With the official recognition of *Billy the Kid*, the literary nationalism of place was obliterated. In this moment, the political and aesthetic planes were coming together to dismiss overt romantic nationalism as "ill-suited to the heterogeneity of Canadian life" (Kertzer 161). Literary texts like *Billy the Kid* responded to multiculturalism by appealing to diversity in order to capture a new "soul of the nation." However, this diversity would appear to be limited in scope and remain beholden to the same Eurocentric preferences of the previous era. According to Lecker, nationalism during this transition was "displaced into realism":

> mimesis is a displaced formal equivalent of nationalism. It is a mode of bearing witness to the country. It is also the mode that allows people to see themselves as members of a community: the literature reflects them to themselves. Mimesis is the means by which critics affirm that the subject of their inquiry is real. The tendency of critics and teachers is to support mimesis at the expense of the experimental, the marginal, the postmodern, the self-reflexive. One answer to the question "Where is nationalism hiding in Canadian literature?" is that it is not hiding; it has only been displaced into realism. (5)

This mimesis, or reproduction of reality, turns out to be such a thorough replica that it includes not only the visible contours of a particular reality, but also the foundational

assumptions of a perceived reality. Lecker is suggesting that this form of mimesis reproduces values which were present during the earlier era that preceded 1971, such as those I identify as romantic inwardness. Mark Rifkin calls these unconscious assumptions and values "settler common sense," which refers to a "set of sensations" generated by "institutionalized relations of settlement, such as law and policy" (2014 xv). He continues, "By this phrase, I mean to suggest the ways the legal and political structures that enable non-native access to Indigenous territories come to be lived as given, as simply the unmarked, generic conditions of possibility for occupancy, association, history, and personhood" (xvi). If this concept is included in Lecker's argument for realism as nationalism, it helps me explain how the political and aesthetic planes operate to reinforce the Canadian settler romance, which I will demonstrate in the following section. Romantic inwardness has not only been displaced into a form of realism - it has also been naturalized into the settler *sensus communis*.

Multicultural Reconciliation

While the significant role literary texts have played in the unfolding project of Canada is well documented,[33] what is less familiar is the way romantic inwardness operates on both aesthetic and political planes. What follows is an analysis of two excerpts from speeches delivered by two former prime ministers, Pierre Trudeau and Stephen Harper, addressing multiculturalism and Reconciliation, respectively. As I will attempt to show, both adhere to romantic inwardness in their attempts to appeal to their national audience. The first excerpt, by then Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau on 8 October 1971, announces official multiculturalism policy within a bilingual framework. Trudeau valorizes individual rights at the expense of collective rights in order to accommodate cultural groups other than the English and French.

[33] See Imre Szeman, 2003; Robert Lecker, 2013; Margery Fee, 2015, to name only a few.

According to Trudeau:

> The individual's freedom would be hampered if he were locked for life within a particular cultural compartment by the accident of birth or language. It is vital, therefore, that every Canadian, whatever his ethnic origin, be given a chance to learn at least one of the two languages in which his country conducts its official business and its politics. A policy of multiculturalism within a bilingual framework commends itself to the government as the most suitable means of assuring the cultural freedom of Canadians. Such a policy should help to break down discriminatory attitudes and cultural jealousies. (Canada, *Debates*, 28th Parliament, 3rd Session 1971)

Official Multiculturalism grants the English and French collective rights and they are the beneficiaries of multiculturalism through the implementation of bilingualism. For other groups, multiculturalism decouples language from culture and formalizes an apolitical mode of inclusion through a narrow definition of "cultural freedom." Trudeau continues:

> National unity if it is to mean anything in the deeply personal sense, must be founded on the confidence in one's own individual identity; out of this can grow respect for that of others and a willingness to share ideas, attitudes and assumptions. A vigorous policy of multiculturalism will help create this initial confidence. It can form the base of a society which is based on fair play for all. (Canada, *Debates*, 28th Parliament, 3rd Session 1971)

Official Multiculturalism offers "a deeply personal" connection to the settler state. This deeply personal connection is an example of romantic inwardness in the political sphere. Trudeau's emphasis on "one's own individual identity" spells out the code of conduct based on a

person's quest for fulfillment. The end result is the status of one of the elect at home on native land, the prize of equal citizenship within the settler project.

When then Prime Mister Stephen Harper's apology[34] for residential schools delivered in Parliament on 11 June 2008 is examined a similar pattern emerges:

> I stand before you today to offer an apology to former students of Indian residential schools. The treatment of children in these schools is a sad chapter in our history. For more than a century, Indian residential schools separated over 150,000 aboriginal children from their families and communities. In the 1870s, the federal government, partly in order to meet its obligations to educate aboriginal children, began to play a role in the development and administration of these schools. (Canada, *Debates,* 39th Parliament, 2nd Session, 2008)

The above apology accompanied the Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement that initiated the TRC. As an apology it is based on a personal appeal, a defining characteristic of romantic inwardness.[35] As Mackey notes, it is also "cultural":

> the government's wrongdoing here becomes framed as apologizable because it is constructed as profoundly *cultural*. According to the apology,

[34] As Pauline Wakeham notes, "In Canada […] the government's recent slate of apologies for the internment and forced relocation of Japanese Canadians during the Second World War, the Chinese head tax, and the residential schools system have all attempted to contain discussion of grievances to discrete, historically delimited policies in an effort to evade recognition of the systemic and ongoing racism and colonial genocide that enabled them. Thus, in the process of purportedly acknowledging these grievances, the federal government labours to depict them as exceptions to the imagined norm of Canadian civility." She adds, "the accumulation of redress claims in the contemporary era begs the question as to why, if Canada is indeed such a civil society, does it have so much to apologize for" (279-280). See Wakeham, 2013.

[35] While Matt James (2006) and Pauline Wakeham (2013) regard "the recognition of collectivities rather than individual bearers of rights" as one of the "defining norms" of "Canada's culture of redress" (Wakeham, 288), I would add that as an affective "speech-act" (Tavuchis, 1991 34), an apology is also personal and inward-focused. As Mackey notes about Harper's 2008 apology, "The structure is perhaps akin to a Catholic confession: the words, and the action of speaking the words, enacting an immense transformation in the individual, and in power relations between parties" (See Mackey, 2013 49).

> the transgression or wrong was based on ignorance and misunderstanding of the value of Aboriginal cultures and was a result of a well-meaning sense of duty and responsibility to care for Aboriginal people. In addition, these violations of culture are seen as the result of wrongful *attitudes*, not the social and political processes of colonial violence. (2013 54)

Harper's statement makes no reference to land, territory, or treaty (Mackey 53), and addresses Indigenous peoples as one of many cultural groups dependent on Canada for its sustenance. This colonial framing adheres to the romance objective of imagining settlers on native land by dispossessing Indigenous peoples of their claims for distinct status. According to Mackey, "the erasure of links between residential schools and the larger land theft process allows the apology to be appropriated into the kind of unifying and future-looking discourse we see here because it does not require Canada or Canadians to account for the ways that intersecting processes of colonial theft of land and cultural genocide are the foundations of the modern nation-state, or to recognize that non-Aboriginal Canadians are all contemporary beneficiaries of this process" (50). Harper continues:

> The government recognizes that the absence of an apology has been an impediment to healing and reconciliation. Therefore, on behalf of the Government of Canada and all Canadians, I stand before you, in this chamber so central to our life as a country, to apologize to aboriginal peoples for Canada's role in the Indian residential schools system. (Canada, *Debates,* 39th Parliament, 2nd Session, 2008)

The apology is framed as an event of such importance that its absence alone would prevent the flourishing of Indigenous peoples. While I do not intend to disparage the significance of such acts of regret, it bears noting that Harper is at the same time acknowledging his

government's authority over Indigenous peoples. Harper's act is designed to reflect well on him, and as Mackey notes, it appears closer to "a Catholic confession" (2013 49).[36] Moreover, his apology is individualized not only through its affective appeal to feelings of personal forgiveness, but also through its offer of monetary compensation in the form of the residential schools settlement agreement. As Jennifer Henderson notes, "from the point of view of the state – financial reparations for residential schooling can be individualized and contained in a way that land claims cannot" (67). As a result, "Residential schooling can operate as a synecdoche for colonialism" (67). This contains the wrong to the past, cutting it off from ongoing colonial practices in the present, while also circumscribing the abuse to one reparable area. The inward appeal of Reconciliation and "individualized" payments ultimately leave the fundamental conditions of colonialism intact.

What these speeches from two different time periods reveal is the prevalence of romantic inwardness and its believed persuasive force on both aesthetic and political planes within the broader Canadian context. Both are inward appeals, first to identity formation in Trudeau's case and then forgiveness in Harper's; both emphasize the individual and the cultural rather than collective political engagement, and both rely on the dispossession of Indigenous claims to achieve their nationalist aims. In "Chapter One: Reconciled Universalism: Michael Ondaatje's *In the Skin of a Lion*, *The English Patient*, and *Anil's Ghost*," the experiences of Patrick Lewis from *In the Skin of a Lion*, follow a similar pattern. After almost losing his life while engaging in radical politics, he is eventually redeemed though the inward forgiveness of Rowland Harris to pursue a life of domestic contentment at home in a "green garden" (243) devoid of any

[36] According to Michel Foucault, apology, like confession, is "a ritual in which the expression alone, independently of its external consequences, produces intrinsic modifications in the person who articulates it: it exonerates, redeems and purifies him; it unburdens him of his wrongs, liberates him, and promises him salvation" (62). See Foucault, 1978.

Indigenous claims to the land. The link between Trudeau and Harper's speeches and the fictional character of Patrick Lewis helps illustrate how both the political and aesthetic planes can complement each other within the Canadian context. Perhaps if I now outline some of the outcomes inwardness has yielded, it will be possible to make the case for the importance of demystifying its appeal.

Colonial Violence

> In *Refuse: Canlit In Ruins* (2018), Hannah McGregor, Julie Rak, and Erin Wunker argue:
>
> At the heart of CanLit as a formation is colonial violence. That violence is what keeps CanLit supposedly open to Indigenous ways of knowing and making knowledge, but in fact closed to anything that would actively dismantle the innate moral authority assumed by its practitioners. In this sense, CanLit *is* the nation. It articulates the nation to itself and repeats the strategy of inclusion as a way to incorporate opposition into its ideology. (2018 21)

I share this concern with the role literary texts have played in "colonial violence" and my intervention is to propose a reading method that identifies the valourization of Hegel's notion of romantic fiction as a heretofore neglected phenomenon. I hope to participate in what George Ciccariello-Maher calls, "decolonizing dialectics" (6). He writes, "a decolonized dialectics sets out from the historical experience of those who have been instructed to either catch up with Europe by completing the necessary 'stages' or to await 'objective conditions' that are possible only under a full-edged capitalism" (11). Within an aesthetic context, to "catch up" involves conforming to the tenets of romantic inwardness. By attempting to set out "from the historical experience" of the colonized, I hope to contest such "cognitive imperialisms" (Leanne Betasamosake Simpson, 2016 19) as romantic inwardness and encourage the decolonization of

the settler state's received aesthetic practices through an awareness of their pervasiveness.

Dismantling, or decolonizing such a "moral authority" as CanLit (*Refuse* 21) is a task that according to Fanon, "sets out to change the order of the world":

> Decolonization, which sets out to change the order of the world, is clearly an agenda for total disorder. But it cannot be accomplished by the wave of a magic wand, a natural cataclysm, or a gentleman's agreement. Decolonization, we know, is an historical process: In other words, it can only be understood, it can only find its significance and become self coherent insofar as we can discern the history making movement which gives it form and substance." (2 2004)

Despite the challenges of creating "total disorder," a "history-making movement" is crucial for accomplishing concrete change, something romantic fiction is incapable of achieving. I acknowledge "There is a long and bumbled history of non-Indigenous peoples making moves to alleviate the impacts of colonization" (Tuck & Wang 3). Exhortations to "Indigenize" [37] the academy, or a focus on an Indigenous Literary Nationalism that, according to Keavy Martin, "rephrases Indigenous traditions in terms that the academy can recognize and engage with" (Fagan et al., 2012 45),[38] have exposed the challenges of such efforts.[39] I hope to avoid "the ease with which the language of decolonization has been superficially adopted" (Tuck & Wang 2) and agree with Tuck and Wang about "what decolonization is not":

> It is not converting Indigenous politics to a Western doctrine of liberation; it is not a

[37] See Len Findlay, "Always Indigenize! The Radical Humanities in the Postcolonial Canadian University," 2000.

[38] See Fagan et al., "Canadian Indian Literary Nationalism? Critical Approaches in Canadian Indigenous Contexts - A Collaborative Interlogue," 2012.

[39] On the challenges of "Indigenizing the academy," see Alfred, "Warrior Scholarship: Seeing the University as a Ground of Contention," 2004. See also Braz, "Minus Literature: the Curious Canonisation of Len Findlay's 'Always Indigenize!,'" 2015.

> philanthropic process of "helping" the at-risk and alleviating suffering; it is not a generic term for struggle against oppressive conditions and outcomes. The broad umbrella of social justice may have room underneath for all of these efforts. By contrast, decolonization specifically requires the repatriation of Indigenous land and life. Decolonization is not a metonym for social justice. (21)

Formulating decolonization as something other than "a metonym for social justice" strips it of political bias and reconfigures it as an improvement to the apparatus of state. As mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, I regard myself as a non-Indigenous, unsettled scholar and view my role as enabling alternative conceptions of justice to flourish in order to improve the current context in which CanLit has operated. I adapt this term from Rita Wong's 2015 poetry collection, *undercurrent,* to situate myself as someone who views the current legal and epistemological arrangements between the settler government and Indigenous peoples as unsettled. As Lai and Wong state:

> Canadian citizens are born into a state where they are expected to be complicit with the violent history of colonialism, but many people refuse that dehumanizing and unethical position. To take personal-political responsibility in such a context means [...] educating yourself about the history of where you live [and] working as an ally to support decolonizing and reindigenizing efforts, understanding that this is not only a responsibility but also a viable and desirable path to a future that materializes peace and justice, act by act, relationship by relationship, place by place, working from the ground on which we live, work, dream and play. (Lai and Wong, 2014)

I believe one of the most effective ways an English PhD dissertation can further the goals of decolonization at this moment is to interrogate the theoretical assumptions such as romantic

inwardness that shape the politics of the settler state within the context of Indigenous dispossession.

Chapter 1

Reconciled Universalism: Michael Ondaatje's *In the Skin of a Lion, The English Patient, & Anil's Ghost*

In this chapter, I suggest that three of Michael Ondaatje's novels - *In the Skin of a Lion* (1987), *The English Patient* (1992), *Anil's Ghost* (2000) – embody an aesthetic that prioritizes the romance mode by modeling characters who retreat from the social world into deep feeling. I have chosen these texts because as Gillian Roberts notes "three of [Ondaatje's] prize-winning novels – *In the Skin of a Lion, The English Patient,* and *Anil's Ghost* – focus on issues of citizenship, habitation and nation, and cosmopolitanism" (54). These attributes reflect elements of the romance mode for the purposes of my project. Questions involving citizenship and nation, for example, touch on the ideal of electability, or those subjects who meet the requirements of citizenship, while cosmopolitanism can refer to the universalism of the romance mode.

I identify how Ondaatje's texts correspond to the romance mode through Hegel's conception of romantic fiction, which facilitates the "education" of an ideal citizen by preparing them for "realities of the present" (*LA Vol. I* 593). The title of this chapter, "Reconciled-Universalism," denotes the acceptance of romantic fiction's version of an apolitical universalism for the "realities of the present." Ideal citizenship, for the purposes of my project, consists of four main characteristics or virtues - individualism, a preference for cultural rather than political engagement, inwardness, and electability. As I will demonstrate, citizenship is based on achieving the elect status of a settler/immigrant transformed into an indigene[40] on native land

[40] I define "indigene" in this context as a settler who consciously or unconsciously self-identifies as a naturalized inhabitant of the Canadian settler state to the point where they view possession of Indigenous lands as an inevitable outcome of history.

through the dispossession of Indigenous peoples. The texts of this chapter establish how the romance mode normalizes romantic inwardness and an aversion for political engagement as reflections of a natural universal order.

To facilitate my analysis of these three texts published in 1987, 1992, and 2000, respectively,[41] I have periodized them into four stages, or eras: Multicultural Transformation (1963-1971), Multicultural Nationalism (1971-1988), Post-national Multiculturalism (1988-1998), and Multicultural Reconciliation (1998-present).

Four Stages

Although my project involves the time period from 1963 when the *Bilingualism and Biculturalism Commission* was established to the present aftermath of the TRC, all the texts I have assembled have been published between 1987 and 2013. During this era the settler state in English Canada attempted to transition from an Anglo-centric national identity[42] to one that purports to celebrate what Prime Minister Lester Pearson once referred to as "unity in diversity" (in Haque 141). What is notable about this history of English-Canada is that despite explicit efforts to foreground diversity since 1971 - when multiculturalism became state policy - the fundamental attributes that characterized the Anglo-centric era of previous years remain largely intact when it comes to literary texts.[43] What these seemingly different eras share is a commitment to cultivating individuals to be "Canadianized" into ideal citizens through a process

[41] My focus in on the contexts of when they were published, not on the eras or settings they strive to represent.

[42] As Eve Haque notes, "multiculturalism was also understood to be a threat to social cohesion and pan-Canadian identity, be that a singular Anglo-centric or a bicultural Canadian identity, and also as a compromise to the Canadian dualism seen to be a bulwark against the United States" (116). See Haque, 2012.

[43] Smaro Kamboureli notes, "the 'face' of mainstream Canadian literature may have changed irrevocably, but the intricate and hard questions raised by the politics of difference and representation persist" (xiii). See Kamboureli, 2007. Roy Miki pointed out in 1998, "CanLit is often 'still narrated through the historical projectile of (white) Anglo-European 'settler' culture'" (in Fee 11). See Fee, 2015.

that includes romantic inwardness. While the texts' subject matter in some cases extends before this time frame (see *The Orenda*, for example), the period parallels the two main government initiatives of multiculturalism and Reconciliation. The theoretical assumptions that shape both initiatives express a uniquely Canadian variant of the romance mode. I identify four stages[44] under the current regime of difference and belonging for the purposes of my dissertation:[45]

1) Multicultural Transformation (1963-1971) – the stage when the settler state was shifting to a multicultural nation. This period includes:

- 1967 Changes to Immigration Policy
- 1969 Official Languages Act
- 1971 Official Multiculturalism Policy

This period precedes the texts of my project and includes the role royal commissions have played in the development of Canadian nationalism, as detailed in my introduction under the heading, *"The Soul of a Nation."*

2) Multicultural Nationalism (1971-1988) – the stage when the settler state was consolidating "unity in diversity" within Canada. This period includes:

- 1977 Writing and Publications Program
- 1982 Constitution Act
- 1988 Multiculturalism Act

[44] I recognize that these delineations are porous and reflect the concatenations of various government policy developments over a fifty-year period.

[45] According to Laura Moss, there is a "dynamism to multiculturalism" (36), which has created "shifting versions" (37) over the years. She adds, "It is particularly important to recognize that in Canada multiculturalism is not (or not solely) a smokescreen of multiplicity, a way to discuss issues of race, or a theory of liberalism and the need for social tolerance […]. For forty years, multiculturalism has been a policy, for over a quarter century it has been enshrined in the Constitution and in the 1984 *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*, and since the passing of the *Multiculturalism Act* in 1988, it has been a law" (38). See Moss, 2011.

This stage includes Ondaatje's *In the Skin of a Lion* published in 1987. This is a period when the settler state codified Multiculturalism into law. According to Brendan McCormack, the Writing and Publications Program "was not only a *parallel* funding program designed to support ethnic minority writers specifically and advance equity (fairer access to resources) within literary publishing, but also a *direct* government intervention into Canadian literary production to support and promote national multiculturalism" (McCormack, 2018). This "government intervention" into "literary production" supports my contention that the political and aesthetic planes in Canada overlap.

3) Post-national Multiculturalism (1988-1998) – the stage when multiculturalism became internationalized in response to global influences. This period includes:

- 1988 Japanese Canadian Redress Agreement
- 1994 The North American Free Trade Agreement
- 1996 The Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples

This period includes three texts – Ondaatje's *The English Patient*, Wah's *Diamond Grill,* and Mistry's *A Fine Balance*. During this period, as Pauline Wakeham notes, "the federal government labour[ed] to depict" events like the Japanese internment and Chinese head tax "as exceptions to the imagined norm of Canadian civility" (2013 279-280). The NAFTA agreement signaled a stage of cosmopolitan multiculturalism, while the redress movement eventually included Indigenous peoples in the aftermath of the 1990 Kanehsatà:ke Resistance,[46] which brought about *The Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples* (RCAP). By 1996, the RCAP stated:

[46] See *This Is an Honour Song: Twenty Years Since the Blockades: An Anthology of Writing on the "Oka Crisis",* edited by Leanne Simpson and Kiera L. Ladner, 2010.

> From an Aboriginal treaty perspective, European rights in the Americas […] did not derive legitimately from international law precepts such as the doctrine of discovery or from European political and legal traditions. Rather, the historical basis of such rights came about through treaties made with Aboriginal nations. In this view, the terms of the treaties define the rights and responsibilities of both parties.[…] Canadians generally can equally be considered participants in the treaty process. (*The Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples* vol. 1 120)

These efforts paved the way for the eventual establishment of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

4) Multicultural Reconciliation (1998-present) – the stage when multicultural recognition led to Reconciliation in response to the conclusions of the RCAP and the focus turned to the status of Indigenous peoples. This period includes:

- 1998 Statement of Reconciliation to residential school survivors
- 2008 Prime Minister Harper's Statement of Apology to former students of Indian Residential Schools
- 2015 The Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Final Report

This period includes Ondaatje's *Anil's Ghost*, Robinson's *Monkey Beach,* and Boyden's *The Orenda*. As noted in the introduction, this period emerges out of multiculturalism in which "the discourse of *recognition* provides the ready frame in terms of which reconciliation might be conceived" (Schaap, 2004 523). As a result, it strives to maintain the authority of the settler state while seeking to reconcile with Indigenous peoples.

I introduce these stages to demonstrate how romantic inwardness has adapted to different historical eras. The first stage was focused on alleviating French tensions in Quebec and opening up immigration beyond Western Europe. The second stage adapted to include the *Bilingualism and Biculturalism Commission* by consolidating multiculturalism's mandate for diversity. Stage three adapted to the collapse of the Soviet Union and transnational free trade deals like NAFTA by positing Canada, according to former Prime Minister Jean Chrétien, as "a post-national, multicultural society" containing "the globe within its borders" (in Moss 2011 39**)**. Stage four is when multiculturalism turned into Reconciliation in an attempt to resolve long-standing issues of colonial violence. These different stages are characterized by romantic inwardness whether it be the policies of multiculturalism or Reconciliation, or the texts of my project.

Ondaatje's texts in this chapter demonstrate the versatility and portability of the romance mode over a thirteen-year period from 1987 to 2000, a time that spans the globe from southern Ontario to Florence, Italy to Colombo, Sri Lanka. As a result, these novels help confirm that a Canadian version of romantic fiction operates in a variety of contexts. I begin with *In the Skin of a Lion* in which the main character, Patrick Lewis, gives up radical politics and finds meaning in a life of contented domesticity. It is set within the Canadian settler context and enables a discussion of Indigenous dispossession without directly referring to Indigenous peoples, which I address in the "Conclusion" of this dissertation. This is followed by *The English Patient,* where the politics of the Second World War force the character, Kirpal Singh (Kip), to retreat into deep feeling, resigned to a life without his love, Hana, and a life he longed for in the West. Kip is a reminder that the romance need not always end happily as long as it upholds the dominant views of the context in which it was written. I conclude with *Anil's Ghost* in which Ananda Udugama, a widower, finds refuge from the conflict in a religious ritual. *In the Skin of a Lion* and *The*

English Patient track closer to the romance mode with an emphasis on the conventions of the grail quest, while *Anil's Ghost* presents electability in the character of Ananda who serves as a model subject in the era of Reconciliation by opting for a cultural resolution to the political dilemma of the text's civil war.

"A Model of Modern Canada"

Ondaatje's oeuvre tracks the development of contemporary Canadian literature during all the stages I have identified, beginning with the first, Multicultural Transformation, through to the fourth, Multicultural Reconciliation. His first notable text, *The Collected Works of Billy the Kid,* won the 1970 Governor General's Award in the newly created category of "Prose and Poetry" because it was "so difficult to categorize" (Roberts 24). This signals the new standard Ondaatje represented as a multicultural author within the context of Canadian literature. At the time, the award for *Billy the Kid* "attracted some controversy precisely because of a perceived failure by Ondaatje to represent Canada" (80), with a former prime minister, John Diefenbaker, condemning "the language of the book" as "atrocious" (80). He also objected to Ondaatje's subject matter. According to Jewinski, Diefenbaker "complained about the inappropriateness of giving a Canadian prize - the Governor General's Award - to a writer who dealt with an American subject" (Jewinski 83). Ondaatje's win would not be the last time that the award would go to a novel that on the surface appeared to have nothing to do with Canada. In 1997 the Governor General's Award went to *A Fine Balance,* which, as will be seen in "Chapter Three," is set entirely in India.

Since then, however, Ondaatje has been heralded as a "perfect model of modern Canada"[47] (in Roberts, 2011 3) by the *Toronto Star* editorial board. However, according to

[47] See "Editorial: Ondaatje's Honor," *The Toronto Star*, 1992.

Roberts, "This editorial illustrates the intersection of national and literary interests" (3) and it naturalizes "Ondaatje's Canadianness as a personal development, rather than a legal question" (4). This perspective is consistent with the prevalence of romantic inwardness which naturalizes Ondaatje's citizenship as an element of personal character rather than an issue of law.

Genre occupies much of the early Ondaatje criticism, specifically concerning how to situate his texts. For Linda Hutcheon in 1988, Ondaatje writes "historio-graphic metafiction" (84), while Stephen Scobie writing in 1994 suggests all Ondaatje's "'novels' may be described as poetic novels" (92). Smaro Kamboureli writes that *Running in the Family* (1982) "deliberately postpones the naming of its genre" (1988 79), while for George Bowering, Ondaatje "is playing with genres (forms made by others) to invent something his own" (1999 36). In 1982, Margaret Atwood wrote in *The New Oxford Book of Canadian Verse in English*, Ondaatje "evades categorization, but his exotic imagery and violent mini-plots have gained him a reputation as one of the most vital and inventive of the younger poets" (xxxviii). While the above authors are generally supportive of Ondaatje's style, they are writing in a context during the nineteen-seventies and eighties when poststructuralism was foregrounding genre as an extension of what Jacques Derrida calls, "'*physis*" (56), or "part of nature" and "*technè,*" or "of the arts" (58).[48] At stake was whether generic conventions were naturalized forms that reflected a universal consensus, or whether they were constructs that were liable to change depending on particular contingencies. Ondaatje's work seems to have been serving as a proxy for this question in the Canadian context. Hutcheon also suggests Ondaatje represents a long-standing tradition of multiculturalism in Canada. She concludes that he is "as *defining* of what is Canadian as the

[48] See Jacques Derrida, "The Law of Genre," 1980.

Atwoods or the Findleys have ever been" (1996 13).[49] Arun Mukherjee has argued that Ondaatje's "universalist poetic" dismisses the politics of his postcolonial identity. She proposes Ondaatje's success has been won "though a sacrifice of his regionality, his past, and most importantly, his experience of otherness in Canada" (1994 113). These contrasting views over Ondaatje's identity reveal how individuals who are perceived as non-white, who are racialized as purveyors of the "exotic" (Atwood xxxviii), have been received within the settler state; they have often been subjected to scrutiny over the legitimacy of their claims.

Referring to *In the Skin of a Lion*, Ondaatje told Catherine Bush in 1990, "I think reclaiming untold stories is an essential role for the writer […]. One of the things a novel can do is represent the unofficial story" (96). While Ondaatje attempts to channel the unofficial histories as opposed to "official histories" (*In the Skin of a Lion* 145) of the unnamed immigrant workers responsible for building public works like Toronto's Bloor Street Viaduct, the novel has provoked criticism that it suppresses politics in favour of aesthetic preoccupations. Frank Davey, for example, argues the novel "reinforces the narrative's emphasis on individual action and mistrust of collective politics" (150). In fact, all three novels end with characters who opt to address their own concerns rather then those of the larger community. Patrick turns away from politics to commit himself to a family life; Kip retreats from the social engagement that propelled him to Europe and returns to India to become a doctor and raise a family; and Ananda finds fulfillment in the solitude of a religious ritual. For Glen Lowry, *In the Skin of a Lion* perpetuates the notion of "'race' blindness" (62) and "the assumption that 'whiteness' signifies some kind of neutral position" (69). The "neutral position" of "whiteness" connects the novel to

[49] Hutcheon also adds other authors, "the Kogawas, Ondaatjes, Bissoondaths, Mistrys, and Riccis in their very diversity have been - and are becoming - as defining of what is Canadian as the Atwoods or the Findleys have ever been" (13). See Hutcheon, 1996.

the tradition of romantic inwardness emanating from Western Europe. According to Julie Beddoes, the novel may be set in the early twentieth century, but "it is an artifact of the 1980s" (204). Indeed, the novel conveys the preoccupations of its time of publication in 1987 such as multiculturalism, immigration, and a neglect of Indigenous peoples or their issues. The novel's "emphasis on individual action" and "race blindness" stem from the romance mode, which prioritizes the individual and dismisses race as a potential obstacle in its appeal to universalism, as discussed previously on pages 6-7.

While *In the Skin of a Lion* failed to win the Governor General's Award, as Roberts notes, "Ondaatje was honoured in a different manner by the federal government when he received the Order of Canada in 1988" (80). She writes:

> The Governor General's office describes the Order of Canada as "recogniz[ing] people who have made a difference to our country. From local citizens to national and international personalities, all Canadians are eligible for the Order of Canada – our country's highest honour for lifetime achievement." In the absence of the Governor General's Award, then, Ondaatje was nevertheless granted the state's "highest honour." (80)

Roberts continues:

> Having "made a difference" to Canada, it is clear that from the state's perspective, Ondaatje plays an integral role in Canadian culture, as indicated by his entry in the Order of Canada files: "One of Canada's most successful experimental writers, [whose] work blends the factual and the imaginary in poetry and prose and is extraordinarily visual, which accounts for his interest in film as a complement to literature. But he is first and foremost a poet whose talent is recognized throughout the English-speaking world"

("Michael Ondaatje" n.p.). Ondaatje received the Order of Canada because of his success as a writer, and not only his national but also his international recognition. Part of his role as a Canadian cultural figure depends upon this external validation, his representative status for Canadian culture within an international circulation. (80)

As a result, Ondaatje represents the diversity the nation desires in its elect citizens.

In the Skin of a Lion

In the Skin of a Lion consists of three "Books," comprised of three subsections for Book One, and two each for Book Two and Book Three. The text's omniscient point of view centers on the perspectives of three main male characters: Patrick Lewis, a Canadian settler, Nicholas Temelcoff, a "daredevil" (34) immigrant from Macedonia, and David Caravaggio, a thief of Italian descent. Two women also feature prominently: Clara Dickens is a radio actress described by Patrick as "'the perfect woman'" (61), and Alice Gull is a former nun who becomes a stage actress after nearly falling to her death from Toronto's Prince Edward Viaduct. For Patrick, Alice is an oblique mystery who "reveals no past" and "remains sourceless" (74). Clara, her name Latin for "clear," or "blank," is apolitical and is more accessible that Alice, enabling Patrick to resume a relationship with her near the end of the text. Both women are friends and engage in affairs with Patrick, while millionaire Ambrose Small, described as a personification of "blatant capitalism" (59), and "Commissioner of Public Works" (29), Rowland Harris, operate as foils playing pivotal background roles.

The novel is set in southern Ontario from the late nineteenth century to the early twentieth century. It follows Patrick's life from a boy to a man as he leaves his rural homestead near Kingston for Toronto. He soon obtains work as a "searcher" (59) pursuing the whereabouts of missing millionaire, Small, and meets Clara and Alice. After Alice dies in a tragic accident,

Patrick works in a series of menial jobs and attempts to emulate Alice's radical politics. After he sets fire to the Muskoka Hotel he is imprisoned for four years where he befriends Caravaggio. Upon his release, he returns to Toronto to bomb the city's new filtration plant with Caravaggio's help, but once inside Commissioner Harris deters him. The novel concludes with Patrick redeemed and pursuing a private domestic life with his former lover, Clara, and Alice's daughter, Hana.

The text takes place during a period that coincides with Clifford Sifton's tenure, the Canadian Interior Minister who was responsible for a large influx of immigration into Canada from Central Europe.[50] Rather than a working-class theme, the novel valourizes a European immigration or settler narrative that centers whiteness, while focusing on the establishment of Canada's largest city, Toronto. This cultural theme overtakes the political or economic concerns represented by individuals like Alice and Cato, her union organizing husband, who is murdered in an extrajudicial killing.

Terra Nullius

A significant feature of *In the Skin of a Lion* is its disappearance of Indigenous peoples. This orientation aligns with the Massey Report's assessment of "Indian arts":

> since the death of true Indian arts is inevitable, Indians should not be encouraged to prolong the existence of arts which at best must be artificial and at worst are degenerate. It is argued that Indian arts emerged naturally from that combination of religious practices and economic and social customs which constituted the culture of the tribe and the region. The impact of the white man with his more

[50] Sifton, the author of Canada's first Immigration Act, was Interior Minister from 1896-1905. According to Wayland, "Sifton's recruitment of central European peasants was not popular with the Canadian public, but he did try to keep the prairies white. For example, although no law was passed to exclude American blacks, they were not encouraged to come and their applications were usually rejected" (36) See Wayland, 1997.

> advanced civilization and his infinitely superior techniques resulted in the gradual destruction of the Indian way of life. The Indian arts thus survive only as ghosts or shadows of a dead society. They can never, it is said, regain real form or substance. Indians with creative talent should therefore develop it as other Canadians do, and should receive every encouragement for this purpose; but Indian art as such cannot be revived. (Massey, Ch. XV., 240 4)

The bleak assessment of "Indian arts" is consistent with assumptions regarding the eradication of Indigenous cultures seen with other settler state initiatives such as the Indian Act of 1876 and the 1969 White Paper. Moreover, the legal and philosophical assumptions of the settler state have resulted in the dispossession of Indigenous lands as seen in the doctrine of *terra nullius*. *In the Skin of a Lion* transforms the land into a "countryside […] unbetrayed" (3) to conjure castles and fairytales regardless of the Wendat, Anishinaabe, and Haudenosaunee/Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation Treaty Territory who actually claim the land. The text exemplifies the assumptions of entitlement that shape the outmoded notion of *terra nullius.* The novel's erasure of Indigenous peoples resembles what Frye identifies as a "child-like" search for "some kind of imaginative golden age" (1969 186) where Indigenous land claims do not exist. While the settler state frames colonialism as an event in the past subject to forgiveness in the present, *In the Skin of a Lion* frames this story of European immigration to English Canada as a golden era when grand public works miraculously appeared across the landscape regardless of Indigenous possession. The Prince Edward Viaduct "goes up in a dream" (*In the Skin of a Lion* 26) and its workers are "part of the fairy tale" (39). The text's focus on the immigrant/settler experience erases Indigenous claims and situates settlers as the founding peoples of a Canada located on land previously unclaimed by anyone. The crucial question of

"who owns the land?" is made redundant and the assumption that *terra nullius* is available for settlement is sustained. Indigenous presence persists everywhere in the form of the land, but the text is silent about it. Ultimately, the subject of Indigenous peoples and Indigenous land is a topic the text avoids.

John Borrows writes, "Canadian law still has *terra nullius* written all over it" (702). It forms the basis for the discovery doctrine first promulgated by Chief Justice John Marshall in 1823, which declares "lands to be legally empty, allowing European law to control Indigenous peoples" (702).[51] According to Bracken, with the stroke of a pen, Marshall invented a new way of acquiring territory: "Discovery […] gave the discovering nation ultimate title and the 'exclusive right' to acquire the land from its occupants" (2004 14). As Audra Simpson argues, settler states are "structured by Indigenous dispossession" (2014) and this dispossession is aided by *In the Skin of a Lion*'s reproduction of the story that land is available in abundance for European settlement.[52] The romance mode requires land on which to stage such desires as romantic inwardness and the assumption of *terra nullius* is an essential prerequisite for this performance.

The text's claim to land ownership relies on Western assumptions. While Patrick as a child watches the "strangers" who we later learn are new immigrant labourers, he observes, "[t]hey do not own this land as the owner of the cows does" (*Lion* 7). Land possession is framed in terms of private ownership expressing the logic from John Locke's *Second Treatise of*

[51] As Robert Williams notes, in the landmark U.S. Supreme Court case, *Johnson v. McIntosh* (1823), Chief Justice John Marshall "drew on the history of European colonization of America to support the universality of the principles behind the Doctrine of Discovery" to reaffirm "the principle that discovery of infidel-held territories by the agents of a Christian monarch vested superior rights of title in the Crown" (314). See Williams, 1990.

[52] As Patrick Wolfe argues, "Territoriality is settler colonialism's specific, irreducible element" (388). See Wolfe, 2006.

Government explaining a legitimate claim to land. It reproduces and extends his labour theory of property for appropriating land that reinforces a settler *sensus communis* at the expense of Indigenous claims:[53]

> God gave the world to men in common, but since He gave it them for their benefit and the greatest conveniences of life they were capable to draw from it, it cannot be supposed He meant it should always remain common and uncultivated. He gave it to the use of the industrious and rational (and labour was to be his title to it). (Sec. 34 21) [54]

In the Skin of a Lion helps to naturalize the disappearing of Indigenous presence as a component of the settler *sensus communis* in order to acquire land for its own story based on the romance mode that informs romantic fiction.

Romance Conventions

In the Skin of the Lion opens in winter, a romance convention associated with "darkness, confusion, sterility, moribund life" (Frye 1969 187-188). Patrick is a young boy living alone with his father, Hazen, "an abashed man, withdrawn from the world around him, uninterested in the habits of civilization outside his own focus" (*Lion* 15). The whereabouts of Patrick's mother is unknown, and the setting therefore lacks "the union of male and female" that prevents "the victory of fertility over the waste land" (Frye 193). The implication is that the setting is in need of something or someone in order to fulfill its potential. This challenge is resolved at the end of the novel when the union between Clara and Patrick is realized.

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[53] Alternatively, notes Alfred, "The land was created by a power outside of human beings, and a just relationship to that power must respect the fact that human beings did not have a hand in making the earth, therefore they have no right to dispose of it as they see fit" (470). See Alfred, 2002.

[54] Cole Harris notes that Locke "maintained Aboriginal peoples lived in a pre-political state of nature and had property rights only to the products of their labour." According to Harris, Locke believed "European sovereignty and settlement would be good for Aboriginal peoples because it would introduce them to civilization in the form of private property, commerce, and the profit motive" (xxii). See Harris, 2002.

Rowland Harris, the Commissioner of Public Works, is the novel's benevolent capitalist, a friendlier, state-sponsored version than the capitalism represented by Ambrose Small. Harris is a public servant and he reconciles the renegade ruthlessness of unbridled capitalism and its industriousness. He is a man of such vision the workers on his projects toil in his "dream" (*Lion* 111) as part of "that community of men […] who are also part of the fairy tale" (39). Immigrant settlers are united in the common purpose of building a new city on land that the novel neglects to mention is claimed by Indigenous peoples. This oversight permits the characters to effortlessly assume the role of indigenes on *terra nullius,* which is consistent with the romance mode's ideal of electability or citizenship. Harris' name recalls the "Song of Roland," a romance from the twelfth century recounting the Battle of Roncevaux Pass in 778 during the reign of Charlemagne. According to Auerbach, the figure of Roland "cannot be frightened" (102) and is one of the elect destined for greatness. Harris is responsible for the viaduct and the Waterworks, aka the "Palace of Purification," and water is associated with him as his "great passion" (*Lion* 29). According to Frye, water, or "the river of life" are symbols of rejuvenation (1969 191).

There are parallels between Patrick's life and the biblical figure of Adam. As Frye notes, Adam is expelled from Eden and "wanders in the labyrinth of human history until he is restored to his original state by the Messiah" (191). After growing up in the country, Patrick arrives at Union Station in Toronto as "an immigrant to the city" (*Lion* 53). At twenty-one, Patrick has "been drawn out" from Bellrock, his home near Kingston, "like a piece of metal" (53), or an armored knight. He figuratively bears the "little seeds of explosives on his apparel" (19) from his father's occupation as a self-taught dynamiter, foreshadowing events that will occur involving the death of Alice and the attempted bombing of the Purification Plant. He eventually takes a job to find the wealthy businessman, Small, who has mysteriously gone

missing. This quest eventually leads him to Small's mistress, Clara, and the two begin an affair. Clara then introduces Patrick to her friend, Alice, and their love-triangle represents "A study for the New World" (79), again foreshadowing future events but this time involving Patrick and Clara, with Alice's daughter, Hana, together at the end of the novel in the "new world" of reconciliation. This reference to a new world signals the characters' ability to be transformed into elect members of the settler state. Patrick and Alice eventually fall deeply in love, and after being separated for a time, they reunite after she has become a widow and is raising Hana alone. They meet again after one of Alice's dramatic performances that leaves Patrick so spellbound he "had forgotten where he was" (118). He mistakes her acting for reality, going so far as to climb up on the stage to interrupt her performance. At this point, Patrick has moved into an immigrant neighbourhood in the "southeastern section of the city […] deliriously anonymous" (112), where he is frequently greeted by the local Macedonian immigrants as, "Hey Canada!" (135). Despite his attempts to blend in, Patrick's neighbours recognize him as a personification of their new country. This suggests Patrick is the novel's embodiment of Canada and his experiences invite reading him as an allegory for the settler state.

The text refers to Clara and Alice as "witches" (76) and "magicians" (79) that Frye identifies as "sinister figures" who are "antagonists of the quest" (1969 193). Alice functions as a bad influence by disrupting Patrick's quest with radical politics, while Clara facilitates it as a magician presiding over his transformation into an ideal citizen. According to Frye, "A polarization may thus be set up between the lady of duty and the lady of pleasure" (196). Patrick first loves Alice, the lady of duty who initially served as a nun and then as a committed activist, and he pursues what he perceives to be her political beliefs until they almost kill him and others. Alice's "duty" is transferred from a religious commitment to a secular concern as a political

radical married to Cato, the aforementioned union organizer. At first glance, Alice's trajectory from nun to activist might resemble "the rise of the Social Gospel movement in Canada" (Beyer 284) within the settler context that flourished from the 1890s to 1930s. This movement attempted to apply Christianity to society's ills and included such notable figures as the first leader of the CCF Party (afterwards known as the NDP), J.S. Woodsworth, Tommy Douglas, the first leader of the NDP, and Nellie McClung of "The Famous Five" who helped clear the way for women to enter politics.[55] However, Alice's more radical approach to politics lacks the "compassion" of these more reform-minded individuals. As she argues with Patrick, "Compassion forgives too much. You could forgive the worst man. You forgive him and nothing changes" (123). Alice rejects compassion and is therefore a threat to the romance mode. After Patrick is forgiven by Commissioner Harris and is provided a second chance at the end of the novel, he gives up Alice's radical politics and settles down with Clara, "the lady of pleasure." According to Bracken, "the lady of pleasure and the lady of duty, the woman in red and the woman in white, are stock characters in romance, a literary genre defined by its capacity to constantly assume new historical forms" (2015 3). He notes (citing Derrida), "Behind the pleasure doctrine lies the fact of sovereign ipseity," which involves "the capacity for self-causation: 'the power that *gives itself* its own law'" (original italics, 2). By settling for Clara, the lady of pleasure, or freedom in contrast to duty, Patrick attaches himself to this form of ipseity and obtains the ability for self-transformation, or the freedom to transcend historical conditions. For electability to be realized both the aggrieved, in this case Harris, and the wrongdoer, Patrick, must be able to transcend circumstances and move on without resentment.

Frye notes if the hero's quest is completed the final stage is "rebirth" (1969 192). After

[55] For more on McClung's complex legacy see Devereux, 2005.

Alice's death, Patrick experiences a figurative death. Her loss is like "a moat" which "he will never cross again" (*Lion* 164) and he feels despondent. He resembles a broken knight who has lost his purpose. As a result, he wanders aimlessly like Adam from the biblical story, detached from any community. We learn Patrick "has always been alien" (156), and that "he could hear the rattle within that suggested a space between him and community" (157). By the novel's end, however, Patrick is united with Clara and has assumed responsibility for Alice's daughter. He has reconciled the space between himself and the community and is reborn as one of the elect.

The Language of Politics

For Frank Davey, *In the Skin of the Lion* "reinforces an emphasis on individual action and mistrust of collective politics" (150). In the text, there is no mention of whether Commissioner Harris might have tried to exploit any workers, no need for working-class solidarity or common struggle. Harris is no villain and he extends his authority apolitically through visionary leadership rather than through the power politics of a capitalist economy. The novel also avoids worker grievances and Alice's husband, Cato, the lone figure in the novel who engages directly in a political struggle, appears only in passing and is executed while attempting to unionize workers (*Lion* 155). Alice is the figure who sustains and articulates the radical politics in the text. She points out Patrick's privilege as a Canadian settler compared to the newly arrived immigrants in his adopted neighbourhood and suggests his "languor" (123) may be a reason for his lack of revolutionary spirit. Patrick resists her appeals, saying, "I don't believe the language of politics, but I'll protect the friends I have" (122). Later, she asks what it will take to "convert" him to her politics and he dismisses her, adding, "The trouble with ideology, Alice, is that it hates the private. You must make it human" (135). The humanizing of ideology, or what Walter

Benjamin calls the "aestheticizing of political life,"[56] is precisely what the settler state accomplishes through affective modes of governance where public apologies replace legislation as forms of change. Audra Simpson argues that the settler state "uses affect, it uses performance, it uses good feelings, and it expects you to have those feelings" (Reconciliation and its Discontents 2016). This is what the text finally accomplishes at the end by replacing politics with private feelings in the figure of Harris forgiving Patrick for attempting to bomb the purification plant while sustaining the modes of production that claimed so many workers' lives.

After Alice dies in an explosion while carrying a "clock bomb, not even knowing what it was" (240),[57] Patrick is hired to help construct the tunnels for the filtration plant beneath Lake Ontario where we later learn that many of his fellow workers die. Only passing reference is made to these deaths, but this history cannot be verified because as Patrick says, "There was no record kept" (236). The novel's focus on "individual action" rather than the "collective politics" that Davey references (1993 150), elevates Patrick's emotional state over any working-class concerns. This atomized state is the preferred condition of the romance mode as subjects are more susceptible to affective appeals and are less of a political threat to the status quo. When Harris says, "What you are looking for is a villain" (*Lion* 237), Patrick's personal feelings eventually intervene to cancel out any effort to find one. He ultimately forgives Harris and dismisses the need to hold anyone accountable for the deaths of his fellow workers. Forgiveness, when manifested as an act of romantic inwardness, is what Alice previously identified as problematic, explaining, "Compassion forgives too much. You could forgive the worst man. You

[56] The "aestheticizing of political life" involves "resolving the challenges and tensions of real human societies in aesthetic terms while endlessly deferring them in political terms" (181). See Manderson, 2018.

[57] The details of Alice's death are not divulged until the very end when Patrick recounts them from memory to Harris (238-241).

forgive him and nothing changes" (123). The novel's conclusion suggests that Patrick, influenced by forgiveness and compassion, settles for deep feeling and that the structures that sustain class politics remain in place, confirming Alice's belief that "nothing changes." The conditions which led the workers to their death still remain unresolved.

Redemption

As the hero of a romance, Patrick is redeemed and born again through the mercy of the older, paternal figure, Harris, the saviour of this story. His name is also an echo of Patrick's father, Hazen, suggesting he has been replaced. In the novel's final pages, they confront each other in Harris' office, the inner sanctum within the "Palace of Purification." In his exhausted state, and holding the explosive detonator, Patrick recounts how Alice died. Harris listens intently to the gripping final moments of Alice's life, how she was the victim of a bomb explosion (*Lion* 240). The recognition Frye identifies as a crucial element of the romance occurs. Harris recognizes Patrick's humanity in this intimate confession of private grief. As Frye writes, "recognition of the hero" is one of the main features of the romance quest (1969 192), and in Ondaatje's text, personal feelings of compassion overtake class and political differences. After finishing his story, Patrick falls asleep and Harris, rather than turn him over to the police, takes the detonator away and asks a nurse to care for him (*Lion* 242). The setting for the text's climatic scene of recognition and reconciliation is within Commissioner Harris' office deep inside the public water purification plant. Not only is Patrick redeemed, but Harris is as well, as a compassionate state-capitalist. The role of recognition in the romance depends on both participants accepting the terms for their redemption. Both Harris and Patrick accept the same understanding of "compassion" and "forgiveness." When the narrative picks up again six months later, we find that Patrick has been "saved" because he is with Alice's daughter, Hana, on their

way to meet Clara. He has been reconciled to Hegel's "realities of the present" (*LA Vol. I* 593) and has achieved the status of electability. While the novel begins in a winter wilderness, it concludes in the spring setting of a "long green garden" (*Lion* 243) resonating with order, contentment, and hope recalling "the drama of the green world […] the ritual theme of the triumph of life and love over the waste land," (Frye 1969 182) or "the victory of summer over winter" (182-183). The winter ice at the beginning of the novel has figuratively thawed, and water, associated with life (199), is flowing freely. On the final page, a neighbor, Mr. Rivera (River), is hosing his garden, "private as they passed him" (*Lion* 244). The private domesticity of this settler romance flourishes, and Patrick, an example of the settler subject devoted to the "lady of pleasure" with her capacity for ipseity, reigns supreme. He began the novel estranged from community in the wintery wilderness of alienation, but now Patrick has found salvation in a fairy tale devoid of public politics, oblivious to any historical conditions that structure the settler state.

By the novel's end, both immigrant settlers, Patrick Lewis and Nicholas Temelcoff, who has become a successful entrepreneur running a bakery, become reconciled to life in the settler state. Rowland Harris, the benevolent capitalist, forgives Patrick and enables him to pursue a new life. The characters that die - Ambrose Small, Cato, Alice Gull – are the irreconcilable subjects who cannot fit into the settler project's settler romance, or Hegel's "realities" (*LA Vol. I* 593). At the conclusion of this romance, the immigrant settler is reborn, committed to pleasure and duty after having been redeemed by a benevolent, state-sponsored form of capitalism regulated not by policy, but by affective governance. Patrick has achieved the status of an elect indigene at home on unmentioned Indigenous land in the new world of Canada.

The English Patient

The English Patient is a sequel to *In the Skin of a Lion* with Patrick's daughter, Hana Lewis, a young nurse from Canada, occupying a dilapidated villa outside of Florence, Italy during the waning days of the World War II. Consisting of ten chapters divided into units or segments, it is focused on the perspectives of Hana, David Caravaggio, a former intelligence officer and an old family friend also from *In the Skin of a Lion*, Kirpal Singh (Kip), an Indian Sikh trained as a sapper in Britain, and the English patient, the Hungarian Count Ladislaus de Almásy, a wounded desert explorer who barely survived a plane crash and is burnt beyond recognition. Hana, whose name and English spelling are Japanese for "flower," suggesting a connection to that country's symbol for rejuvenation - the *kiku,* or chrysanthemum - is tasked with taking care of Almásy. Caravaggio and the sapper, Kip, join her separately at the Villa San Girolamo (7). Hana and Kip become romantically involved until Kip learns about the United States dropping nuclear bombs on Japan. He expresses rage and disillusionment and flees the villa and the war to eventually return to India. By the end of the text, Hana is married and living in Canada, while Kip is married and living in India. The novel's ethnic diversity reflects a change from the Eurocentric *In the Skin of a Lion*, and published in 1992, reflects the next stage of the Post-national Multiculturalism era from 1988-1998 when the emphasis of national policy was on visible minorities and cosmopolitanism.

For Mark Simpson, *The English Patient*'s "intertextual references" suggest "that reading has very little to do with comforts in meaning" (221). The novel's "most volatile intertext, Herodotus' *History*" (221),[58] a book the novel's titular character contends consists "of supposed

[58] While both *History* and *Histories* are used for Herodotus' text, the novel uses the latter version. See *The English Patient*, 125.

lies" (*The English Patient* 261), ultimately suggests "that the knowledge or meaning to which, in the Western tradition, history and narrative conventionally aspire may be not simply unsettled but indeed unsettlable" (Simpson 1994 221-222). This abdication of political meaning forfeits hermeneutics for the sake of deep feeling, and is consistent with the limitations of the romance mode which avoids political engagement for inwardness. If history were "unsettlable" Indigenous claims may also be unsettlable as well. Such a view serves the state and its desire for Indigenous land by dismissing historical conditions, and by extension, Indigenous claims. The degree to which history can be settled is crucial for the futurity of Indigenous peoples.

At the outset of the novel, we learn Almásy "fell burning into the desert" (4) as a pilot after working with the Nazis.[59] He is handed over to the allies and Hana is left to nurse him when her medical colleagues have left for more secure facilities. Almásy is believed to be English based on his language abilities. The villa, named after Saint Jerome who is traditionally associated with scholarship and books (Willinsky 26),[60] has been occupied by both allies and foes, and served as a convent before transitioning to a hospital. It also houses a dilapidated library. Significantly, Hana's father, Patrick, recently died in the war, and Hana's mother, Alice Gull, was a nun before becoming involved in politics. As a nod to the romance mode, King Arthur's wife, Guinevere, spent her last days as a nun after the death of King Arthur and was significantly "changed" (Malory, 2017 550).[61] Hana, too, has been changed by the death of her

[59] This detail is divulged later in the text while Almásy shares his experiences with Caravaggio (269-270).

[60] See John Willinsky, 2018.

[61] According to Malory, "when Queen Guenever understood that King Arthur was slain, and all the noble knights, Sir Mordred and all the remnant, then the queen stole away, and five ladies with her, and so she went to Almesbury; and there she let make herself a nun, and ware white clothes and black, and great penance she took, as ever did sinful lady in this land, and never creature could make her merry; but lived in fasting, prayers, and alms-deeds, that all manner of people marveled how virtuously she was changed" (2017 550).

father as well as by the war and its devastation and her devotion to Almásy represents a form of heroic virtue. According to Lecker, Canadian literature "exhibits a number of features that point to its fundamental conservatism" (2013 5). The romance mode exemplifies a "fundamental conservatism" regarding gender and race, for example. As an aesthetic tradition designed to preserve the political status quo, it amplifies romance conventions that situate women as caregivers who are subservient to men. Hana embodies these conventions in her interactions with both Almásy and Kip, as do Alice and Clara from *In the Skin of a Lion*. These literary stereotypes of women found in the romance genre can migrate over to the social realm and find traction in policy initiatives of the contemporary settler state. As Ann Stoler notes, when this type of sexual violence enters the settler context it has "entailed colonizing both bodies and minds" (1995 4). According to Bonita Lawrence, the Indian Act of 1876, for example, significantly lowered the standing of Indigenous women by removing "the Indian status of all Native women who married individuals without Indian status" (8). Lawrence continues, "The same act gave Indian status to white women who married status Indians" which "would remain part of the Indian Act until 1985" (8). The inherent sexism of the romance genre has had lasting consequences not only for settler women like Hana, but for the Indigenous women who go unmentioned in the novel.

Bill Fledderus suggests, "the characters and plot of *The English Patient*" are "analogous in very significant respects to certain types of Arthurian romance and to the earliest written narratives of quest for the holy grail" (19). Fledderus' analysis illuminates the correspondence between such grail romances as Chrétien*'s The Story of the Grail* and *The English Patient.* Despite Ondaatje's fragmented post-modern narrative, the text evokes the romance mode to strengthen its claim for universal significance. In this way, the romance mode can help normalize

romantic inwardness and its aversion for political engagement as a reflection of a natural universal order. According to Fledderus, "The title character of *The English Patient* offers perhaps the clearest connection with Arthurian legend" (24). The fisher king is identified in the romances with a mysterious wound in the thigh, which has been generally understood to be the groin area, symbolizing impotency. While Almásy does not suffer from a thigh wound, he is so severely debilitated that he is virtually impotent. Moreover, his penis is compared to a sleeping "sea horse" (*The English Patient* 3) and he is described as reclining in his bed "like a king" (15). His impotence is further implied through the text's reference to the biblical story of King David and Abishag (100-101), another figure of female subservience. In that story, the novel explains "a young virgin," Abishag, "cherished the King" and helped him stay warm at night, but "the King knew her not" (101), suggesting the relationship was never consummated.

In romances like *The Story of the Grail*, the realm of the fisher king is a wasteland (Fledderus 26) and in Ondaatje's text the area surrounding the villa has been ravaged by war and remains desolate. Kip serves as the wandering knight who attempts to heal the land by diffusing bombs. His nickname is related to a "kipper" fish (*The English Patient* 93-94), which is an appropriate name for someone "who is to become the fisher king's successor" (Fledderus 31).[62] In Chrétien de Troyes' romance, Perceval's quest begins when a nameless knight is slain, much like Kip's quest begins after his mentor, Lord Suffolk, dies. Kip has wandered from India to Britain, King Arthur's legendary homeland, to support the allies, and as a Sikh he wears a Kara, a cast iron bracelet suggesting knight's armor (*The English Patient* 133). Like Perceval, Kip must make a long journey to answer "the unspelling question" (Fledderus 38).[63] For Kip, this

[62] Almásy appears to acknowledge this when he compares himself to Goliath and says, "Kip is my David" (123).

[63] Fledderus notes, "in Chretien the unspelling question is 'whom does the grail serve?' and the assumed answer is 'the fisher king, your uncle' - thus the question implies an inquiry into the quester's own history" (37-38). See

question concerns his identity. He obtains an answer near the end of the novel when confronted with the knowledge that the United States dropped nuclear bombs on Japan and concludes that the Americans "learned it from the English" (*The English Patient* 304). Suddenly, his aspiration to join the allies – to symbolically enter Arthur's court - is foreclosed. As a result, he retreats to India disillusioned and heartbroken.

As a physically unrecognizable figure, Almásy is able to transcend boundaries. A former Nazi collaborator, he is idealized as an explorer without any political loyalties or respect for borders, either national or personal. Caravaggio explains to him that he "had become the enemy not when [he] sided with Germany but when [he] began [his] affair with Katharine Clifton" (270). Almásy also renders both allies and foes indistinguishable and frames the Second World War as the "Barbarians versus the Barbarians" (273), suggesting a conflict of moral equivalencies. As an embodiment of European values such as the romance mode he is apolitical and conveys an entitlement that transcends historical limitations. He recognizes himself in Kip saying, "Kip and I are both international bastards, born in one place and choosing to live elsewhere" (188). Almásy expresses the desire for internationalism at the heart of the novel to live in a world free from the deformations caused by nation-states (147). His desire for *terra nullius,* where he may disappear to be reborn without name or country, is presented as a desire for the novel's one pan-European figure who inhabits both sides of the war at various times in his life. As a member of the European aristocracy, Almásy has been a free agent throughout his life, a citizen of Europe born in Hungary, educated in Britain and a member of the ruling elite. He represents what Elizabeth Povinelli refers to as the "autological subject" (2006 4), or the self-

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Fledderus, 1997.

sovereign individual who has the capacity to reinvent herself. According to Povinelli, "By the autological subject, I am referring to discourses, practices, and fantasies about self-making, self-sovereignty, and the value of individual freedom associated with the Enlightenment project of contractual constitutional democracy and capitalism" (4). She contrasts this with "the genealogical society" (4) that imposes restraints. Almásy's body is burnt beyond the recognition of race or ethnicity, and his nationality is obscured, which helps liberate him from the political consequences of being identified as a Nazi ally. Through this condition of anonymity he is able to choose his identifications and exert a sovereignty that the others lack.

Near the end of the text, Kip explodes in anger after hearing of the U.S. bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. He blames Europe and its white allies for targeting "the brown races of the world" (304). His outburst invisibilizes Japanese colonialism[64] in a move that reinforces the novel's erasure of politics in favour of individual feelings. He breaks up his relationship with Hana and returns to his birthplace in India, where he becomes a doctor, "has two children and a laughing wife" (318). He is resigned to a conventional lifestyle and Hegel's "realities of the present" (*LA Vol. I.*, 593). This retreat from the politics of the external world into deep feeling affirms that matters of the heart alone are ultimately powerless to impact historical conditions, which is a defining feature of romantic fiction.

Anil's Ghost

When *Anil's Ghost* was published in 2000, Ondaatje was criticized for taking an apolitical approach to the Sri Lankan civil war. Reviewers such as Tom LeClair of *The Nation*

[64] Before 1945, the Japanese empire stretched from East Asia to Southeast Asia. According to Minoru Sawai, "After the outbreak of the Second Sino-Japanese War in 1937, Japan extended its zone of military control from North to Central China. At its height of the Pacific War, the Japanese empire under the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere grew to encompass distant areas in Southeast Asia" (2). See Sawai, 2016.

wrote that Ondaatje's "apolitical gaze" was "irresponsible" because it "turns away from politics to personal lives" (32). For Victoria Cook, Ondaatje "speaks through" (2) the titular character in *Anil's Ghost*'s with "the language of transnationalism" (2), which "incorporates the contradictions and paradoxes that are displayed in human and cultural diversity" (2). This observation helps explain why the broader political issues involving the conflict between the Tamil minority and Sinhalese majority that occupies the novel are obscured. In fact, the novel avoids explicitly naming the groups that make up the different sides of the conflict in Sri Lanka.[65] Mukherjee has suggested Ondaatje "does not get drawn into the act of living, which involves the need to deal with the burning issues of his time" (99). Anil, like Ondaatje, is a prodigal who has returned to her birthplace after becoming estranged. As a result, she never feels at home and in fact remains foreign as the novel's conclusion demonstrates.

Set in Sri Lanka during the nineteen-eighties and nineties when a brutal civil war between the majority Sinhalese government and the minority Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (the LTTE, also known as the Tamil Tigers) was engulfing the country, *Anil's Ghost* attempts to deal with issues of injustice and state violence on the personal level of its main characters. The text downplays the details of the conflict and makes a forceful case against its politics. The leader of Sri Lanka in the novel, "President Katugala," is blown up beyond recognition in a terrorist attack (291), symbolizing the destructive role politics play in resolving the novel's central conflict. The public and personal are at battle in the form of a civil war and the text implicates public politics as the source of the problem. Ananda, the character who transcends the conflict, serves as a model of an electable citizen who avoids anger and retribution. Although he lost his beloved

[65] The "Author's Note" at the beginning of *Anil's Ghost* states, "From the mid-1980s to the early 1990s, Sri Lanka was in a crisis that involved three essential groups: the government, the antigovernment insurgents in the south and the separatist guerrillas in the north." These groups are not specifically named or defined.

wife, Sirissa, he resists participating in the conflict or of succumbing to despair in the end and finds tranquility in the practice of a religious ritual. Ananda represents the romance subject as he is able to put aside grievances and live a productive life by expressing his emotions culturally rather than politically.

The novel's titular character, Anil Tissera - her last name echoing the noun "tessera," a small block of stone, tile, glass, or other material used in the construction of a mosaic, the symbol of Canadian multiculturalism - is a forensic pathologist. She is figuratively tasked with picking up shattered pieces and assembling them into discernable patterns. She was born in Sri Lanka, left at age eighteen, and was educated abroad in Britain and the United States. She has returned fifteen years later to begin working on a United Nations funded investigation into human rights abuses (13). She arrives in Sri Lanka at dawn, literally the lightening of the world, and can be seen as a figure of European enlightenment values. Employed by the U.N., whose mandate includes maintaining international peace and security while upholding international law, Anil is thirty-three years old, the same age Jesus Christ was at his crucifixion. This detail is a nod to the central place Christianity occupies in the European formulation of universalism[66] and a foreshadowing of the sacrifice Anil will make regarding her Sri Lankan ties. Notably, she is a native of Sri Lanka who has become estranged to the point of resembling a foreigner in her own country. She will soon embark on a journey that will ultimately reveal the degree of her alienation as she tries to re-adjust to her place of birth and to her local counterpart, Sarath Diyasena, an archeologist "in his late forties" (16). Anil represents an intrusion of international

[66] Immanuel Wallerstein argues, "Western-Christian civilization […] evolved into Enlightenment thought" (76), and he traces its evolution back to the sixteenth-century debates in Valladolid between Sepúlveda and Las Casas over whether Amerindians had a legitimate claim to basic human rights. See Wallerstein, 2006.

law into the domestic affairs of Sri Lanka in her capacity as a U.N. envoy. However, her ties to the local context, along with Sarath and the context of Sri Lanka, represent the obstacles of local customs and beliefs that fragment assumptions of a Western, non-local universalism. Although she has not returned to Sri Lanka for fifteen years and uses a British or U.N. passport to travel, she still feels the "family wars" continuing "to reside in her" (137). These "wars" ultimately drive her away at the end of the novel. Sarath recognizes the limitations of her contingency, remarking, "You can't just slip in, make a discovery and leave" (44). The gap between her private attachments to Sri Lanka and her public affiliation represented by a U.N. passport problematizes her ability to be politically engaged. Her job is viewed as inherently political: she determines how the dead became deceased, which will then implicate the government. Whether she wants it to be or not, her role is political.

Apolitical Struggle

When Anil and Sarath uncover a body they call "Sailor" in a government-protected compound, thus implicating the government in murder, they consult Palipana, a former epigraphist and a mentor to Sarath. Palipana approaches "runes not with a historical text but with the pragmatic awareness of locally inherited skills" (82). In the context of the novel, he represents traditional knowledge and recommends Ananda Udugama to reconstruct Sailor's face and help in its identification. Ananda is an artist who shares his first name with the historical Gautama Buddha's devout attendant.[67] However, Ananda's reproduction is "peaceful" and resembles "what he wants of the dead" (184) rather than what Sailor may have actually looked like. The text suggests it might be an image of his deceased wife, Sirissa (185), who was brutally

[67] William Rockhill's *Life of the Buddha* explains how Ananda became Buddha's "inseparable attendant, and was the foremost among those who heard much, who understood what they heard, who remembered what they had heard" (88). See Rockhill, 1884.

killed in the civil war. As a way of dealing with her loss, Ananda pursues the traditional ritual known as *Netra Mangala*, the painting of the Buddha's eyes on statuary. This religious practice represents the element of the romance mode that the text valourizes over politics with its attention and care focused on the preservation of cultural objects rather than on those living through civil war. Palipana states, "*Netra* means 'eye.' It is a ritual of the eyes. A special artist is needed to paint eyes on a holy figure. It is always the last thing done. It is what gives the image life. Like a fuse. The eyes are a fuse. It has to happen before a statue or a painting in a *vihara* can become a holy thing" (97). This holy ritual executed by the character bearing the name of Buddha's devout attendant, exemplifies the behaviour of one of the elect within the settler context. From the settler perspective, a spiritual or cultural reaction to grievances is more preferable than a political one as it preserves the political status quo. When Anil flees Sri Lanka at the end of the novel and by extension, political engagement, Ananda remains behind committed to this religious practice and functions as the text's example of a character who has achieved electability by avoiding politics. The novel's conclusion involves Ananda withdrawing from the political struggle to focus on painting the eyes of Buddha statues:

> Then he drew from a satchel the colours for the eye. He looked past the vertical line of cheek into the landscape. Pale greens, dark greens, bird movement and their nearby sounds. It was the figure of the world the statue would see forever, in rainlight and sunlight, a combustible world of weather even without the human element. (306)

Ananda has found refuge from the grief caused by a civil war that claimed his wife's death. The suggestion is that a combination of art and religion can transcend the morass of political strife where "the human element" is not a factor. While Marlene Goldman suggests that Ananda's

pursuit of Buddhism "acknowledges separation and difference" (36), his politics nevertheless conform to the apolitical tenets of romantic fiction. Ananda serves romantic inwardness and its apolitical commitments by abandoning "the human element" (*Anil's Ghost* 306), or the ongoing conflict afflicting his surrounding context. However, for Anil who "loved a lab" (66), the solitary labour of her profession has political consequences that implicate the government, and her position, therefore, becomes untenable within the context of a civil war. When she attempts to fulfill her professional duty, she ends up accusing the government of complicity in murder and thus endangers her own life. She eventually flees Sri Lanka and fails to fulfill her U.N. mandate. Anil Tissera, and the mosaic her name recalls, cannot survive a political assault. Her time abroad has turned her into an alien in Sri Lanka and Sarath's younger brother, Gamini, compares her to a character from a film: "The American or the Englishman gets on a plane and leaves. That's it. The camera leaves with him [...] He's going home. So the war, to all purposes is over. That's enough reality for the West" (285-86). This comparison to a film explicitly aestheticizes her departure and situates Anil literally transcending the world of experience as her plane takes off. The reference to "enough reality for the West" recalls Auerbach's observation that the romance mode is unable to contain "reality in its full breadth and depth" (142). For Anil, in Sri Lanka reality would likely take her life.

Anil's Ghost evacuates politics for a narrow aesthetic apprehension of the world epitomized by Ananda's pursuit of romantic inwardness. The disappearing of politics, epitomized by Anil's departure and the blowing up of President Katugala, perpetuates the structural injustices of the state as the civil war continues to rage on, ultimately claiming Sarath's life at the end of the novel. Politics represent an obstacle to the romance mode and political engagement is rejected in favour of Ananda's aesthetic ritual. *Anil's Ghost* fulfills the romance

mode by suggesting that apolitical aesthetic practices are a preferable expression of individual suffering while neglecting to substantially address the political, ethnic, or class factors caused by Sri Lanka's civil war. In this way, the novel speaks to the settler state regarding the priority of romantic inwardness in the quest to achieve an apolitical ideal of citizenship.

Chapter Two

Hybrid Universalism: Fred Wah's *Diamond Grill* and *Faking It*

Once the subject reaches the status of electability, she faces the challenge of maintaining it. The settler state agrees to welcome the elect in a "home" where "diversity is our strength" (Austen 2017)[68] reigns supreme. This home is romantic inwardness, a castle that shelters the wandering immigrant settler from the harsh public storms of racial politics. Fred Wah's *Diamond Grill* (2006) captures the ambivalence of this multicultural romance by exposing its flaws, while simultaneously perpetuating its inward appeal. The politics of the racial state, and the accompanying alienation that can afflict the racially mixed subject, are exposed in the character of Fred Jr. At the same time, however, the multicultural romance is affirmed by positing the racial subject as responsible for its outcomes. *Diamond Grill* is the "contact zone" (*DG* 69) where the two personas of Fred Jr. meet - one who can "pass for white" (*Faking It* 76) and who is a successful writer and recipient of the Order of Canada, and the other who is the alienated and racialized son of a mixed marriage between an Irish-Scots-Chinese father and a mother of Swedish descent. I reiterate that I do not mean to suggest authors like Wah are consciously promoting settler colonialism, but rather that romantic fiction as a literary form promotes attributes like romantic inwardness.

[68] In the aftermath of then U.S. president Donald Trump's executive order halting immigration in January 2017, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau posted on Twitter, "To those fleeing persecution, terror & war, Canadians will welcome you, regardless of your faith. Diversity is our strength." See Austen, 2017, and Blanchfield, 2019.

Biotextuality

Wah is a former Poet Laureate of Canada and has won numerous awards for his writings, including the Governor General's Award in 1986 for his poetry collection, *Waiting for Saskatchewan*, which includes a series of poems about his relationship with his father. The long poem, "This Dendrite Map: Father/Mother Haibun," which was taken from *Waiting for Saskatchewan*, includes similar themes as *Diamond Grill*. Wah himself acknowledges the connections:

> *Waiting for Saskatchewan*, from which "Dendrite Map" is taken, spread out into family and, particularly, father. *Diamond Grill*, a biofiction, turns more to prose to extend the problem of writing through identity into racialization. Even *Faking It*, a collection of critical writing, pulls some of the biotextual dendrita into a kind of poetics of the body. Long poem, deep life. (in Thesen, 2001 493)

Wah's relationship with his father predates *Diamond Grill* and its appearance has as much to do with personal issues as with a response "to the changing racialized times," as he writes (*Diamond Grill* 182).

Diamond Grill was first published in 1996 during what I refer to as the Post-national Multiculturalism era from 1988-1998, when multiculturalism became internationalized and events like the 1988 Japanese Redress Agreement took place. It was followed by *Faking It* in 2000*,* a collection of Wah's essays, interviews and commentary about related issues. In the "10th Anniversary" edition of *Diamond Grill,* Wah explains that much of his "'thinking' behind and around" the text "can be located" in *Faking It* (*DG* 187). *Diamond Grill* consists of 132 non-chronological vignettes that explore the "pain and anger" (ix) behind issues of identity, race, and culture. It focuses on Fred Jr.'s ethnicity as a Canadian-born Chinese-Swedish-Irish-Scots

working in his family's restaurant while growing up in Nelson, B.C. during the 1950s. According to the book jacket, "racism from whites for being Chinese and from Chinese for being white simmers behind the stainless surface of the action in the café" (2006). Wah refers to *Diamond Grill* as his "father/racialized hyphen story" (*DG* 183). The "father" is Fred Wah Sr., a Canadian-born Chinese/Scots/Irish of Asian appearance, who achieves success as an entrepreneurial owner of the text's eponymous restaurant. *Diamond Grill* is "racialized" as the lens of race is the mediating factor through which multiple characters are represented. The "hyphen" is both a theoretical concept that signals hybridity, as well as a punctuation mark that grounds the text as a written document. Like a period or comma, the hyphen is meant to be seen, not heard. This focus on language highlights what Wah calls his "hybrid borderland poetics" (*Faking It* 74), which have been cited as a method of disrupting writing conventions.[69] Finally, *Diamond Grill* is a "story," which enables Wah to deploy aesthetic strategies that allow a "fictionalysis […] that uncovers analytically that territory where fact and fiction coincide" (Marlatt 15). The worlds of fact and fiction combine to create what Wah suggests is a "biotext" (*DG* 184), which is a term coined in 1988 by George Bowering who defined it as "an extension" of the writer in contrast to autobiography that "replaces the writer" (in Saul 4). The personal biotext operates to extend the private world of Wah throughout *Diamond Grill* and it is this unpublic realm that is "home" for the racialized subject where he alone bears the burden for the public politics of race. One of the features of this form of the biotext is that it personalizes history and atomizes settler politics into individual experiences while making collective responses more difficult to achieve. According to Saul, "I have chosen to call these works 'biotexts' because I like the way the term captures the tension between the 'what' and the 'how' of the texts, between the 'bio' (with an emphasis on

[69] See Katelnikoff, 2017, and Weaver, 2005.

the 'life': including the family, relationships, and genealogy) and the 'text' (the site where these fragments are articulated in writing)" (4). The intimacy of the biotext captures the "what" of Wah's family dynamics by allowing access into Fred Jr.'s inwardness and his process of articulating his ancestors' feelings. For example, the scene "Dirty Heathens, Granny Erickson thinks of the Chinese" (*Diamond Grill* 8), captures the "what" and "how" of *Diamond Grill,* including the what of Wah's life and family, as well as the how of where the "fragments are articulated in writing" (Saul 4). Wah captures the interior monologue of his grandmother anxiously thinking about her daughter: "now that she's living with that Chinaman, nobody'll speak to her, the little hussy" (*Diamond Grill* 8). The biotext also captures the "how" by allowing Wah's "hybrid borderland poetics" (*Faking It* 74) to serve his purpose of exposing what he calls "the tyranny of the 'correct' grammatical sentence" (*Diamond Grill* 185).

"Sole Responsibility"

In the Acknowledgments for *Diamond Grill*, Wah declares "sole responsibility for [the] text" (2006). This declaration, stated on its first page, sets the tone for personal responsibility over public matters such as policy that inform the text. Wah exposes how this "sole responsibility" operates within the intimate relationship between a son and his mother. When Fred Jr. approaches his mother, who is of Swedish descent, about the racism she encountered when she married Fred Sr., she tells him, "They wouldn't speak to me until after you were born […] when I ask her how people in Swift Current reacted to her marrying a Chinaman" (13). She continues, "But that's in the past. I've forgotten a lot of things. Your dad, he just shrugged it off, though I know it hurt him" (14). This highlights the degree to which the victims of the racial state internalize it to their own detriment. When Fred Jr. attempts to uncover his family's history, he encounters an articulation of the state's racial logic (ie: "that's in the past" and "he just

shrugged it off"). Regardless of whether it is possible to forget racism, this demonstration of personal responsibility involved in the acts of shrugging off and forgetting ultimately exonerates the state and leaves its racial structures unaccountable. Racism is internalized and relegated to inwardness where it is the individual's responsibility to determine its outcomes.

Reconception of Memory

The title, *Diamond Grill,* functions as a dual metaphor, a juxtaposition of a rare jewel and a common cooking appliance. A diamond is a hard gem, a precious stone that at first glance represents the perspective of the racialized entrepreneur. A diamond is also a singular gem, a metaphor for the private subjectivity that is required to access the inward aesthetic experience. The grill is where elements are mixed privately in a kitchen and rendered for public consumption. Used as a verb, "to grill" suggests intense scrutiny of the kind the racialized subject is subjected to by the settler state. Wah's family restaurant is the embodiment of the narrative's multiple voices. As a diamond refracts light, so too does the text refract the narrative, augmenting the hegemony of a single point of view. The effect is to provide a variety of perspectives that share the common attributes of being mediated through Wah, as well as through Mary Louise Pratt's concept of the "contact zone" in the form of the restaurant:

> "Contact zone"…is often synonymous with "colonial frontier." But while the latter term is grounded within a European expansionist perspective (the frontier is a frontier only with respect to Europe), "contact zone" is an attempt to invoke the spatial and temporal copresence of subjects previously separated by geographic and historical disjunctures, and whose trajectories now intersect. (*DG* 69-70).

The intersection of these "historical disjunctures," and *Diamond Grill*'s combination of fact and fiction along with its reliance on memory, allow the text to traverse time and space to inhabit an ambivalent chronotope that resists conventional readings. Lily Cho acknowledges this ambivalence and suggests "the central problem of the dilemma of Wah criticism" is "an unacknowledged reliance upon the historicism of racialized subjectivity" (2010 136). Such approaches, according to Cho, tend to conform to settler assumptions about what minority writing should be and stifle chances for fresh alternatives to emerge. They also separate Wah's "formal techniques from the complexities of the content" in an attempt to subject *Diamond Grill* to a reading that resembles "an objective sociological text" (137), rather than an "elliptical movement that hangs on the edge of the unfinished" (146). Cho calls the latter, "Wah's reconception of memory" (146). Cho is rightfully cautioning against neglecting *Diamond Grill*'s poetics for the sake of its politics. I attempt to read *Diamond Grill* both as an objective socialized text that elucidates the objective conditions of its contexts, while also speaking to the "elliptical movement" of Wah's unique deployment of memory.

Faking It

Wah's poetics are initially derived from observing how his father, Fred Sr., struggled with racism, particularly how he performed or "faked" it in order to be accepted by the predominantly white community of Nelson, B.C. in the 1950s. Wah admits he learns how "English can be faked" (*DG* 66) from observing his father. When Fred Sr. mistakenly says "sloup" (66) instead of soup while giving a speech at his initiation into the prestigious Lion's Club, Wah watches as he turns "copper red (the colour you get when you mix yellow with either embarrassment or liquor" (66). His father then "turns it into a joke, a kind of self put-down" (66) while trying to cover it up with an elaborate lie about "slop water" (66). Wah concludes, "he

fakes it, and I guess I pick up on that sense of faking it from him, that English can be faked. But I quickly learn that when you fake language you see, as well, how everything else is a fake" (66). This admission remains at the individual level of his father, rather than connecting it to the structural racism that might coerce such behaviour. While the scene is retold in a lighthearted manner, it obscures the fact that his father is "the only Chinaman at an all-white dinner meeting" (65). Wah appears to ascribe disingenuous motives to someone who is avoiding becoming a victim of what could be construed as a public shaming. Fred Sr. is not necessarily trying to deceive: he makes a mistake and might be compensating by giving more information, perhaps to demonstrate his proficiency in English. Or maybe he tries to conceal his mistake for a very good reason given the high stakes context, i.e.: to avoid the derision of the white audience that might jeopardize his initiation into the Lion's Club. Of course, it is impossible to determine with certainty, but the focus on minority subjectivities is a pattern that emerges in both *Diamond Grill* and *Faking It*. Such a focus fails to connect the cynicism bred by a minority subject of colour confronted by racism on an ongoing basis with the structural imperatives of the settler state's hierarchy of belonging. In this way, the source of the corrosive racial logic and settler policies remain in place, while the individual affected by it remains open to scorn or sentimentalizing pathos. *Diamond Grill* successfully captures the anxiety and dilemma of racialization but stops short of addressing the structural elements of racism. Wah has not failed to express a profound feeling that has found resonance with sections of his audience. However, the text supports my thesis that romantic fiction's over-emphasis on inwardness neglects historical conditions. The impetus is on the individual to manage racism emanating from state policy rather than on the state to modify its policies. Wah's concept of "faking it" as it applies specifically to his father denotes what is essentially a personal coping mechanism that enables Fred Sr. to be accepted by

the white settlers judging him. In this sense, "faking it" resembles Fanon's concept of emulation described in *Black Skin, White Masks*. Fanon calls this inferiority complex an "internalization" or "the epidermalization - of this inferiority" (4). To paraphrase Fanon, for racial minorities "there is only one destiny. And it is white" (4).[70] The colonial conditions that produce inwardness also reproduce their original contexts, which are in this case, "white." Fred Sr. could be manifesting such an "inferiority complex" by "faking it" due to a constant awareness of his precarity as a visible minority in Nelson of the 1950s.

As mentioned above, the relationship between Wah and his father occupies a central place in the text. Wah writes that he has become his father fourteen years after his father's death and feels "his ocean" decanting through his body (*DG* 12). Does Wah fake it as his father once did? No, rather he turns his father's experience into a textual strategy. While Wah expresses respect for his father's accomplishments and for his work ethic, he is critical of his tolerance for bigotry. It is a source of tension between them and reveals their differences. In an earlier scene, "As Soon As The Café Opens At Quarter" (29), Fred Jr. witnesses his father in the diner interacting with some regular customers - CPR workers, engineers, a contractor – and they share a racist joke at the expense of an anonymous "Chinaman" (29), while Fred Sr. "laughs with them" (29). Wah explains that these men are his father's "customers" (29) and that his father "wants them to come back" (29). The bustle of the restaurant quickly takes over and the scene moves on. The role of capitalism and the racial state in structuring private and public behavior and in alienating family members is brushed aside. "Faking it" ultimately shifts the burden to the minority subject in the name of personal responsibility. Another reading might also consider "the language of the [so-called] civilizing nation" (*Black Skin, White Masks* 9). Read from this

[70] The original quote is "For the black man there is only one destiny. And it is white (4)." See Fanon, 2008.

perspective, Fred Sr. is confronting the English language of the settler state and the sense of inferiority inculcated by this causes a distortion that creates the conditions in which he commits a "self put-down" (66). Moreover, the structural imperatives of the settler state's racial capitalism can be read as possible sources for Fred Sr.'s actions. As Cedric Robinson writes:

> In contradistinction to Marx's and Engels's expectations that bourgeois society would rationalize social relations and demystify social consciousness, the obverse occurred. The development, organization, and expansion of capitalist society pursued essentially racial directions, so too did social ideology. As a material force, then, it could be expected that racialism would inevitably permeate the social structures emergent from capitalism. I have used the term "racial capitalism" to refer to this development and to the subsequent structure as a historical agency. (2000 2)

The fact that Fred Sr. is essentially auditioning for a place in the Lion's Club, a private society designed for wealthy entrepreneurs, underscores the stakes surrounding Fred Sr.'s anxiety within the context of the "racialism" that permeates "the social structures emergent from capitalism." Jodi Melamed adds:

> the term "racial capitalism" requires its users to recognize that capitalism *is* racial capitalism. Capital can only be capital when it is accumulating, and it can only accumulate by producing and moving through relations of severe inequality among human groups - capitalists with the means of production/workers without the means of subsistence, creditors/debtors, conquerors of land made property/the dispossessed and removed. (2015 77)

The stakes for Fred Sr.'s so-called "faking it" could not be higher: if he fails to please the

members of the Lion's Club, dispossession is his reward.

Wah's attempt to "fake language" (*DG* 66) involves transferring his concept of "faking it" to the textual field where he refers to it as it as "hybrid borderland poetics" (*Faking It* 74). When Cho warns against separating Wah's "formal techniques from the complexities of the content" (137), she is directing attention to this move from the personal "hurt" (*DG* 14) of Fred Sr. to the deployment of this aesthetic strategy. For Joel Katelnikoff, Wah's poetics resemble "the language of the outsider […] it is language that doesn't pass as institutional" (205). For Andy Weaver, Wah "can assume the role of insider and outsider […] depending on what he wishes. Living in the hyphen allows him to see the fixed codes of subjectivity that define each community, which, in turn, further convinces him of the importance of refusing himself insider status in any of the groups" (315). Wah suggests that his poetics are an attempt to "to dislodge the privilege of the (complete) sentence" or challenge "the tyranny of the 'correct' grammatical sentence" (*DG* 185). The transposing of his father's attempts to be accepted by white society - to fake it - into an aesthetic strategy, one that Wah views as political, involves a process of abstraction that risks obfuscating the specific contexts of its origin. By separating "faking it" from its racialized origins, Wah is adhering to romantic inwardness, which evacuates politics and aestheticizes historical conditions. While I do not intend to discount Wah's textual approach to challenge "the tyranny" of grammar, I do intend to question whether it is compatible with his emphasis on - in the language of the text - the targets of racial politics rather than the "gun" (*DG* 138), which I take to be the structural enforcer of racial violence.

Race is Food

According to Wah, "race is food" (in Goddard 41). Wah explains, "Race is not something you can feel or recognize, and that's one of the things I'm investigating in that book. It turns out

race is food. I feel Chinese because of the food I enjoy, and that's because my father cooked Chinese food. But I don't know what it feels like to feel Chinese" (41). The book in question is 1985's *Waiting for Saskatchewan.* The role of food and taste are principal metaphors in *Diamond Grill* for the racially mixed subject and are vehicles through which the text aestheticizes its politics. As Baena notes, "The culinary language […] makes the notion of food metonymic of the elaboration of culture and identity" (Par. 3). The grill is the interior location where culinary elements mingle and are cooked together. Wah suggests the spicy, edgy flavours of Chinese cuisine are watered down for the Canadian palate, that the "taste" (*DG* 11) of one context is modified in translation. The text's references to taste conjure Immanuel Kant and his *Critique of Judgment,* a foundational text in the field of aesthetics which, according to Hegel, "constitutes the starting point for the true comprehension of the beauty of art" (*LA Vol. I* 60). Allison notes that when Kant's work was published in the eighteenth century, "taste was thought of as a special way of knowing, one for which rational grounds cannot be given, but which nonetheless involves an inherent universality. In short, it was not a private but a social phenomenon, inseparably connected with a putative *sensus communis*" (1). However, Kant narrowed this "way of knowing" from a public social phenomenon into a private concern that resembles the way Wah narrows race to food. According to Kant:

> But the judgment of taste, like every other empirical judgment, also only makes a claim to be valid for everyone, which, in spite of its intrinsic contingency, is always possible. What is strange and anomalous is only this: that it is not an empirical concept but rather a feeling of pleasure (consequently not a concept at all) which, through the judgment of taste, is nevertheless to be expected of everyone […]. (5:191:77)

For Kant, taste is no longer open to public interest, but is a private "feeling," a singular perspective devoid of any interest or conceptual grounding and is accessible to all. When Wah explores "How taste remembers life" (*DG* 74) by linking taste with memory, he produces a distinctly personal aesthetic separated from the harsh public flavours of racial politics. Memory is a personal conduit into the racial state's objective historical conditions and in *Diamond Grill* history happens personally. This is consistent with how Wah's "reconception of memory" (Cho 146) is contained within his own inwardness and separated from any collective apprehension. History is available to all, but memory like taste, is a personal phenomenon.

Diamond Grill approaches race as a problem that is primarily the responsibility of the racialized individual. According to Omi and Winant, "The effort must be made to understand race as an unstable and 'decentered' complex of social meanings constantly being transformed by political struggle" (55). They continue, "*race is a concept which signifies and symbolizes social conflicts and interests by referring to different types of human bodies*" (original italics 55). They propose to approach race not as a problem, but as an opportunity to examine what it does. While it is a social construct, "the concept of race continues to play a fundamental role in structuring and representing the social world" (55). In *Diamond Grill* race is internalized as a negative stigma Wah struggles to overcome rather than being externalized as a structural element of the settler state's colonial violence. This orientation reflects the state's priorities, which deflects political engagement inward. The text mentions the settler state's conflict with the Chinese through the Exclusion Act and head tax, which were government policies that targeted Chinese people to discourage and prevent their immigration. They are manifestations of Canada's racial policies from the past that continue in different ways to target minorities in the present, such as the Indian Act which is specifically designed to manage Indigenous peoples.

Diamond Grill portrays racism as "in the past" (*DG* 14), in the words of Wah's mother. Apologies are given for such policies suggesting that the conflict has been resolved and that race has disappeared as a factor as far as the Chinese community and the settler state are concerned. However, the text neglects the fact that racism can always be resuscitated and it never completely disappears as a strategy of power for the settler state.[71]

The setting of *Diamond Grill,* a restaurant, is a public/private space where politics are aestheticized for popular consumption. The metaphor of the "grill" operates as a "quick and dirty" (2) way of leveling taste for the broadest appeal, but is partitioned off from public view and is a private, inward process. Wah writes, "the hyphen is the door" that "swings between the Occident and Orient" (16). In this configuration, the West is the public space of consumption, and the East is the private interior of production. We are told "Mixed grill is an entrée at the diamond" (2), which combines disparate elements from various cultures, such as garlic and ginger, to create a new, hybrid dish: the multicultural subject rendered as an apolitical commodity. The chef is the private subjectivity of the autonomous individual adding this or subtracting that ingredient while engaged in preparing his own aesthetic enterprise – identity - for public consumption. In this way, the text reinforces individual autonomy over a private aesthetic realm.

Writing Thru Race

Diamond Grill appeared in 1996 just after the "milestone event" of the 1994 "Writing Thru Race" conference. As Smaro Kamboureli notes, The "Writing Thru Race" conference "was a milestone event […] because I felt, for once, that I had every reason to not leave the politics

[71] The outbreak of Covid-19 has foregrounded how "racism against people of Chinese ethnicity has been on the rise" in Canada, and former President Donald Trump's use of "kung flu" has been flagged as "racist." See Wu, 2020, and Nakamura, 2020.

that shape CanLit outside the door of my classroom. Since then lots has changed, not enough has changed, but CanLit studies has never been the same" (2015 17). In *Faking It*, when Wah expresses his support for the conference organized by The Writers' Union of Canada for racial minorities, he notes, "writers of colour and Aboriginal writers gain a significant social empowerment by engaging in dialogues that relocate the responsibility for their own subjectivity within themselves" (75-76). However, Wah's emphasis on individual "empowerment" and "subjectivity" suggests internalizing the racism of the settler state and turning it into a matter of personal responsibility. This orientation can be understood as the conditioned response to events that occur within the context of romantic inwardness where appeals to an individual's free will and agency are valourized as self-empowerment. It can also be seen as an example of what Pierre Bourdieu identifies as "misrecognition": "I call misrecognition the fact of recognizing a violence which is wielded precisely inasmuch as one does not perceive it as such" (1992 168).[72] Furthermore, misrecognition "leads those who are dominated to apply the dominant criteria of evaluation to their own practice" (in Loyal, 2017 34). In *Diamond Grill,* Wah is applying the "dominant criteria of evaluation," the logic of the racial state, to his own situation - as well to that of others - as people of mixed race.

The events leading up to the "Writing Thru Race" conference demonstrate how it disrupted prevailing settler assumptions regarding race in Canada and they help provide context for the publication of *Diamond Grill* two years later. While unable to attend due to a scheduling conflict, Wah maintains the conference "caused quite a stir in the ongoing debate about the

[72] Bourdieu adds, "What I put under the term of 'recognition,' then, is the set of fundamental, prereflexive assumptions that social agents engage by the mere fact of taking the world for granted, of accepting the world as it is, and of finding it natural because *their mind is constructed according to cognitive structures that are issued out of the very structures of the world*" (original italics 168). See Bourdieu, 1992.

country's policy of multiculturalism" (*Faking It* 75). Wah refers to the widespread criticism the conference attracted as the "usual confrontation" involving "liberal dogmatists of pluralism" (*Faking It* 75). As the following summary will demonstrate, the criticism was quite intense.

In 1993, a year before the conference was convened in Vancouver, the Writers' Union of Canada formed an advisory group, the Racial Minority Writers' Committee, chaired by Roy Miki, to identify topics for discussion. They established a policy limiting enrollment to "First Nations writers and writers of colour" (Tator 89). When the conference opened on 30 June 1994, it attracted a plethora of negative criticism. According to Tator, "The conference was important enough that it was debated in the House of Commons. Dozens of articles and editorials were written about it, and it led to intense public discussion among some of the country's leading writers" (86). Federal Heritage Minister at the time, Michel Dupuis, withdrew federal funding "on the basis that his government could not support an 'exclusive' conference" (91). The media coverage of the event was disproportionate considering that fewer than two hundred people attended and that its budget was under $100,000. Robert Fulford, a prominent media and literary critic at the time, criticized a fellow journalist, Bronwyn Drainie, for "skin-colour thinking" (104) and Richard Gwyn in the *Toronto Star* noted "the conference is an example of racism practised by those who have suffered from it […]. Something is going terrible [73] wrong. All these noble intentions seem to be turning us into the hell of a systematically racist society" (104). Editorial writers also took up this theme. The *Toronto Star* stated, "reverse discrimination does not end injustice, but rather feeds it" (in Tator 104). According to Tator, the conference "posed a significant threat to the Eurocentric values, assumptions, and beliefs that have formed the central

[73] Original quote. See Carol Tator, 1998.

core of Canadian cultural identity and aesthetic representations" (95). As Kamboureli notes above, this conference, although convened in 1994, continues to resonate in the present.

Two Founding Races

Diamond Grill evokes three different time periods – the past before the implementation of Canada's official multiculturalism policy in 1971; the text's published present in 1996/2000 and the reader's own present. Much of the text's focus is on events from Wah's youth in the 1950s when Canada was "for most purposes a monocultural, monolingual, single-nation state" (Day 178) and the expectation was "difference would wither away" (178). For Wah, who "can pass for white"[74] (*Faking It* 76), this turned out to be true. While race "carries no biological significance," in the words of the *Royal Commission on Bilingualism & Biculturalism* (Dunton 7),[75] Canada nevertheless is entangled with the notion of "two founding races" (3) first identified by Lord Durham in his 1839 report. This report that was precipitated, in its own words, by "two nations warring in the bosom of a single state" (in Haque 144). It led to the Act of Union in 1840, which was an effort to reconcile Upper and Lower Canada into one entity and eventually brought about the establishment of Canada. The *Bilingualism & Biculturalism Commission's* use of "race" was explained as a synonym for nation, referring to Durham's phrase "Two nations warring in the bosom of a single state…a struggle, not of principles but of races" (in Haque 144). As Eve Haque demonstrates, the history of Canadian multiculturalism is fraught with

[74] "The essential problem with the term" to pass, according to Wade Compton, "is that it illogically implies that what a viewer sees is the responsibility of the person being seen" (21). See Compton, 2010.

[75] The *B&B Commission* states, "we accept the words 'race' and 'people' only in their traditional sense-meaning a national group, with no biological significance- and we prefer to emphasize the facts of language and culture rather than the concepts of 'race,' 'people,' or even 'ethnic group'" (7). See Dunton, 1969.

contradictions and prejudices based on this ambivalent formula of "two founding races" (Dunton 3). In the text, Fred Jr. internalizes this ambivalence and personalizes it into a "snarl":

> Better watch out for the craw, better watch out for the goat. That's the mix, the breed, the half-breed, metis, quarter-breed, trace-of-a-breed true demi-semi-ethnic polluted rootless living technicolour snarl to complicate the underbelly panavision of racism and bigotry across this country. I know, you're going to say, that's just being Canadian. (*DG* 53)

Multiculturalism became national policy on 8 October 1971 when then Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau declared, "A policy of multiculturalism within a bilingual framework commends itself to the government as the most suitable means of assuring the cultural freedom of Canadians" (in Haque 224). Bilingualism elevates English and French above other linguistic groups and perpetuates the ambivalent formula of "two founding races," while Trudeau's focus on "cultural freedom" rather than political or economic freedom, remains relevant twenty-five years later in the 1996 context of *Diamond Grill*. As Wah notes, "race is food" (Goddard 1986), which is a cultural expression of ethnic identity. At the time in 1971, multiculturalism was more than just a new discourse; "it was also a formulation for national unity that subsequently established a particular system for the racial ordering of immigrant Others" (Haque 243). It has since been referred to as "the core component of Canadian national identity" (Richter xiii). As Kogila Moodley notes, "with a festive aura of imaginary consensus, multiculturalism implies that Canadian society offers equality of opportunity in the public sphere, regardless of private ethnic classification" (320).

Racial State

Through such policies as multiculturalism, the intervention of the settler state into racial politics is normalized into a *sensus communis.* The settler state grants itself the power to classify and quantify racial identity as a strategy of "racial formation" (Omi and Winant 55). *Diamond Grill* reflects how this state intervention operates when Fred Jr. as a boy is required to fill out a form at the beginning of each school year declaring his "Racial Origin" (*DG* 53). After he tries to write in "Canadian" his elementary school teacher corrects him, saying, "your racial origin is Chinese, that's what your father is" (53). Policies designed to manage difference and belonging like multiculturalism have emerged from what Michel Foucault identifies as "the subjugation of bodies and the control of populations" that accompany "an era of bio-power" (140). What needs to be confronted, Rey Chow suggests, is "racial violence as a systemic function, one that is internal to the workings of the social body" (15). Chow locates responsibility for this violence in structures, not individuals. However, in *Diamond Grill* Fred Sr. is expected to shrug off the "hurt" of racism, while Fred Jr.'s mother tells her son, "that's in the past" (*DG* 14). These are examples of the way *Diamond Grill* locates responsibility for structural racism within individual subjectivities. As Ann Stoler writes, "[r]acism does not merely arise in moments of crisis, in sporadic cleansings. It is internal to the biopolitical state, woven into the weft of the social body, threaded through its fabric" (69). *Diamond Grill* reinforces a logic of uniformity, or what Sneja Gunew refers to as the "homogeneous" (16) influence of Canadian multiculturalism: "Multiculturalism has been developed as a concept by nations and other aspirants to geopolitical cohesiveness who are trying to represent themselves as transcendentally homogeneous in spite of their heterogeneity" (16). *Diamond Grill* helps facilitate this homogeneity by reducing race to

private concerns metaphorically based on taste. *Diamond Grill*'s politics are homogenized into apolitical cultural expressions, or "dishes," also known as subjects.

According to Day, "multiculturalism in a bilingual framework is best seen as a creative reproduction of the colonial method […] and not as an overcoming or a break with this past" (197). However, *Diamond Grill* neglects connecting the historical conditions of colonialism to the present and consequently situates injustices in the past where they are subject to Reconciliation and redress. When "Grampa Wah" (*DG* 5) returns to Canada in 1904, he has "to leave his family behind because the head tax has […] been raised to five hundred dollars" (5). This reference to the head tax highlights the historical injustice the Chinese have endured and subsequent policies like the "Chinese Immigration (Exclusion Act)" (10). However, due to *Diamond Grill*'s atomized politics, the link between colonialism's past and present is obscured. Although the redress movement for the head tax and Exclusion Acts were ongoing in the 1980s and 1990s, *Diamond Grill* is silent on this contemporary struggle. According to Lily Cho, the redress movement began in 1983 when "Dak Leon Mark walked into the offices of his local Member of Parliament carrying his original head tax receipt for five hundred dollars and asked for his money back." According to Cho, "the head tax continues to be an important point of mobilization for the Chinese Canadian community and Asian Canadian critical discourse" (2002 62).

Blood Quantum

Wah states, "My own interest in the site and sign of the hyphen is essentially from a blood quantum point of view, that is, as a 'mixed blood'" (*Faking It* 74). However, this point of view is based on coping with the blood quantum terms set by the settler state, rather than challenging or unsettling them. When Fred Jr. recalls a photo of himself as a child, "I'm just a

baby, maybe six months (.5%)" (*DG* 83), he satirizes the absurd and dehumanizing calculus that quantifies the racialized subject. To help make his point, he conflates the effort to measure racial blood type with a person's physical age by referring to his infant self at six months, as being, ".5%". After listing the blood percentages of everyone present in the photo, including "a 100% full-blooded Chinaman" (83), he concludes, "we have our own little western Canadian multicultural stock exchange" (83). He continues to extend the financial metaphor to "racialized investments" and "colourful dividends" (83). However, the text stops short of interrogating the implications of the metaphor, such as how financial benefits accrue to different groups depending on their colour or place of origin. The effect of this containment of analysis is to ultimately avoid the political consequences of the state's racial logic. The section ends with the culinary advice to take such measurements with "either a grain of salt or better still a dash of soy" (83). This reference to flavour, or taste, is an aesthetic embellishment designed to make the unpalatable palatable. The suggestion is the racialized subject should take racism in stride, or simply fake it, rather than reject the settler state's apolitical multicultural dish.

As someone who "can pass for white" (*Faking It* 76) Fred Jr. is usually unaware of his racialized identity. The problem with the term "pass," according to Wade Compton, is

> it illogically implies that what a viewer sees is the responsibility of the person being seen. That is to say, this term we have for phenomena of misrecognition always implies deception on the part of the individual viewed. At its root, the term is about getting away with it, going underground, and intentionally escaping an oppressive racializing order. But what of those circumstances in which the person viewed has made no comment or projection of any kind, but rather is simply read by a viewer? (21-22)

Compton goes on to suggests "the syntax is misleading; the active voice steers us wrong […] 'passing' grammatically absents the person who reads someone's race" (22). As a result, the syntax implicates the racialized subject rather than the gaze of the racialized state. The fact that Wah believes he can "pass" for white implicates the motives of the victim, rather than the perpetrator of racial violence - the settler state.

According to the text, Wah was awakened to racism as an elementary school student: "Until Mary McNutter calls me a chink I'm not one" (*DG* 98). McNutter is a white girl "pheneticizing," to borrow Compton's term (23). Compton argues, "we need a new term that corrects this logical fallacy. We can borrow a word from biology 'phenetics' - and adapt it to this social phenomenon, recasting its verb form to create an alternative term, 'pheneticizing'" (23), which Compton defines as "Racially perceiving someone based on a subjective examination of his or her outward appearance" (25). McNutter is reflecting the violence of the blood quantum perspective that forces subjects into a hierarchy based on narrow, essentialized parameters of identity. As Ashok Mathur notes, the line recalls Althusser's concept of interpellation (*Faking It* 100), which suggests that Fred Jr.'s subjectivity depends on a wider social context. For Althusser, one's identity can be called forth from the environment, as in the oft-cited example of a police officer hailing a subject on the street (Althusser 174). However, the source of Wah's "childhood interpellation" (*DG* 182) is named "McNutter," perhaps a reference to her "nuttiness." The racism she conjures is immediately internalized by Fred Jr., which deflects criticism from the structural origins of the racism. As a result, Fred Jr. remembers that it caused him to notice race and concentrate on becoming "as white as [he] can" (98). Roy Miki refers to the "drive to excel at becoming Canadian, becoming, […] more than Canadian" as "a model minority syndrome" (2013 264). The desire to emulate one's oppressors, to become as white as

possible, is typical of a feeling of inferiority, according to Fanon, which is rooted in an internalization of structural racism. As Fanon writes, "If there is a taint, it lies not in the 'soul' of the individual but rather in that of the environment" (2008 165).

Discourse of the Minority

When he wrote *Diamond Grill* in 1996, "in response, no doubt, to the changing racialized times" (*DG* 182), he turned to what Homi Bhabha calls "the discourse of the minority" (1994 157) to address the dominant narrative of the state. This radical shift from becoming as white as possible to becoming a "miscegenated" (*DG* 178) subject can be understood as identifying with the victims of racism perhaps through a desire to identify with his father that had begun at least as early as 1985 with *Waiting for Saskatchewan*. Wah adopts the minority perspective of a "racially mixed" subject, but internalizes Bhabha's concept of hybridity as a personal strategy, rather than identifying it as an extension of the racial state's logic. As Robert Young notes, "For Bhabha, hybridity becomes the moment in which the discourse of colonial authority loses its univocal grip on meaning and finds itself open to the trace of the language of the other" (1995 21). However, Renisa Mawani states that "Bhabha's characterization has been rightly criticized and could be read as overemphasizing the subversive and insurgent potential of hybridity" (488).[76] According to Bhabha, "The discourse of the minority reveals the insurmountable ambivalence that structures the equivocal movement of historical time" (1994 157). This ambivalence is derived from the "process of splitting" (146), which explains the space between "the scraps, patches, and rags of daily life" and "a coherent national culture" (145). As Bhabha notes, "It is through this process of splitting that the conceptual ambivalence of modern society

[76] Bhabha's concept of hybridity has provoked many critiques. For a few examples see Mei-Po Kwan, 2004, and John Hutnyk, 2005.

becomes the site of writing the nation" (145-146). "Splitting" creates the gap between the private feelings "of daily life" and the public policies of "national culture." Policies that make appeals to affective universalism, such as multiculturalism, are designed to reconcile, or heal this split, and make the two into a cohesive unit based on terms set by the settler state. Wah's hybridity, adapted from Bhabha, reinforces the settler state's racial logic. His symbol of the "minority discourse" is the hyphen:

> I want to focus here on the scene of the hyphen as a crucial location for working at hybridity's implicit ambivalence. In order to actualize this hybridity, what Bhabha sees as "as negative transparency that comes to be agonistically constructed on the boundary between frame of reference/frame of mind" ("Signs Taken for Wonders" 175), the hybrid writer must (one might suspect, necessarily) develop instruments of disturbance, dislocation, and displacement. (*Faking It* 73)

This "agonistically constructed" (73) ambivalence is located within the hybrid subject - the writer - who Wah suggests, "must develop instruments of disturbance, dislocation, and displacement" (73) despite embodying the alienation and confusion of the racial state. Not only are individuals burdened with racism, they are further tasked with subverting the very structures that contribute to their suffering. Wah places too much responsibility for the settler state's racial policies and their solutions on the individual, rather than locate them more broadly within institutional structures. The focus on the "hybrid writer" (73) reflects the text's preoccupation with the individual being responsible for racism and its agonies.

Wah quotes above from Bhabha's 1985 essay, "Signs Taken For Wonders," which formulates "hybridity" as "the sign of the productivity of colonial power" (154). Bhabha's essay speaks to "English colonialism" (144) in India, Africa and the Caribbean. *Diamond Grill*

universalizes Bhabha's discourse to include immigration as a colonial process within the Canadian settler context. Whether an immigrant experiences colonialism as an Indigenous person does is overlooked by *Diamond Grill*. The text adopts "metis" and "half-breeds" as synonyms for hybridity, which has the effect of perpetuating colonialism by at once foregrounding and marginalizing Indigenous people.

Bhabha suggests hybridity "unsettles the mimetic or narcissistic demands of colonial power but reimplicates its identifications in strategies of subversion that turn the gaze of the discriminated back upon the eye of power" (1985 154). It is significant that in the time since Bhabha's essay and *Diamond Grill* were published critics such as Métis scholar Chris Andersen note: "social scientists have used Bhabha without sufficient regard for his positioning of a "third" space as an analytical rather than a "real" position. That is, Bhabha was speaking to a particular strategy for reading, whereas many social scientists have attempted to locate it as a strategy for analyzing social relations" (216).

Wah attempts a reading of Bhabha that locates hybridity in the socially engaged writer, rather than solely as a "strategy for reading." At its core, hybridity presumes an essentialism of race that produces it. As Andersen writes, "it makes little sense to gesture toward the emancipatory possibilities of hybridity without accounting for the elementally unjust relations of colonial power that produce and sustain it" (37). When Wah refers to "hybridity's implicit ambivalence" (*Faking It* 73), he appears unaware of its explicit essentialism. For Andersen, there is nothing ambivalent about hybridity.

Diamond Grill suggests the hybrid subject, "could be the answer in this country. If you're pure anything you can't be Canadian. We'll save that name for all the mixed bloods in this country" (*DG* 53-54). The text raises the possibility of forging a universalism from multiple

allegiances, one "that could recognize an alien identity and construct a common language of the other" (*Faking It*, 66). It is a possibility that might inspire "a kind of solidarity" (Bhabha, 1994 170) among hybrids that could replace "pure anything" with "mixed bloods" (*DG* 53) in order to create a state based on common allegiances, or what I term, "hybrid universalism." Wah's version of this solidarity finds itself in an individual identity that "is never pure, never sure" (*DG* 187). However, any such hybrid solidarity is doomed from materializing because the narrative in *Diamond Grill* is confined to Fred Jr.'s personal, isolated grievances. In the end, a community of autonomous hybrids is atomized by the agonies of structural racism.

Hyphen-Nation

As a "miscegenated" (*DG* 178) subject, Wah admits his "own hyphenation strikes a particular ambivalence" (*Faking It* 76). Wah is both Chinese and white at the same time and he aims to utilize a "hyphen poetics" and "remain within an ambivalence without succumbing to the pull of any single culture" (83). Wah suggests the racial subject has the ability to disturb, dislocate, and displace colonial authority. This emphasis on personal agency reflects the logic of the settler state that seeks to atomize its subjects and valourize individual agency above collective solidarity. The text demonstrates the difficulty of maintaining this ambivalence. As an adult, Fred Jr. drops in to visit his childhood friend, King, inside his family restaurant. Fred Jr. believes King embodies a "pure Chineseness" (*DG* 137). Later, "back outside, on the street," Fred Jr.'s "ambivalence gets covered over, camouflaged by a safety net of class and colourlessness – the racism within [him] that makes and consumes that neutral (white) version of [himself], that allows [him] the sad privilege of being, in this white white world, not the target but the gun" (138). Despite their personal history together, Fred Jr. and King remain apart. Wah is isolated from his "Chineseness" and is left to berate himself and rely on his own "sad

privilege" to overcome his alienation by assuming the role of race enforcer - "the gun" - that preserves the primacy of white settler society. This is indeed an ambivalence, but one that is located in the alienated individual rather than in any state authority or policy. The implicit suggestion pits "pure" against "impure Chineseness," which has the effect of essentializing both Fred Jr. and King and putting them in competition with one another.

For Wah, "the hyphen is in the middle, it is not in the centre" (*Faking It* 73), and he refers to it as "the door" (*DG* 16) between two ethnic identities, a hinge between two fixed places, the interior, private space of the kitchen grill, and the exterior, public space of the restaurant booth. However, the assumption is that both sides of the hyphen are pure manifestations of a racial and/or ethnic identity. This essentialism reflects a logic that relies on a constructed boundary or partition to keep the two separate. In order for the hyphen to have any potency, there must be pure, racial subjects to add to the mix at some point. *Diamond Grill* suggests hybridity is created on the mixed grill in the private space of the kitchen and is then sold, or performed, in the public space where "faking it" emerges as an existential strategy for survival. The text's emphasis on personal responsibility masks the fact that hybridity is a product of "the unjust relations of colonial power that produce and sustain it" (Andersen 37) because *Diamond Grill* locates racialization in individual attitudes and perceptions rather than historical conditions that generate such policies.

Multidirectional Memory

One notable factor about *Diamond Grill* is its lack of engagement with the material injustices of the racial state on the text's other characters that extend beyond the Chinese community. Michael Rothberg notes, "one of the most agonizing problems of contemporary multicultural societies" is "how to think about the relationship between different social groups'

histories of victimization" (2). While references to Doukhobors and Japanese might remind some readers of the injustices and struggles these groups endured in the past, the details are subsumed by a focus on food and pleasantries. Likewise, Fred Jr.'s acknowledgement of "the German massacre of the Jews" (*DG* 153) when making a delivery to Betty Goodman serves to reinforce the settler state's tendency of locating genocide elsewhere beyond its own borders. Nevertheless, this connection between Wah and Goodman highlights what Ikyo Day identifies as "an economic modality that links constructions of the Asian and the Jew" (3) within settler colonialism earning racialized Asians the "'New Jews' appellation" (6). However, *Diamond Grill* neglects such intersectional politics in favour of culinary ones, confining the racialized subject to a personal perspective. This logic further reinforces the authority of the settler state by reducing the possibility of collective identification in opposition to its policies that involve various communities. Given that the actual Diamond Grill restaurant was located in the 1950s in Nelson, B.C., a context surrounded by First Nations, former interned Japanese, and Doukhobors, Wah might have explored such grievances as the Japanese internment[77] or the bombings and protests involving the Sons of Freedom Doukhobors.[78] Instead, the text explains the Sons of Freedom are vegetarians and that they order strange dishes from the Diamond Grill when they are in court, but it does not divulge the events that summoned them to court (*DG* 45). While the Japanese relocation and internment in the Kootenays during the Second World War are mentioned in passing (77), any details are forfeited for a focus on the Japanese and "their tenacity and diligence" (77). We are introduced to two young Japanese women employed as waitresses in the Diamond Grill (77), but the brief references exacerbate the peril of slipping into stereotypes. The

[77] See Miki, 2004

[78] See *Righting the Wrong,* 1999.

Freedomites's food choices are "pretty strange" (45) and the Japanese are "hard workers" (77). While these observations may or may not be accurate, their brevity leads to stereotypical representations that obscure the historical conditions involved.

Half-Breed Hybrid

Indigenous peoples do not directly appear in the text, but the text conjures them as a rhetorical device. The term, "half-breed loneliness" (*DG* 7) is used to describe Chinese women who were often left behind and forgotten when men, such as Grampa Wah, traveled from China to Canada. When Indigenous peoples are invoked, *Diamond Grill* gathers them under the same universalizing category, "That's the mix, the breed, the half-breed, metis, quarter-breed, trace-of-a-breed true demi-semi-ethnic polluted rootless living" (53). As well as being the title of a seminal Indigenous text written by Maria Campbell and published in 1973 (*Halfbreed*), the term "half-breed" emerged from the Indian Act of 1886 as a "distinct legal taxonomy" (Mawani 488-489) to "distinguish between mixed-race and full-blooded Indians (489). According to Mawani, "many viewed half-breeds to be disreputable, immoral, and intemperate characters that were corrupting Indians and obstructing colonial efforts towards their racial and territorial integration" (491). This helps explain the term's negative connotations. *Diamond Grill* reconfigures these "Heinz 57 Varieties […]. living the hyphen" (53) as genuine Canadians: "If you're pure anything you can't be Canadian" (53). The politics of *Diamond Grill* are universalized to assemble all Canadians as hybrids while positing any mixed Indigenous subject as a legitimate hybrid. Not only does this racial logic entrench more racism by inadvertently granting "pure" status to Indigenous peoples who are "'fullbloods'" (Lawrence 17) and not recognized as mixed, it also dilutes any claim of the Métis to be anything other than Wah and other immigrant settlers "living in the hyphen" (*DG* 53). Moreover, the distinct oppression endured by so-called "half-breeds" is

erased. It is quite possible that Wah was unaware of this particular history and appropriated the term as others have done to designate any person of mixed race. Whatever the case, it serves as an indictment that a writer of Wah's stature publishing in 1996 and 2000 would be unaware of the historical connotations of the term. As Andersen writes, "Understanding *Métis* nationhood or peoplehood can never begin or end with a discussion of hybridity, because hybridity is neither an empirical nor a philosophical fact. It is instead but one of many lenses through which scholars interpret the social world around us" (5). Andersen also rejects the use of "Métis" to identify a mixed racial subject (7).[79]

Post-Text

In the "Afterword," Wah explicitly states that *Diamond Grill* is "largely about hybridity, literally about being racially mixed, miscegenated, Asian, Swedish, Scots, ChineseHYPHENCanadian" (*DG* 178). This admission explains how Wah internalizes the state's racial logic and the text can be read as an ongoing attempt to conform to it. He adds, the "hyphen is a real problem for multiculturalism; it's usually a sign of impurity and frequently erased as a reminder that the parts […] are not equal to the whole" (178). However, Canadian multiculturalism depends on the hyphen to function. Since multiculturalism became official policy in 1971, diversity has been emphasized as an official state virtue. What has been more problematic is being a visible minority. While Wah concludes that "identity is never pure, never sure" (187), and that he prefers to "remain within an ambivalence (*Faking It* 83)," the assumption is that this uncertainty somehow undermines multiculturalism and the settler state's racial logic. In fact, the opposite is the case: for the multicultural subject under the auspices of

[79] Andersen argues the use of Métis "as a conceptual placeholder for mixedness both relies on and reproduces a racialized hierarchy of indigeneity" (7). See Andersen, 2014.

the racial state, instability and precariousness are not uncommon conditions. The settler state prefers its subjects sealed inward inside their own private subjectivities, alienated or not, but ultimately powerless to provoke any political change.

On the final page of the text, Fred Sr. pulls into his parking spot behind the Diamond Grill and it is marked "Private" (*DG* 176). As he moves from the frozen chill of the exterior world to the warm interior of the restaurant he retreats inward into the gauzy romance of multiculturalism that artificially separates politics from culture. Once ensconced inside, the individual is meant to be truly at home in the settler state. *Diamond Grill* is a document of uncertainty and instability precisely because it attempts to legitimize an illegitimate apparition: race as deployed by the settler state. The final words of the 10th anniversary text confirm this: "You had me fooled there" (189). The suggestion *Diamond Grill* is the biotext of someone who has been fooled into pursuing the racial logics of hybridity and multiculturalism based on romantic inwardness.

Diamond Grill fulfills Hegel's notion of romantic art by facilitating "the education of the individual into the realities of the present" (*LA Vol. I* 593). The text achieves this through a theme of personal responsibility for the consequences of racialization in order to uphold the settler state's romance of multiculturalism and unity in diversity. Wah's notion of "faking it" and his assertion that "race is food" ultimately serve to aestheticize politics into palatable cultural issues, while positioning racialized subjects as not only responsible for their own oppression, but also for their own emancipation. Both Fred Jr. and his father demonstrate attributes of the elect subject in their inward response to racism and in their failure to connect it to the historical conditions that structure the politics of their lives.

Chapter Three

Reified Universalism: Rohinton Mistry's *A Fine Balance*

After the subject accepts personal responsibility for the political policies of the state, another sign in the quest for electability is the acceptance of power relations invested in individual personalities as part of a natural order. Rohinton Mistry's *A Fine Balance* articulates this characteristic of the romance mode while illustrating its portability by situating the story in India. With this chapter I hope to demonstrate how romantic fiction relies on confining subjects to systems that seek to preserve and extend their authority. As a literary form, romantic fiction deploys inwardness as an aesthetic practice. The title of this chapter, "Reified Universalism," refers to the novel's representation of its oppressive socio-political structure as a natural formation immutable to any human alterations.

The fine balance the novel's title refers to is the social order that preserves the inequities it produces. This unjust arrangement is better, the novel claims, than the chaos the alternative offers. Romantic inwardness is presented as a source of comfort under oppressive conditions for the main characters. It is an aesthetic response to a political dilemma.

A Fine Balance is set in India from the 1920s to 1984, a period that encompasses British rule, Independence and Partition of 1947, and the internal crisis known as "the Emergency" when Prime Minister Indira Gandhi's government, citing security concerns, suspended civil liberties for twenty-one months from 1975-1977.[80] The narrative centers on four main characters,

[80] "The Congress government cited threats to national security, highlighting the recently-concluded war with Pakistan as a plank for its argument." See Bose, 2021.

two middle-class Parsis[81] - Dina Dalal, a widow of forty-two living in Mumbai struggling to pay her rent, and Maneck Kolah, a university student from a town in the mountains who rents a room in her house. The other two are Chamaars - Ishvar Darji, approximately forty-seven, and his nephew, Omprakash, eighteen, who come from a rural village and have moved to the city to find work as tailors. The Chamaars are of the Hindu Dalit caste, also known as untouchables, and are "tanners and leather workers" (Mistry 95), an occupation involving the disposal of dead animals that the Hindu religion has regarded as a polluting activity (Shah 361). While the pair has been trained as tailors, they are still identified as Chamaars and occupy the lowest place in the text's hierarchy. In this chapter, I suggest the characters of *A Fine Balance* represent relationships that substitute personalities for political structures, where individuals become the focus for politics in a move that humanizes ideology and avoids Fanon's historical conditions.

The novel opens on 25 June 1975, the day the Emergency was decreed by Indira Gandhi's National Congress Party. The narrative then travels back in time to summarize the life stories of the main characters bringing their lives up to the text's present where all four are gathered in Dina's home. The majority of the novel takes place during the Emergency when Gandhi's administration enforced censorship, limited civil liberties, and imposed policies of social engineering on the poor. The novel ends in 1984, three days after Gandhi's assassination by her Sikh bodyguards, which led to the retaliatory deaths of over 3000 Sikhs (Singh 2014).

As an employer for the Chamaars from the untouchable caste, Dina Dalal, the text's main character, operates as a substitute for the Indian Prime Minister, Indira Gandhi. In her capacity as a stand-in "Mother India," the figure of Dina aestheticizes politics into individual relationships

[81] The Parsis (Persians) are a minority religious group of Zoroastrian followers who arrived in India from what is now known as Iran about one thousand years ago. See Writer, 1989.

based on appeals to inwardness as an example of "affective governance." Audra Simpson argues that in lieu of using violence to govern, the settler state "uses affect, it uses performance, it uses good feelings, and it expects you to have those feelings" ("Reconciliation and its Discontents" 2016). Mistry's characters deploy this strategy at the level of personal relationships. Dina may say to the Chamaars, "Government problems" do not "affect ordinary people like us" (*A Fine Balance* 75), but circumstances eventually prove her wrong. By suggesting they are immune from political influence, Dina neglects the structures that are the source of the Chamaars' suffering, as well as her own. Mahatma Gandhi's views help explain the text's aestheticization of capitalist relations. In 1925 he stated, "my ideal is that capital and labour should supplement and help each other. They should be a great family living in unity and harmony, capital not only looking to the material welfare of the labourers but their moral welfare also – capitalists being trustees for the welfare of the labouring classes under them" (in Young, 2001 322-23). This renunciation of politics in favour of "capitalists being trustees" helps preserve the fine balance represented by the text's oppressive hierarchy.

What is Canadian

Rohinton Mistry was born in Mumbai, India to a Parsi family and immigrated at twenty-three to Canada in 1975. He worked at a bank and attended the University of Toronto earning a degree in English and Philosophy while writing his first book, *Tales from Firozsha Baag* (1987). A collection of short stories, it was followed by the novel, *Such a Long Journey* (1991), which won the Governor General's Award and was shortlisted for the Booker Prize. *A Fine Balance* won the Giller prize in 1995 was also shortlisted for the Booker. In 2015, Mistry was appointed as a Member of the Order of Canada. Despite being born and raised in India, Mistry is "as

defining of what is Canadian as the Atwoods or the Findleys have ever been," as Hutcheon notes (Hutcheon, 1996 13).

According to Lukács, in realist literature the characters' "human significance, their specific individuality cannot be separated from the context in which they were created" (19). *A Fine Balance*'s inward response to oppressive politics resembles the other texts of my project. For example, while the text appears to articulate an emancipatory politics by highlighting the plight of the most vulnerable "from below" (Currie 240), it ultimately portrays the Chamaars as exemplary models of humanity's inward capacity to transcend political conditions through affective appeals based on personal sacrifice. This recalls Ananda in *Anil's Ghost* and Fred Sr. in *Diamond Grill*. This sacrifice is achieved by renouncing politics, which is an identifying feature of the romance mode. *A Fine Balance* accomplishes this by locating authority in social relations which are portrayed as friendly and fair, despite their inequality. As a result, *A Fine Balance* is as defining of the Canadian settler romance as *In the Skin of a Lion* or *Diamond Grill*.

"Compassionate Realism"

Much of the research about *A Fine Balance* focuses on its form as a "classical realist novel" (Rao, 2004 Par. 1). According to Moss, "Mistry's novel *resists* on every page, his resistance comes in the form of realism" (2000 158). In contrast to "magic realism," she argues "realism is a viable, perhaps even indispensable, form for political and social engagement in post-colonial contexts" (159). However, Moss appears to be suggesting realist writing is neutral. Mistry's "resistance" is countered by a neglect of colonialism's historical conditions rather than a deployment of realism. Rao argues that Mistry's realism is a conservative model that contains the agency of its main characters and "brings it into concordance with that most potent of nationalist myths: the powerlessness of the oppressed classes" (Par.3). According to Rao, the text

"reifies oppression" (Par. 3) by evoking sympathy but stifling the agency of its subaltern characters. This claim that realism is conservative resembles Lecker's [82] and suggests Mistry's text is part of the same mimetic tradition that reproduces the assumptions and worldview that inform the romance mode. This mimetic tradition is conservative because it reproduces a familiar worldview rather than challenging any received assumptions. For Derek Ettensohn, the text "stresses the importance of empathy and understanding to create a shared sense of humanity while foregrounding the conditions that enable these connections" (588). He notes that the text's back cover labels the work "'compassionate realism'" (580) and suggests Oprah Winfrey's selection of it to her eponymous book club immediately after the 9/11 attacks in the United States offers "a case study of the capacity of literature to create empathy and 'cosmopolitan engagement' in the moment of possibility after the attacks" (576). As a Canadian text, *A Fine Balance* valorizes romantic inwardness as a virtue. Furthermore, within the Canadian context during the period I identify as the Post-national Multiculturalism era, *A Fine Balance* received funding from the Writing and Publications Program (WPP) through the government's Department of Canadian Heritage, and was promoted in order to foster the impression that Canada was, in the words of then Prime Minister Jean Chrétien, "a post-national, multicultural society" that "contains the globe within its borders" (in Moss, 2011 39). According to Moss, "the Department of Heritage rather egregiously claims responsibility for the prominence and success of the writers supported by the Writing and Publications Program" such as Mistry (48). Moreover, "Many individual writers and publishers have benefited from the WPP sub-section of the multiculturalism policy. Rohinton Mistry, MG. Vassanji, SKY Lee, Nino Ricci, and Alistair

[82] According to Lecker, Canadian literature "exhibits a number of features that point to its fundamental conservatism" (2013 5).

McLeod, among other prominent, now mainstream, writers, received support directly or through their publishers" (45). My point is not that *A Fine Balance* is concerned primarily with Canada (although as a literary artifact it does convey the context of its production), but rather the Canadian government endorsed and promoted the novel as an exemplary model of multicultural literature.

"Children of God"

In the Indian context of *A Fine Balance*, the figure of Mahatma Gandhi represents the text's version of political engagement. Gandhi is closely associated with those he labeled "*Harijan*" (children of god) (Rawat 95), also known as Dalits or Chamaars in the text. According to Young, Gandhi "spiritualized and dematerialized" (2001 310) politics by appealing to the feelings of individuals to inspire social change, rather than legislate it as his rival B.R. Ambedkar advocated.[83] Gandhi's dictum, "[f]or human beings renunciation itself is enjoyment" (*Essential Writings* 76), in practice "was to continue the enforced impoverishment of the majority of the Indian people" (Young 310) by encouraging the Dalits to cease trying to change their caste status and make the best of what they already had. This inward approach focuses on adjusting personal attitudes rather than changing the material structures of oppression embodied by the caste system.

Gandhi's romanticization of the "Harijan perspective" (Rawat 10) has helped "account for the absence of systemic engagement with Dalits as political and historical actors" (9). Gandhi attempted to valorize their impoverishment as an ascetic virtue that focuses inward on matters of the spirit, rather than worldly attributes such as material wealth. The text replicates Gandhi's inward approach in its portrayal of the Chamaars. His overarching message was one of inward

[83] See Ambedkar, *Annihilation of Caste,* 2014.

renunciation, or sacrifice, which allowed the Hindu caste system to take priority over India's secular, political order. Rather than eliminate caste through political remedies, Gandhi sought to preserve caste through a spiritual outlook and hoped to change the hearts and minds of those who oppressed his "children of god" (Rawat 95). In this way, a spiritual attitude is preferred to one that engages in politics. Through Gandhi's advocacy for a spiritual approach to oppression rather than the political engagement of Ambedkar, he embodies the romantic inwardness valued by the state. Romantic inwardness earns the favour of those interests, such as state governments, which depend on current political arrangements being sustained. In Canada, multiculturalism attempts this same arrangement by emphasizing "a deeply personal" (Canada, Debates, 1971) connection to the settler state.

Gandhi is referred to in the text when his representatives from the National Congress visit the area where the Chamaars live "to spread the Mahatma's message regarding the freedom struggle, the struggle for justice" (*A Fine Balance* 107). The time period precedes the independence of 1949 and they single out the British Raj stating, "With truth and ahimsa we will convince the British that the moment is right for them to depart" (107). The text frames the "freedom struggle" as a non-violent, spiritual struggle involving "ahimsa," or what Gandhi defined as, "soul force or the power of Godhead within us" (Dayal 141). This follows the logic that favours an inward response to political injustice. Gandhi's representatives then expand their criticism to include Hinduism, adding, "how can we even start to be strong when there is a disease in our midst? [...] This disease, brothers and sisters, is the notion of untouchability […] No one is untouchable, for we are all children of the same God. Remember what Gandhiji says, that untouchability poisons Hinduism as a drop of arsenic poisons milk" (*A Fine Balance* 107). Ultimately, the remedy for obtaining liberation from the British, and for getting rid of

"untouchability," relies on Gandhi's emphasis to change people's hearts through ahimsa. Shortly after Duhki hears this message and his young sons, Ishvar and Narayan, get into trouble by wandering into an empty schoolroom and playing with the supplies. The teacher catches them and after "a dozen strokes" with a cane, he yells, "get out, and don't let your unclean faces be seen here ever again" (110). The text later explains that Ishvar and Narayan were beaten "for touching the slates and books of upper-caste children" (145). When Dukhi learns of this incident, he decides to seek justice from Pandit Lalluram, "a Chit-Pavan Brahmin – descended from the purest among the pure, from the keepers of the Sacred Knowledge" (111):

> Relying on this legendary reputation for justice, Dukhi sat at Pandit Lulluram's feet and told him about the beating of Ishvar and Narayan. The learned man was resting in an armchair, having just finished his dinner, and belched loudly several times during his visitors narration. Dukhi paused politely at each eructation, while Pandit Lulluram murmured "Hai Ram" in thanks for an alimentary tract blessed with such energetic powers of digestion. (112)

The Brahmin then delivers "a lecture on the caste system" in defense of the abusive teacher telling Dukhi, "just as you, a leather-worker, have to do your dharmic duty towards your family and society, the teacher must do his […]. Punishing your sons for their misdeeds was part of the teacher's duty. He had no choice" (113). This meeting serves as an example where an individual with all his singular particularities stands in for a system of justice. Duhki makes his appeal not to a process or in a public forum like a court, but to an individual. His claim for justice rests on the Brahmin's inwardness, his moods or predilections, rather than on any objective criteria. This is one of the ways the text reinforces the primacy of romantic inwardness in the mediation of

politics. The Brahmin appears as a benevolent arbiter, but in fact he is an obstacle to any adjustments to the fine balance of the novel's hierarchy. This is precisely how affective governance operates to offer personal sentiments like apologies that preserve the political structures sustaining its power.

This encounter convinces Dukhi to send Ishvar and Narayan to town to apprentice with their family friend, Ashraf the tailor. The decision is intended to provide his sons with social advancement. Duhki tells them, "Ashraf Chacha is going to turn you into tailors like himself. From now on, you are not cobblers" (114). However, this attempt to improve their social status fails and the brothers eventually suffer separate tragic fates. The text's representation of its social hierarchy is reified as natural, divine and unchangeable, rather than a social construction susceptible to alteration. In the face of authority figures like the Brahmin, appeals to romantic inwardness serve to perpetuate the structural injustices of society.

The Subaltern

While the term "subaltern" never appears in the text, Mistry's focus on India's most vulnerable is an attempt to give this marginalized group a voice. However, as Gayatri Spivak notes in her essay, "Can the Subaltern Speak?" such an endeavor is fraught with difficulties inherent in aesthetic representations when they get mistaken for political representations. As she notes, such misrepresentations can result in the type of "epistemic violence" (282) involved in the "project to constitute the colonial subject as Other" (280-281).[84] The term "subaltern" originates in the writings of Italian Marxist, Antonio Gramsci, who used it to refer to the peasant classes of southern Italy in the 1930s (Currie 220). The mainly India-based Subaltern Studies collective, led by Ranajit Guha, later adopted the term in the 1980s and attempted to recover a

[84] See Spivak, "Can the Subaltern speak?" 1988.

"history from below" that involved "the recovery of lost experiences and absent voices" (240). The text's portrayal of politics as deadly for this group and inwardness as the only available option is actually a perspective from "above" that resembles the elitist logic behind the romance mode. As Byrd and Rothberg contend, "Despite its clear political inspiration to craft a history from below, subaltern studies discourse situates itself necessarily in greater proximity to elite institutions, which it seeks to dismantle from within, than to subaltern communities" (10).[85] *A Fine Balance* is an example of how this "proximity to elite institutions" can dispossess the subaltern of agency with the noblest intentions. Tuck and Wang suggest such an effort to aid from "above" should not be regarded as "a philanthropic process of 'helping' the at-risk and alleviating suffering" (21). They warn that "the pursuit of social justice through a critical enlightenment, can also be settler moves to innocence - diversions, distractions, which relieve the settler of feelings of guilt or responsibility, and conceal the need to give up land or power or privilege" (21). In other words, approaching any emancipatory gesture "from above" includes the possibility of serving the interests of those "in greater proximity to elite institutions" of power. As a result of this "proximity," the text romanticizes the subaltern's suffering and naturalizes their oppression as inevitable. For example, when Narayan, Ishvar's younger brother, attempts to vote in a polling station located in the same schoolhouse where he was beaten as a boy, he is told by the village "goondas" to make a thumbprint and "we will do the rest" (*A Fine Balance* 145). Narayan, speaking for himself and two other men, dismisses this suggestion and demands ballots to exercise their "right as voters" (145). The goondas seek out Thakur Dharamsi, the village's secular authority, and another example of an individual representing a political system, for

[85] For more about subalternity and Indigeneity, see Byrd and Rothberg, 2011.

guidance. The Thakur accuses Narayan of "trying to humiliate" him (145), but Narayan persists. He is ultimately taken away with the two other men to Thakur's farm where they are tortured and hanged. Afterwards, their corpses are displayed in the village square, and the goondas are encouraged to rampage through the Chamaar quarter where they "beat up individuals at random […] stripped some women, raped others, burned a few huts" (146). The Thakur turns on Narayan's family, declaring, "the father is more to blame than the son" (147). The father, Duhki, is accused of "distorting society's timeless balance" by turning "cobblers to tailors" (147) in a reference to the training his sons received from Ashraf. The goondas force Dukhi and his wife, Roopa, into a hut with Narayan's wife and children where they are all burned alive. Ishvar and Om's absence is noted and the goondas proceed regardless, while "the family's death agony" signals their collective demise as the "blaze swiftly enfold[s] all six of them" (147). This horrific incident illustrates how the text locates power in individuals like Thakur and prioritizes "society's timeless balance" (147) over the agency of Narayan exercising his political rights. The only option available to the Chamaars is to passively accept their oppressive conditions and turn inward away from politics or face a brutal demise. After the massacre, Ishvar is further deprived of political agency by containing his reaction to the death of his family to a personal expression of helplessness. When the massacre is reported to the police, the Chamaars are mocked and the "best" Ishvar can do is "weep" (148) before he and Om return to their sewing jobs. Om, who harbours anger, is told by Ashraf that "Vengeance should not be […] our concern" (149) and the narrative moves on. The text voices the Chamaars' suffering, but stifles any opportunities for political change by taking action or by harnessing the potential redemptive power of anger. The Chamaars are abandoned by an aesthetic representation that reflects an elitist concern with the preservation of order, rather than the agency of these most vulnerable people.

Beautification

Later, after this incident Dina has hired Ishvar and Om and they find that their home in the city is in the process of being demolished in the shantytown where they live (291). After failing to stop the demolition, they have no choice but to sleep rough on the street. As a result of the Emergency, the police are given special powers to detain the homeless without due process and place them in labour camps or force them to submit to a sterilization program. To mitigate these extreme measures, the state deploys an aesthetic rationale, or "Beautification Programme" (365), to provide an explanation for why such actions are necessary. Om and Ishvar are eventually herded into a truck against their will and transported with other homeless individuals to a work camp far outside the city (319). While I do not intend to draw any parallels between the material conditions of the oppression of the Chamaars in India and Indigenous peoples in Canada, the rationale for the "Beautification Programme" bears a resemblance to the "civilizing missions" (Razack 7) cited for the existence of the residential school system throughout Canadian history. The Chamaars are also told the labour camps and sterilization programs are for their own good. The foreman at the camp describes it as a "generous scheme of the government […] introduced for the uplift of the poor and homeless" (*A Fine Balance* 325). At the camp they are made to carry out heavy labour, but when they complain their minimal food rations are threatened. They continue in this miserable situation until the Beggarmaster, a gang leader who offers protection to beggars for a fee, agrees to help them (360). He stands in as a protector in place of formal law enforcement agencies. The Chamaars are required to pay him every month once they return to the city and are able to resume their employment with Dina. This experience reflects how society dehumanizes its most vulnerable to the point where they can be dismissed as garbage to be swept off the streets for the "beautification" of society. The only option open to

them is to purchase their freedom or protection and rely on the whims of an unaccountable individual like the Beggarmaster.

After being released from the work camp, Om and Ishvar succumb to the government's program of forced sterilization and in the case of Om, castration. The sterilization camps signal the inevitable concluding logic for the detritus of society. The program targets the poorest and weakest as undisciplined and lascivious, while preventing them from reproducing. The text also makes clear that the program was carried out in part as revenge against those who were seen to be threats or trouble for those with power. After Om spits in anger before Thakur (512-513), he later instructs a doctor to castrate the Chamaar, rather than sterilize him. This occurs as Om is preparing to marry and start a family. When the procedure is completed his plans fall apart and he is fated never to marry, nor fulfill his dream of having a family due to the arbitrary authority of the Thakur. Om is left to his own inward despair and is provided with no options to act. He is helpless and silenced by the text's aesthetic representation of his predicament. Once again the characters are at the mercy of the inward moods of one individual who is shielded from accountability.

The use of aesthetics to legitimize the eradication of the weak and vulnerable operates to cover up the ugly economic imperatives of the government. The purpose for the Beautification Programme is located in public policy, while the excuse for it is expressed aesthetically through the taste preferences of the wealthy elite. As a result, the program is an example of romantic inwardness where aesthetics are deployed for the political concerns of one group rather than the public interests of the broader community. The Beautification Programme is itself a renunciation of a political solution to resolve the homeless situation. Dina's brother Nusswan explains the rationale for a programme that forcibly sterilizes the homeless and sweeps them off the streets:

> "People sleeping on pavements gives industry a bad name. My friend was saying last week – he's the director of a multinational, mind you, not some small, two-paisa business – he was saying that at least two hundred million people are surplus requirements, they should be eliminated."
>
> "Eliminated?"
>
> "Yes. You know – got rid of. Counting them as unemployment statistics year after year gets us nowhere, just makes the numbers look bad. What kind of lives do they have anyway? They sit in the gutter and look like corpses. Death would be a mercy." (366)

When pressed for clarification, Nusswan reiterates this position, while praising the government initiatives under the Emergency. Nusswan, through his friend in "a multinational," articulates the logic of a society where the poor are disposable. Romantic inwardness supports the conditions for atrocities to occur by forfeiting political engagement. If someone is unable to be productive, or becomes a hindrance in some capacity or another, they are worthless and a drain on the overall value of the system. The only option is for the system to purge itself of such subjects in the way Nusswan suggests. The deployment of the Beautification Programme also reveals the limitations of romantic inwardness. Confined to the "radical subjectivization" (Gadamer 38) of romantic inwardness, such aesthetic judgments resemble Kant's, which as Allison notes, helps turn matters of taste into a "private" (1) phenomenon that effectively abandons the novel's political casualties to the taste preferences of the rich and powerful. The Beautification Programme reveals how political dilemmas that are answered with aesthetic remedies can have devastating consequences on the weak and vulnerable, turning "death" into "a mercy" (366).

Realism and History

A Fine Balance has been referred to as "a postmodern approach to storytelling within the framework and conventions of realist literature" (Tokaryk 3). Mistry's use of multiple characters attempts to provide heterogeneous insights into a variety of experiences and the text also strives to uncover the complex social networks, such as the caste system and capitalism, that shape the characters' lives and relationships. However, these efforts are ultimately abandoned for a homogeneous perspective that reduces the varied experiences to conventional representations that preserve the order of society regardless of whether that order is just or not. The tragic deaths of Ishvar and Om's family, the deadly fate of Maneck and Dina's loss of independence elicit responses contained to inward expressions of grief, which are powerless to impact the source of suffering that resides in the political structures of society. The various perspectives and experiences of the four main characters align together in a passive inward acceptance of their tragic fates.

In *Realism in Our Time,* Lukács suggests realism expresses "the Aristotelian dictum" that "Man is *zoon politikon*, a social animal" whose "ontological being […] cannot be distinguished from [his] social and historical environment" (19). In realist literature, the characters' "human significance, their specific individuality cannot be separated from the context in which they were created" (19). Mistry's characters labour under the assumption that they can be redeemed by avoiding political engagement, in a way that resembles the character of Ananda in Ondaatje's *Anil's Ghost*. Mistry's chosen form for the novel recalls such realist texts as Leo Tolstoy's *Anna Karenina*, which functions to reproduce the romance mode through what Northrop Frye calls "displacement" (1969 136). As previously mentioned, this involves applying the romance mode in various contexts. I link displacement with Frye's observations that realism is "the art of

verisimilitude" or "an art of implicit simile" (136). As a result, this version of realism is influenced by inwardness. As Frye notes, realism achieves its aim when observers can imply a likeness through a simile that suggests the rendering of a real thing. What this type of simile affirms, however, is not reality but the observer's version of it. The realism critics identify in Mistry's work is actually a construct as there is no correct version of reality in his text. As a result, Mistry's reproduction of Tolstoy's form includes the romance mode as a form of its realism. For example, while Maneck becomes the most materially successful of the novel's four main characters, he eventually succumbs to despair. The suggestion is that material wealth will not be enough to overcome society's inequities - inwardness is also necessary. After returning to India from the United Arab Emirates for his father's funeral, Maneck discovers that his old Chamaar friends have ended up much worse off than he expected. He takes the opportunity to seek out Dina and finds that her home has been torn down and replaced with a modern apartment block. He then visits her brother's and Dina answers the door, a "stick-wristed figure [who] looked nothing like the Dina Aunty he had left eight years ago. Eight years in passing were entitled to take their toll; but this – this was more than a toll, it was outright banditry" (594). After they exchange a few awkward words, Maneck leaves and passes Om and Ishvar on the street, who we later learn attempt to address him as he seems to rebuff them, or is too overcome with despair to notice (598, 602). As with Anna from Tolstoy's novel, Maneck appears alone at the train station absorbed in his own thoughts, "walking against the flow" (601) as he approaches a railway platform. Once there, he "stared at the rails. How they glinted, like the promise of life itself." Maneck then steps "off the platform and into the gleaming silver tracks" (601), a suicide that parallels the death of Anna Karenina.

Maneck's reaction to the sufferings of his old friends fits into the same inward-focused pattern seen previously with Ishvar and Om, but for him despair results not in weeping, but suicide. Weeping and suicide are the only forms of agency the text allows its characters to express, as all other productive options are shut down. This homogenization of experience reinforces the helplessness of its characters and is an embodiment of reification, an inward affliction that internalizes social conditions such as the caste system as natural formations. This aligns with the romance mode which treats the external world as ultimately of no consequence to the inward well being of individuals. In the end, all the main characters are ravaged and mutilated to one degree or another, but it is only Maneck who commits suicide.

Neglected Value

One of the ironies of the text is the way it presents the weakest and most vulnerable character – Worm – as the most admirable and worthy. His nickname reveals how he is denigrated by society as less than human. Worm is the antithesis of the government's priorities – he is useless, vulnerable, and provides a distraction to those fulfilling their capitalist function by reminding them of inward virtues such as compassion and kindness. Not only is he a beggar, he is also unable to use his legs and relies on a wooden platform with wheels – a "gaadi" - to get around. His decrepit state has its benefits, however, as he often makes more in a day than his fellow beggars due to the severity of his condition. This makes it easier for him to appeal to the sympathies of others which the text suggests is a threat to its fine balance. However, the text's valourization of Worm's inward virtues signals an emphasis away from historical conditions and reinforces the conventions of the romance mode. It is through Worm - whose real name is Shankar, another name for Lord Shiva, one of the "major deities of the Hindu pantheon" (Caughran 514) - that Om and Ishvar meet the Beggarmaster. Worm is reliable and kind, and

inspires loyalty and affection in those who encounter him. While in the work camps, Om and Ishvar fall ill and it is Worm who helps by delivering them their meals despite his own physical condition (342). In the novel's caste/class hierarchy he is as worthless as the red worms Maneck flushes down the shower drain in Dina's home (251), but he can be invaluable to others. Rather than quantify his output according to the logic of profit and loss, he is appreciated for his presence and his efforts. He provides immaterial wealth in the form of companionship that society neglects to value. The characters who are killed – Worm, Narayan, Avinash – all pose a threat in one way or another to the fine balance of the text's oppressive hierarchy. Worm's death can be compared to Narayan's demise. Both are mutilated beyond recognition, and while Narayan actively agitates for his rights, Worm simply disturbs with his physical presence and kindles the inward virtues the text views as threats to its order. According to the text's logic, if too many people experience compassion or measure value qualitatively rather than quantify it, society's order may be jeopardized. However, this logic configures romantic inwardness, rather than political engagement, as a force that upsets structural inequities.

Worm eventually dies a passive death by succumbing to the apparatus of society's transportation networks when his is run over in a gruesome traffic accident. The narrative suggests his physical body has been crushed to the point that it has merged with his gaadi. He is mutilated beyond recognition, embedded into the material structure that once supported his life (491). As the Beggermaster reports, "with all my years in this profession, my eyes have seen much that is gruesome. But never anything this horrible. Both Shankar and the gaadi were crushed completely – not possible to separate the two" (491). In death it becomes clear how his life was inseparable from his material circumstances, but the text minimizes these inhumane

conditions by valourizing spiritual matters that facilitate the suffering and ultimately the death of Worm.

Reification

Worm's complete obliteration supports a reading of the text as a critique of its rigid social order. As a response to the prison-like structure of its worldview, *A Fine Balance* attempts to do what Patrick Lewis in Chapter One from *In the Skin of a Lion* suggests: make ideology "human" (135). To achieve this, the text aestheticizes Karl Marx's critique of capitalism by replacing individuals for economic structures. According to Marx, "a social division of labour […] is a necessary condition for commodity production" (*Capital* 132). Dina's private home becomes the site for this "division of labour." Gandhi's views help explain the text's aestheticization of capitalist relations when he states, "my ideal is that capital and labour should supplement and help each other. They should be a great family living in unity and harmony, capital not only looking to the material welfare of the labourers but their moral welfare also – capitalists being trustees for the welfare of the labouring classes under them" (in Young, 2001 322-23). This notion of capitalism as a family affair suggests its politics rely on personal attributes such as generosity or selfishness, rather than on the structural demands of a market economy. It places the division of labour within a household or "family" setting that obfuscates the harm it afflicts on human relationships. The idea of capitalism as "a great family" is reified in the text and presented as a normative condition.

Jameson notes that Lukács should be credited with rewriting the terms of realism to include the categories of "reification and totality" (2007 212). In *History and Class Consciousness*, Lukács echoes Marx by identifying how under capitalist modes of production the commodity-structure conceals the "fundamental nature" (83) of relationships between people and

things (*Capital* 166). Alienation sets in when the labourer apprehends his creation as a product to sell for profit. This confusion reverberates throughout the capitalist system displacing and devaluing the human subject until, as Marx writes, "Time is everything, man is nothing" (in Lukács, *History and Class Consciousness* 89). Eventually, this quantifiable logic results in the fragmentation and atomization of the human subject: "The atomization of the individual is, then, only the reflex in consciousness of the fact that the 'natural laws' of capitalist production have been extended to cover every manifestation of life in society" (91/92). The totalizing effect of reification creates the conditions for capitalism to confront the human subject in the form of "invisible forces" that seem to "generate their own power" (87). Romantic fiction obfuscates the historical conditions of its context in order to preserve the structures that sustain it and those whom it benefits like Marx's capitalist class.

The text's allusions to Marx's *Capital* are foregrounded in the occupations of the Chamaars. As tailors, they represent one of the examples – tailoring – that Marx deploys at the start of *Capital* to explain the commodity form (132-133). As Marx writes, "Tailoring and weaving, although they are qualitatively different productive activities, are both a productive expenditure of human brains, muscles, nerves, hands etc., and in this sense both human labour […] the value of a commodity represents human labour pure and simple" (134-135). The Chamaars perform this "human labour" for Dina, but the text highlights their affection for her while concealing her adversarial role. According to Marx, one quality of a fetish is that it conceals "the social relations between the individual workers by making those relations appear as relations between material objects, instead of revealing them plainly" (*Capital* 168-169). The text also obscures capitalist relations by placing Dina mediating between the modes of production. She is fetishized as friend and auntie, rather than being understood plainly as an

employer. When the Chamaars produce dresses for "Au Revoir Exports," they have no access to how the materials arrive in their hands or what happens when they finish sewing the products. However, at one point Om grows suspicious and attempts to follow Dina on a bicycle to discover where the company's offices are located. He ultimately fails and is almost run over in the process (*A Fine Balance* 189). This near-death experience operates as a metaphorical warning for those who, like Om, Narayan, and Worm, challenge existing hierarchies. The concealment of the dresses' origins maintains the fine balance of those who hold power over the Chamaars, and the text forecloses any opportunities for them to demystify the means of their oppression beyond their personal relationship with Dina.

The character who articulates reification is the proofreader, Vasantrao Valmik. His name recalls the lower caste group, the Valmikis (Rawat 242), as well as Valmiki the author of the Hindu epic, *The Ramayana* (Goldman 45), which ties him to the spiritual tradition of romantic inwardness. As with natural forces such as gravity, under conditions of reification capitalism and caste appear to the characters as systems that are natural and impossible to resist or transform. When Maneck first meets Valmik on a train journey from his mountain village to the city, Maneck expresses his idealism arguing for political change, saying, "Maybe if everyone in the country was angry or upset, it might change things, force the politicians to behave properly" (227). Valmik replies by dismissing the possibility of collective action as "chaos," "anarchy," and "mass hysteria":

> In theory, yes, I would agree with you. But in practice, it might lead to the onset of more major disasters. Just try to imagine six hundred million raging, howling, sobbing humans. Everyone in the country – including airline pilots, engine drivers, bus and tram conductors - all losing control

of themselves. What a catastrophe. Aeroplanes falling from the skies,
trains going off the tracks, boats sinking, buses and lorries and cars
crashing. Chaos. Complete chaos. (227)

During this conversation, Valmik quotes from "Easter 1916" by his "favourite poet," W.B. Yeats: "too long a sacrifice can make a stone of the heart" (*A Fine Balance* 227). The poem, about the violent Irish uprising that eventually led to independence from the English, involves Yeats grappling with the deaths of people he knew to conclude, "Wherever green is worn, / Are changed, changed utterly; / A terrible beauty is born" (Yeats 336). This was achieved through a violent war of political liberation, which is the opposite of what Valmik advocates through the preservation of a system that reflects "a fine balance between hope and despair" (228-229). Valmik's reification of society's political structures ironically obfuscates Yeats' political commitment and reinscribes the poem in an apolitical context.

Years later, when the two coincidentally meet again immediately prior to Maneck's suicide, Valmik tells him that storytelling, "helps to remind yourself of who you are. Then you can go forward, without fear of losing yourself in this ever-changing world." He then declares, "Ah, yes, to share the story redeems everything" (594). Valmik's emphasis on art's redemptive power is undermined when Maneck, apparently having lost himself, commits suicide soon after their meeting. While Valmik says art "redeems everything," he confesses to not knowing why, saying only, "I feel it" (594). This subjective, inward confirmation affirms how personal feelings take precedence in the text. The inward logic Valmik articulates as intuition not only situates it as a natural force that is inherent within humans and is therefore beyond the reach of political concerns, it has no power to save Maneck from committing suicide.

The figures of Dina and Valmik, both storytellers of different mediums, represent an inward approach to art that suggests politics can be transcended. They both pursue an aesthetic response to oppression that the text configures into practices that do not disturb historical conditions. Dina sews a patchwork quilt that tells her life story (598), while Valmik extolls the redemptive powers of bearing witness through the writing of stories (594). Near the end of the text when Dina is seeking help in her battle against her landlord, she also coincidentally meets Valmik outside the courthouse and admires "his expert narration" (554) wondering, if "the very act of telling created a natural design. Perhaps it was a knack that humans had, for cleaning up their untidy existences – a hidden survival weapon, like antibodies in the bloodstream" (555). This "natural design" suggests that this process is inherent within humans. Dina then asks Valmik why the justice system has been corrupted. He replies:

> Who knows why, madam. Why is there disease and starvation and suffering? We can only answer the how and the where and the when of it. The Prime Minister cheats in the election, and the relevant law is promptly modified. *Ergo*, she is not guilty. We poor mortals have to accept the bygone events are beyond our clutch, while the Prime Minister performs juggling acts with time past. (552-553)

Valmik equates political corruption with "disease and starvation" as though it were an inevitable natural occurrence beyond the ability of humans to influence it. This expression of helplessness is the logic of reification working at its utmost capacity to undermine any possibility of a change to its conditions. Valmik's "poor mortals" are at the mercy of a system that only appears impossible to change due to the phenomenon of reification. According to its logic, the only factor that can change is the character or worldview of the individual. This befuddlement of

reification fosters a belief that politics are beyond the "clutch" of "poor mortals" such as Dina and the Chamaars.

Maintaining Balance

The title, *A Fine Balance,* references Valmik's words, "You have to maintain a fine balance between hope and despair" (228-229). However, this balance depends on maintaining the hierarchies and aesthetic regime that reproduce the suffering of the characters. The fact that three of the four main characters end the story seemingly contented in their misery, sharing a "laugh" and "chuckling" (603), supports the romance of renunciation, or the triumph of romantic inwardness over public politics:

> Dina shut the door, shaking her head. Those two made her laugh every day. Like Maneck used to, once. She washed the two plates, returning them to the sideboard for Nusswan and Ruby to dine off at night. Then she dried her hands and decided to take a nap before starting the evening meal. (603)

As seen in Chapter One with Patrick, Kip and Ananda, and Chapter Two with Fred Sr., Mistry's text ends with a character, Dina in a private setting - in this case, her brother's kitchen - a manifestation of the isolated individual incapable of confronting the politics of her oppression. She and the Chamaars are the elect subjects of this romance because they offer no threat to the political structures that are the cause of their suffering.

Chapter Four

Colonial Universalism: Joseph Boyden's *The Orenda*

In December 2016, a year after Justin Trudeau was elected prime minister for the first time and had been warmly welcomed by the Assembly of First Nations, he found himself needing to shore up his relationship and renew his commitment to the truth and reconciliation process:

> I recently heard my friend Joseph Boyden speak to reconciliation and why it is so necessary. He asked Canadians to understand the damage residential schools caused to Indigenous Peoples by comparing it to a great tsunami in slow motion advancing over the course of 140 years, destroying homes, splintering families, drowning children. This tsunami in slow motion left no home untouched. But the tsunami has reached its high water mark and it now recedes. (Canada, Office of the Prime Minister 2016)

The fact that Trudeau deployed Joseph Boyden, an honorary witness for the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (*National Post* 2015), to appeal to the assembly demonstrates the power Boyden embodied at the time for the settler state. Boyden's credibility soon came into question, however, when later that month he faced a deluge of criticism over claims concerning his Indigenous identity. When Jorge Barrera of *APTN News* published an exposé documenting "Boyden's shape-shifting Indigenous identity" (2016) he was subsequently accused of being an impostor and a "pretendian" (Fine 2016) who was appropriating Indigeneity for white settlers. Boyden responded, "I do apologize for taking too much of the airtime. It's time to jump off that train and pull back a bit" (Wong 2017). He later produced DNA test results he claimed proved

his Indigenous ancestry. Boyden's attempts to prove his Indigenous affiliation and by extension, his authority to address Indigenous issues, was to appeal to settler norms. According to Kim TallBear, DNA definitions "are ultimately settler-colonial definitions of who is Indigenous" (TallBear 2018), and "People think that there's a DNA test that can prove if somebody is Native American or not. There isn't" (in Geddes 2014). Ojibwe/Dakota scholar Scott Lyons notes, "There may be no better example anywhere of a retrograde colonialist inheritance than blood quantum," adding that Indigenous tradition has "defined people by what they do, not by what they are" (*X-Marks* 143). Boyden's fealty to "settler-colonial definitions of who is Indigenous" is consistent with his 2013 text, *The Orenda*, and I offer it as evidence of what the settler state prefers in its Reconciliation narrative involving Indigenous peoples. The text portrays romantic inwardness in the form of appeals to personal responsibility that function to obfuscate its political contexts. *The Orenda* deploys the romance mode through Erich Auerbach's concept of "creatural realism" (247), which conveys romantic inwardness by suggesting life on earth "has neither worth nor dignity" (250).

So why Boyden? If he has lost the authority to address Indigenous issues, why should his work be taken seriously? I suggest it is still valuable as an instructive example of what a settler state prefers in Indigenous peoples. Although his credibility has been called into question, for over a decade he was widely regarded by the CanLit establishment as a significant Indigenous writer, winning the Giller prize in 2008 for *Through Black Spruce*, for example (Smith 2008). His reception is rife with potential insights and offers an opportunity to examine the settler phenomenon of what Shari Huhndorf calls, "going native" (2).[86] One famous example is "the

[86] According to Huhndorf, "Over the last century, going native has become a cherished American tradition, an important – even necessary – means of defining European-American identities and histories" (2).

celebrated trapper-turned-conservationist" (Braz 1), Archibald Belaney, the Englishman commonly known as "Grey Owl" who settled in Ontario and self-identified as Ojibwe until his death in 1938. Boyden's own uncle, Erl König Boyden, was known as "Injun Joe" and claimed to be Ojibwe. In the 1950s he was selling Indigenous crafts from a tepee-kiosk near Algonquin Park to tourists advertised with a sign that read, "Ugh! Indian Souvenirs!" (Sangster 1956). Huhndorf notes, "going native articulates and attempts to resolve widespread ambivalence about modernity as well as anxieties about the terrible violence marking the nation's origins" (2). *The Orenda* appeared in 2013 at a historical moment when the settler state was attempting to resolve some uncomfortable truths about its treatment of Indigenous people and was in the process of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission begun in 2010. As Huhndorf argues, "While those who go native frequently claim benevolence toward Native peoples, they affirm white dominance by making some (usually distorted) vision of Native life subservient to the needs of the colonizing culture" (5). The "vision of Native life" *The Orenda* articulates is one that enables Reconciliation with the settler state by portraying cooperation as mutually beneficial within the historical conditions that created colonialism. As a result, I read *The Orenda* as a literary example of a colonial text "going native."

Speaking about Boyden's Indigeneity, Mohawk scholar Taiaiake Alfred notes, "A person can't self-identify as Indigenous and claim to take that on. That simply doesn't exist in [the] Indigenous worldview. It's about relationships – relationships to land. To a people" (in Andrew-Gee 2017). This focus on relationships to land and community is a worldview that is in stark contrast to colonial notions of identity formation as an inward quest. The "Indigenous worldview" articulated by such scholars as Alfred, Audra Simpson, Glen Coulthard, Vine Deloria, Jr., and Leanne Simpson, expresses a perspective based on what Coulthard and Leanne

Simpson call, “grounded normativity” (Coulthard and Simpson 2016). These scholars emphasize a form of decolonization that “requires a fundamental epistemological shift away from Western theory” toward “Indigenous epistemologies” that “will provide the foundation for Indigenous liberation” (Simpson and Smith 4).

Colonial Universalism

The controversy over Boyden’s Indigeneity, and his eventual attempts to address it with DNA evidence, parallels the settler state’s approach to Indigenous issues during what I have referred to as the Multicultural Reconciliation Era from 1998 to the present, which I characterize as “colonial universalism.” What Boyden represents - and what Trudeau recognized – is a universalism where Indigenous people can be accommodated within the settler state through appeals to individual responsibility. If the individual accepts responsibility they become what Auerbach defines as “one of the elect” (136) who will ascend to reconcile with the settler project on its terms. Colonial universalism operates through settler-centered initiatives like Reconciliation where both the government and “elected” Indigenous people work together for the sake of improving the settler state. The settler state is therefore the “colonial” part of this formula and the mutual investment is the “universalism” of its appeal. It frames colonialism as a process that implicates the individual as a strategy of empowerment by minimizing dispossession to a personal flaw or mistake, one that can be rectified through individual initiative. *The Orenda* promotes individualism as a way of seeking empowerment where Indigenous peoples are encouraged to look to themselves and their own communities for responsibility for colonial events. Such events include the dispossession of lands and the “undermining” of the “*onderha,*” or the “‘foundation’ of the country’” (Blackburn 38), a term that embodied “Many of the most important aspects of Huron religion” (Trigger 75). This form of Indigenous individualism rejects

victimization in an attempt to assert agency over events that are beyond an individual's control. It also paves the way for Indigenous peoples to collaborate on initiatives like Reconciliation by absolving the settler state for the historical conditions that extend dispossession into the present. This is when Reconciliation appears to harmonize different worldviews in order to resolve intractable conflicts. Boyden's text exemplifies a settler romance through a narrative that amplifies themes of personal responsibility, election, and agency by suggesting Indigenous individuals are partially or wholly responsible for their own colonization. One problem with this view, according to Coulthard, is that it off-loads "Canada's responsibility to address structural injustices that continue to inform our settler-colonial present" (*Red Skin, White Masks* 155). Boyden's characters express what Coulthard identifies as "neocolonial subjectivities that coopt Indigenous people into becoming instruments of their own dispossession. According to this view, contemporary colonialism works *through* rather than entirely *against* freedom" (original italics, 156). For example, the italicized voices that open and close the text suggest that the events in the novel are ahistorical by claiming, "The past and future are present" (*The Orenda* 435). The voices also ask, "What role did I play in the troubles that surround me?" (281). This question invites the individual to assume a role in all the "troubles" from the seventeenth century to today in an effort to work "*through* rather than *entirely against freedom"* (italics added, Coulthard, *Red Skin, White Masks* 156). By taking responsibility for colonialism these subjects believe they are exercising their freedom when actually they are participating in their own dispossession.

Concepts of community and identity formulated by Indigenous scholars of decolonization like Alfred, Coulthard, and Leanne Simpson stress the interconnected relationships their communities have traditionally adhered to. These involve collective politics and are not solely confined to inward manifestations of personal responsibility. They also represent an inversion of

romantic inwardness through political commitments rooted in Indigenous epistemologies. As Alfred writes:

> Indigenous cultures and the governing structures that emerged from within them are founded on relationships and obligations of kinship relations, on the economic view that sustainability of relationships and perpetual reproduction of material life are prime objectives, on the belief that organizations should bind family units together within their land, and on a conception of political freedom that balances a person's autonomy with accountability to one's family. (2009 184*)*

As *The Orenda* demonstrates in the figures of the Jesuits and Champlain, who divide "the conquest of souls" from "the conquest of [the] land" (106), Western epistemologies have emphasized the separation of land and Indigenous spiritual issues, rather than their interconnectedness. Vine Deloria Jr. apprehends Western and Indigenous worldviews through notions of time and space. According to Deloria Jr., there is a "fundamental difference" between the "American Indian and Western European immigrant":

> American Indians hold their lands – places - as having the highest possible meaning, and all their statements are made with this reference point in mind. Immigrants review the movement of their ancestors across the continent as a steady progression of basically good events and experiences, thereby placing history – time - in the best possible light. When one group is concerned with the philosophical problem of space and the other with the philosophical problem of time, then the statements of either group do not make much sense when transferred from one context to the other without

the proper consideration of what is taking place. (2013 61-62)

Deloria Jr. is expressing an incommensurability between settlers and Indigenous worldviews. This recalls the structure of incommensurability that the French philosopher Jean-François Lyotard calls a "differend" (Lyotard 1988). According to Lyotard, "a differend [*différend]* would be a case of conflict, between (at least) two parties, that cannot be equitably resolved for lack of a rule of judgment applicable to both arguments" (xi). Byrd and Rothberg note, "A legal term for a situation in which the two parties to a case do not share a common language in which to articulate the wrong at stake, the differend describes the bind in which the state repeatedly places indigenous communities" (2011 7). Povinelli adds, "While the justice of an indigenous claim always seems to confront the law with a specific face, the law of recognition always demands that this specific face speak its difference within a legislated norm" (2011 27). While Lyons has critiqued Deloria's analysis for "its simplicity" (in Simpson and Smith 4), Coulthard argues, "Deloria does not simply intend to reiterate the rather obvious observation that most Indigenous societies hold a strong attachment to their homelands. Instead, he is attempting to explicate the position that land occupies an ontological framework for understanding *relationships*" (original italics, "From Wards of the State" 69-70). It is these relationships that position Indigenous people "as much a part of the land as any other element" (70). As Patricia Monture argues:

> Although Aboriginal Peoples maintain a close relationship with the land, and this is related to Aboriginal conceptions of sovereignty, it is not necessarily the same relationship Canadians understand. It is not about control of the land from my Aboriginal view. Earth is mother and she nurtures us all. If any hierarchy is attached to this view, it is the human race that is dependent on the earth and not

vice versa. (2009 125)

For Deloria Jr. “Western secular thought is essentially Christian in its foundations” (in Simpson and Smith 4). In its depictions of graphic violence, particularly torture and cannibalism, *The Orenda* articulates a version of Auerbach’s “creatural realism” (Auerbach 247) which is an aesthetic representation of reality and is present in “the Passion of Christ…or in the passions of the martyrs” (247) like Jean de Brébeuf, who the character of Christophe resembles. Auerbach notes, “the portrayal” of these passions “becomes more and more brutal while its sensory and mystic power of suggestion grows stronger” (247). Auerbach suggests, “the story of salvation in the contemporary daily life of the people had reached such a pitch, and their minutest details had become so penetrated with typology, that religious realism exhibits symptoms of excess and crude degeneracy” (248). The concept of “creatural” is “of essential importance for late medieval realism” and “It is characteristic of Christian anthropology from its beginnings that it emphasizes man’s subjection to suffering and transitoriness” (249). It denotes a “devaluation and denigration of earthly existence” (249). Auerbach adds, “The peculiar feature of this radically creatural picture of man” (249) resembles “a radical theory of the equality of all men, not in an active and political sense but as a direct devaluation of life which affects every man individually. Whatever he does and attempts is vain” (250). Life on earth “has neither worth nor dignity” and “God has appointed that there be inequality between them in their lives on earth. But they are equal before death, before creatural decay, before God” (250). In the Christianized context of the novel, what might be called “Hegel’s creatural realism” suggests that the dissolution of the body promotes romantic inwardness, or the development of the soul. By extension, land as a material element, may also be sacrificed if it can be rationalized for a spiritual or aspirational purpose. This gap between a Western worldview informed by Christianity and an Indigenous one based, in part, on

relationships with the land, are the "philosophical" problems with time and space that Deloria suggests "do not make much sense" (2009 61-62) when both sides come together in pursuit of mutual understanding. Such misunderstandings reveal an incommensurability that may be insurmountable within a colonial context where Reconciliation prevails as a policy goal.

According to Alfred, "the real and deeper problems of colonialism are a direct result of the theft of our lands, which cannot be addressed in any way other than through the return of those lands" (2009 183). Understood in this way, land is connected to the ontology of Indigenous peoples and any approach to reconciliation must address the dispossession of these lands. However, Boyden's text is confined to romantic inwardness and is therefore unable to address the colonial politics in which the dispossession of Indigenous lands is a defining feature. *The Orenda* avoids Alfred's view of restitution and instead expresses a worldview that conforms to colonial universalism, which seeks accommodation with current political arrangements that depend on the dispossession of Indigenous lands. As Audra Simpson writes, "Like Indigenous bodies, Indigenous sovereignties and Indigenous political orders prevail within and apart from settler governance. This form of 'nested sovereignty' has implications for the sturdiness of nation-states" (*Mohawk Interruptus* 11). Reconciliation involving the restitution of Indigenous lands will therefore require challenging the "sturdiness" of the settler state and *The Orenda*'s colonial universalism is a response that is ill-equipped to address such realities.

Comforting Narrative

I will now turn to *The Orenda* to demonstrate how romantic inwardness is manifested to suggest, in part, that colonization arose through irresponsible personal choices and not through violent practices of dispossession. The title refers to "a life force" (*The Orenda* 28) that permeates everything, living or not. According to J.N.B. Hewitt, the "*orenda*" is a "subsumed

magical potence" (43). The text is set in the Great Lakes region during the Iroquois Wars of the seventeenth century, and culminates with the destruction of Wendake, the Wendat homeland and their dispersal in 1649 to Gahoendoe, modern-day Christian Island in the Georgian Bay. Based loosely on the experiences of Jesuit missionary, Jean de Brébeuf, the text alternates from chapter to chapter among three first-person perspectives: Père Christophe, one of "the crows," or Jesuits seeking to convert the Wendat; Bird, an aging Wendat warrior mourning the loss of his family at the hands of the Haudenosaunee; and Snow Falls, a young Haudenosaunee girl captured after Bird kills her family in an act of revenge. When it was published in 2013, *The National Post* hailed *The Orenda* as a "timeless" and "classic" novel. However, the same article also recognizes, "the idea that First Nations, by allowing the missionaries into their villages are partly to blame for the devastation of their culture" is "controversial" (*National Post* 2013). Peter Mansbridge told Boyden in a televised interview from 2013 that it was "the work of your life" (*CBC* 2014). The expectations were very high and the accolades did not disappoint. Kamal Al-Solaylee claimed to be "enraptured" by "Boyden's struggle – as a writer, a Canadian, and a human being – to reconcile the irreconcilable" (Al-Solaylee 2013). However, Anishinaabe scholar, Hayden King, in a review that in retrospect seems prescient, dismissed the text as a "moral alibi" for colonialism and "a comforting narrative for Canadians about the emergence of Canada" (King 2013). Historian Richard Weyhing found the "inner lives" and "internal monologues […] simplistic" and "unreflective of the rich historical cultures from which they emerged" (Weyhing 104). I too find the text's voices are homogenized and suggest Boyden engages in what Lyons refers to as "a bad kind of historical revisionism" by "reading […] present desires into the past" (*X-Marks* 123). This involves projecting assumptions about characters' subjectivities from completely different contexts. Bracken cites Paul Ricoeur's

analysis of John Locke's notion of identity from 1690 in *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (1979) as "the victory of sameness over difference" (2014 126) and suggests this concept of identity represents "a resistance to the experience of otherness" (127).[87] Boyden's three main characters also demonstrate "sameness over difference." For example, all come from radically different contexts – a Jesuit missionary, a young Haudenosaunee girl, a middle-aged Wendat warrior – yet they all express uniform subjectivities through linear monologues in the present tense. Wendat historian, Kathryn Magee Labelle excuses Boyden's "two-dimensional" female characters and his neglect for "the critical role women played within the warfare experience" (2015 428) as a problem with his main source, *The Jesuit Relations*, which reflects a Western worldview at the expense of an Indigenous one.

Jesuit Representations

In the "Acknowledgements" for *The Orenda,* Boyden cites the seventeenth-century text, *The Jesuit Relations,* as a primary source for providing "insight and sometimes the words I needed" (*The Orenda* 437). However, as Micah True notes, "The Jesuits […] created *representations* of Amerindian cultures, filtered through the biases, beliefs, language, and culture of the missionary writers and editors" (17). As seen in the previous chapter, the problem of representing marginalized groups from outside of the group is fraught with problems. According to Labelle, these male-centered reports make it difficult "to recreate the important lives of Wendat, Haudenosaunee, and Anishinaabe women" (2015 428). The *Relations* were "reports from the New France mission that were published annually in France between 1632-1673" (True

[87] According to Ricoeur, "The situation of John Locke within the philosophical current of inwardness is utterly singular." Ricoeur credits Étienne Balibar for underscoring that "Locke's invention of consciousness will become the acknowledged or unacknowledged reference for theories of consciousness in Western philosophy from Leibniz and Condillac, passing through Kant and Hegel, to Bergson and Husserl" (102). See Ricoeur, 2004.

9). They were "part of a long letter writing tradition of the Society of Jesus" (9), and by all accounts, "were a great success" and "in high demand in seventeenth century France" (10). The letters were in large part responses to audience expectations in Europe designed to evoke both material and popular support for their endeavors, but they also expressed patronizing generalities and sensationalistic details. For example, according to Father Francois du Peron writing in 1639 after a journey up the Ottawa River (Franks 550), "The nature of the Savage is patient, liberal, hospitable; but importunate, visionary, childish, thievish, lying, deceitful, licentious, proud, lazy; they have among them many fools, or rather lunatics and insane people" (in Thwaites 155). Although *The Orenda* is an English language text, the Jesuit characters use the French "*sauvage*" (*The Orenda* 32) to refer to the Indigenous characters. Franks notes "*Sauvage* as used by Cartier and the other early explorers and missionaries had few of the connotations of brutishness and ferocity now associated with the English "savage" (547). However, he adds, "[t]he legal, philosophical, and theological justifications for taking Indian lands varied depending on the religion and motivations of the colonizers, but the end results were the same: the Indians were dispossessed, and overwhelmingly came to be viewed as bad and savage" (559). The novel also supports this conclusion. For example, Christophe notes, "the depravity and brutality I've witnessed so far is that these beings, while certainly human, exist on a plane far lower than even Europe's lowest caste" (*The Orenda* 30). Regardless of deploying "*sauvage*," the result is the same as "savage." The Jesuits were not trained ethnographers and their writings express more about their own concerns than about the Wendat or Haudenosaunee. The savagery portrayed by the text's Indigenous characters invites the Jesuits, and by extension, Western colonialism, to civilize their behaviour. While the civilizing mission of the work camps in *A Fine Balance* was designed to serve the private interests of society's rich and powerful, in this chapter the civilizing

mission is expressed through the missionary work of Jesuit priests serving the private interests of a colonial project. In fact, *The Orenda* presents this civilizing mission[88] as a pretext for the production of "subjects of empire" (Coulthard 2007) that operates as a response to expectations of a settler state that seeks its own version of universalism. As Nichols points out:

> By attending to the assimilative function of claims to universal inclusion, we also can better grasp the techniques of a range of alternatives, or the means by which they are foreclosed. By focusing on the historical experience of settler colonialism, for instance, we cannot avoid foregrounding the fact there may be some forms of life or modes of governance that are universalizing in the sense that they literally colonize and absorb alternatives. They create the world after their own image. (2014 112)

The Jesuit Relations, and by extension, *The Orenda*, elucidate the ways in which "claims to universal inclusion" (Nichols 112) such as romantic inwardness, "colonize and absorb alternatives" (112). The appeal of *The Jesuit Relations* is a result of these claims that Nichols suggests permit settler writers to "create the world after their own image" (112). *The Orenda*'s approach to the "historical experience of settler colonialism" reproduces the worldview found in the *Jesuit Relations* and enabled Boyden to deploy it for "insight and […] the words [he] needed" (*The Orenda* 437).

[88] As Nichols writes, "Almost without exception, European philosophers of the nineteenth century found their contemporary society (often their specific nation) to be at the pinnacle of this anthropological development, while indigenous, non-European societies were relegated to lesser, barbaric or savage forms, often understood as a kind of 'living anachronism': frozen moments of Europe's own past caught in the present" (2013 166). As Williams notes, this worldview, "is the redemptive source of the West's presumed mandate to impose its vision of truth on non-Western peoples" (1990 6).

The Jesuit Relations is a manifestation of romantic inwardness as a text that valourizes the Christian concerns of white settlers in a foreign wilderness. As Christophe notes, "I must remember, though, that all of us are God's creatures. It is my mission to begin to help these poor souls rise up. The only way that their eternal souls might be saved is to accept Jesus, and to do this they must accept the Eucharist" (*The Orenda* 30). According to the Jesuit, "the sauvages" have no choice but to surrender their orenda and accept a colonial manifestation of inwardness as universal in order to be "saved." Christophe's focus on the Eucharist, a metaphor for cannibalism, operates as a civilizing contrast to the actual cannibalism that occurs at the end of the text involving the Iroquois character, Hot Cinder, also known as Joseph. As Blackburn notes, "The Jesuit's representations of torture and cannibalism in the context of warfare are the more vividly dramatic because they and other French were potential victims" (65). *The Orenda* exploits this "creatural realism" (Auerbach 247) into something "more vividly dramatic" (Blackburn 65) based on an inward preoccupation with Christianity. This is expressed as both fear and desire - a fear of succumbing to savagery and a desire for martyrdom embodied in their saviour, Jesus Christ.

Franks notes the Jesuits, "likened the Hurons to Greek sculptures in their physical beauty" (557). In *The Orenda,* Christophe observes "a very handsome young man, high cheekboned and with a frame like Michelangelo's David" (78), and likens Bird to "a Roman god" (232). He is struck "by how much [the Indigenous characters] resemble Greek senators from ancient times" (141). Hegel considered the apotheosis of Western art to culminate in the form of Ancient Greek sculpture during the "classical age," which reconciled spirit itself to appearances (*LA Vol. I* 527). While he praised the Greek sculptors as masters of form and substance, according to Hegel's aesthetic system art is the third stage behind religion and

philosophy before the Absolute. By asserting their superiority, the Jesuits are confirming Hegel's valourization of romantic inwardness over not only the aesthetic realm, but the political as well. According to Franks:

> Intentionally or not, these descriptions of the Indians as living images of antiquity, of their generosity and charity worthy of Christians of early times, and the attraction of the free and wandering life across an untouched and virgin wilderness, served as the basis for developing critical analysis of European society which led to Rousseau and the philosophers of the French Revolution. (558)

Moreover, "the encounter with the North American Indian lay behind much of the thinking of the French Enlightenment. The construct of the *bon sauvage* that derived from this encounter became a key source for arguments for freedom and equality (and perhaps especially for *fraternité*) that inspired the French Revolution" (573). As Philip Deloria writes:

> noble savagery has a long history, one going back to Michel de Montaigne, Jean Jacques Rousseau, and other Enlightenment philosophers. If one emphasizes the noble aspect, as Rousseau did, pure and natural Indians serve to critique Western society. Putting more weight on savagery justifies (and perhaps requires) a campaign to eliminate barbarism. Two interlocked traditions: one of self criticism, the other of conquest. They balance perfectly, forming one of the foundations underpinning the equally intertwined history of European colonialism and the European Enlightenment. (4)

The *Jesuit Relations* contained the origins of noble savagery and their representations of Indigenous peoples became one of the examples French intellectuals used to justify an

Enlightenment project that took their own emancipation as its subject. Texts like the *Jesuit Relations*, as Edward Said notes, "can *create* not only knowledge but also the very reality they appear to describe. In time such knowledge and reality produce a tradition, or what Michel Foucault calls a discourse, whose material presence or weight, not the originality of a given author, is really responsible for the texts produced out of it" (1979 94). By relying on *The Jesuit Relations* as source material, *The Orenda* participates in a discourse that represents Indigenous peoples who allow their traditions and customs to be violated. Take the following passage from the opening of the book: "*And when they cawed that our magic was unclean, we laughed, took a little offence, even killed a few of them and pulled their feathers for our hair. We lived on. But that word, unclean, that word, somehow, like an illness, like its own magic, it began to grow. Very few of us saw that coming*" (3). The larger issue of "*our magic*" being *"unclean*" is ambiguous and overtakes the Wendat like a pathogen that is beyond the control of humans. Colonialism is like a disease and Indigenous people are its passive victims. Another passage from the end of the novel reads, "*Most of us will admit we were taken aback by how quickly the crows adapted. When you fall asleep laughing in the evening, it's difficult to awake crying in the sun. But this isn't just about sadness, or pity, or blame. We're all party to our own wants as well as to our own shortcomings*" (435). The acknowledgement that most of the Wendat "*were taken aback*" at the abilities of the Jesuits to adapt suggests a people ill-prepared to defend themselves, while the references to "*laughing*", "*crying*", "*pity, or blame*" are emotional expressions devoid of political agency. These passages reveal a people inwardly focused on feelings others might have about their "*magic*" while having very little concern for their own material dispossession at the hands of the colonizers in the text. Moreover, any focus on their complicity in their own colonization is amplified. For example, *The Orenda*'s main theme has to do with the spiritual

labour of the Jesuits whose main concern is for individuals and their souls. This takes place within the larger context of the internecine conflict between the Wendat (Huron) and the Haudenosaunee (Iroquois), while the political arm of the European colonizers, represented by Samuel de Champlain and his military troops, hover in the background as detached observers, rather than as active participants pursuing their own interests. Moreover, colonialism is reduced to the Wendat allowing the Jesuits to live among them. Bird expresses his frustration with himself as "the one who brought [Christophe] here" (56). As Coulthard writes, "ignoring or downplaying the centrality of dispossession" is to risk "becoming complicit in the very structures and processes of domination" ("From Wards of the State" 61). By assuming responsibility for dispossession, Bird is demonstrating the colonial universalism necessary to become one of the "elect" subjects of empire.

Loss of Magic

The Orenda opens with a direct appeal in the present tense to the individual reader concerning "the crows," or Jesuits. The narrative is in the first-person point of view and the typescript is in italics, which frames the novel's omniscient register:

> *We had magic before the crows came. Before the rise of the great villages they so roughly carved on the shores of our inland sea and named with words plucked from our tongues – Chicago, Toronto, Milwaukee, Ottawa – we had our own great villages on these same shores. And we understood our magic. We understood what the orenda implied.* (3)

Immediately at issue here is dispossession in the loss of magic and knowledge of the orenda, but as is consistent with the text, responsibility is not assigned. According to Blackburn, "The Jesuits themselves were accused of trying to ruin the country by undermining the *onderha*," defined as

the "'prop' or 'foundation' of the country" (38). This strategy implicates the reader in the events described, avoids blame, and invites an affiliation with a mutually shared set of assumptions about the meaning of such terms as "*our magic*", "*our tongues*" and the list of settler cities. The events belong to the reader in a move that universalizes its content and invites settlers to identify with the experience. In other words, our story involves your story and "we" are all invested in its outcome. This affective appeal fosters a universalism that neglects the historical conditions that create different experiences of colonialism. It is also connected to the theme of personal responsibility by suggesting everyone is involved in the dispossession, which is one of the ways *The Orenda* assigns Indigenous peoples complicity in colonialism. The text then gives voice to the sky gods amplifying this theme of dismissing blame for the orenda's receding power:

> *But who is at fault when that recedes? It's tempting to place blame, though loss should never be weighed in this manner. Who, then, to blame for what we now witness, our children cutting their bodies to pieces or strangling themselves in the dark recesses of their homes or gulping your stinking drink until their bodies fail? This, on the surface, is the story of our past*. (3)

The abstract reference to "what we now witness" apparently concerns the legacies of colonial oppression such as suicide and alcoholism that afflict "our children." Tanya Talaga writes that the "historical separation of Indigenous people from their land, the separation of children from their parents, the separation from their traditional culture and ways of living [...] have contributed to a spiritual emptiness that has resulted in generations of children's deaths" (17). Writing about the contemporary trauma of suicide afflicting young Indigenous people of the Nishnawbe Aski Nation (NAN), "a political organization comprising forty-nine First Nations" in northern Ontario (3) near to where *The Orenda* is set, she states:

> The scope of the suicide problem is immense. From 1986 through December 2017, there were more than 558 suicides across NAN territory, a community comprising only forty-nine thousand people. Last year, 2017, was the worst in recent memory, with thirty-seven suicides. Most of the suicides are by hanging, and the majority are by young men. The number of attempts – those who try to take their lives but fail – is even greater. Since 1986, an almost incomprehensible eighty-eight children between the ages of ten and fourteen have killed themselves. (11)

The narrative appears to be addressing current historical conditions by suggesting the text is speaking to the present at the same time it is addressing the past. In fact, the final words of the text make this clear, "*The past and the future are present*" (435). This shift to an atemporal mode decontextualizes the events and gives rise to the claim that the historical events represented in *The Orenda* are connected to colonial oppression and suicides today. The text's portrayal of Indigenous peoples as inherently dysfunctional is naturalized as one that transcends time.

The dismissal of blame, specifically for the role of western colonialism, is an expression of what Alfred refers to as a "pacifying discourse" (2009 182) that represses legitimate forms of constructive anger, while exonerating the structures that perpetuate dispossession or loss. As Coulthard writes, the "appropriate manifestation of our *resentment,*" which is "understood as an incapacitating inability or unwillingness to get over the past," is actually "a politicized expression of Indigenous anger and outrage directed at a structural and symbolic violence that still structures our lives, our relations with others, and our relationship with land" (*Red Skin, White Masks* 109). However, *The Orenda* rejects this "Indigenous anger" in favour of an inward focused theme based on self-responsibility. In other words, the text neglects assigning blame to

Europeans for colonialism and instead shares it with Indigenous peoples, which risks blaming the victim for their own abuse.

The text invokes the romance mode as a way of equalizing the role adversaries play in the formation and resolution of events and also as a way of attempting to equate their spiritual worldviews. As Christophe notes when trying to describe the spiritual system of the "sauvages", "In matters of the spirit, these sauvages believe that we all have within us a life force that is similar, if you will, to our own Catholic belief in the soul. They call this life force the orenda" (*The Orenda* 28). However, he is appalled when confronted with an Indigenous belief he cannot recognize: "What appalls me is that these poor misguided beings believe not just humans have an orenda but also animals, trees, bodies of water, even rocks strewn on the ground. In fact, every last thing in their world contains its own spirit […]. I have to admit, dear Superior, that I'm still left confused" (28). When compared to Christianity the text over-simplifies the orenda rather than portraying it as a way of life that might offer a genuine alternative to a Western worldview. When European and Indigenous spiritual systems clash in the text Christianity prevails. Snow Falls, for example, is beguiled into believing that Christophe's crucifix pendant contains her own deceased father, "imprisoned in the glowing being around his neck" (37), and Bird is convinced Christophe has special powers over the dying. In contrast, Christophe dismisses the orenda as "magic" and Indigenous people as "under the sway of Satan" (77). The Indigenous characters are much more impressed with Christianity than the Jesuits are with Indigenous practices. The text's imbalanced perspective reproduces the ongoing dispossession of Indigenous power by failing to expose colonial spirituality to a critique of substantive merit.

Internecine Conflict

After an introduction involving the sky gods, the text opens with the chapter, "Hunted" (*The Orenda* 5) told from the perspective of Christophe who is accompanying the Wendat while the Haudenosaunee pursue them in battle. The internal monologue of Christophe occurs at the outset of the text and creates an affective bond with the reader that becomes the primary mediating force for the majority of the novel. Readers are encouraged to experience events primarily through the eyes of the Jesuit, even when the text alternates from chapter to chapter among the other two Indigenous perspectives. The Jesuit is portrayed as having fundamentally different interests from Champlain, who represents military and political matters. This privileging of the colonizer's point of view allows for such clichés as the inevitability of Indigenous dispossession and the inferiority of Indigenous civilization to be reinforced by the narrative and it exemplifies one of the text's major flaws. Its context is predisposed to be sympathetic to Christophe's perspective. Rather than land or resources, *The Orenda*'s narrow focus on the individual posits the souls of Indigenous people as the main commodity to possess. This emphasis on romantic inwardness, or the souls of Indigenous peoples at the expense of material resources obfuscates the issue of dispossession that forms the political context of the novel.

Coulthard sees "colonialism as a form of structured dispossession" (*Red Skin, White Masks* 7) that resembles Karl Marx's "historical process of primitive accumulation" (8). For Marx "primitive accumulation plays approximately the same role in political economy as original sin does in theology" (*Capital* 873), and as Coulthard notes, it "links the totalizing power of *capital* with that of *colonialism"* (*Red Skin, White Masks* 7). However, this "actual

history" (*Capital* 874) of colonialism's formation and connection to capitalism is concealed by the text's overemphasis on romantic inwardness and the souls of Indigenous peoples.

The Jesuit's first thought is "of the end" of Indigenous people: "The weight these men give their dreams will be the end of them" (*The Orenda* 5). This reference to the "vanishing Indian" topos is repeated throughout the text and its repetition makes dispossession seem inevitable by naturalizing the processes of colonization. As Simpson and Smith note, situating "Native peoples as dying cultures to be assessed, memorialized, and classified" has functioned as a "colonial imperative" (2014 4-5). *The Orenda* amplifies the inevitability of the demise of Indigenous culture to emphasize the power of the settler state and make it appear as omnipotent. From the settler perspective, it is the only entity that can guarantee the survival of Indigenous peoples.

The first appearance of violence in the text belongs to the Indigenous characters. Bird is involved in an ambush of Snow Falls' family, and her parents and brother are murdered. She recalls in a dream:

> It's a good thing my father lies dead on the ground near [mother] with an arrow through his neck or he would not stop until all of them are dead. But he is dead and my mother shakes toward him and my oldest brother, who is blind and deaf and cannot see or hear our parents dying, leaves the world with them when the big older man clubs him in the head. (*The Orenda* 11-12)

The internecine Iroquois wars are the source of the text's conflict. As with the orenda's perceived uncleanliness, factors contributing to the formation of colonialism are portrayed as preexisting contact. The text minimizes how the influence of the fur trade and the introduction of a European market caused or exacerbated existing tensions. *The Orenda* helps erase the

"conquest, enslavement, robbery, murder" of colonialism's "actual history" in favour of promoting a "nursery tale" (*Capital* 874) that invisibilizes European violence. According to George Hunt, "these white men wanted […] what every native had or could get, furs or land, and the trade that was opened was a trade in which every native could take part" (4). Moreover:

> The abundance of furs and the inexhaustible market for them made North America a unique theater of interracial contacts. On other continents the desire of traders had been for materials or products considerably less plentiful and less easily obtained by individuals, but here the ease of acquisition, the apparently limitless supply, the ready market, and the permanence of the white settlements permitted the constant participation of every native, expanded the business of trade to unprecedented proportions, and changed, almost overnight, the fundamental conditions of aboriginal economy. (4)

The text neglects this "business of trade" and its influence on relations among Indigenous peoples. In fact, violence between the Wendat and Haudenosaunee is separated from European influence and is assumed to exist in perpetuity. While Europeans introduce the "shining wood," or guns (*The Orenda* 114), their use is portrayed as only one factor in the ongoing conflict between Indigenous nations. The text also references the French/English conflict but it occurs away from the main narrative and is incidental to its plot. This leaves Indigenous people to their own suffering through a struggle over personal spiritual matters involving the Jesuits, rather than land or material resources. The text's spiritual theme reinforces an inward-focused narrative at the expense of one that would implicate Europeans in colonial politics. The violence is limited to the individual and its effects are psychologized as personal grief or rancour. Snow Falls and Bird

are both haunted by the murders of their families. For example, Bird recalls, "the awful deaths of you, my wife, and you, my two daughters. There's been no peace since. I no longer care for peace" (*The Orenda* 9). Snow Falls also recalls, "I want my mother to hold me. I want my father to rub my nose with his. I want my brother to carry me across the creek so my feet don't get wet. I want my father's brothers to kill all these men who have killed my family. I want my father's brothers to make these men feel the same pain I do" (18). Bird no longer cares for peace and Snow Falls is wanting. She repeats the verb "want" five times over as many sentences. The portrait of Indigenous peoples as driven to violence through suffering of their own making reinforces a narrative of personal responsibility that helps to exonerate settlers from accountability in historical events by transferring it to Indigenous individuals.

A notable feature of the text is its portrayal of extreme violence and torture, or "caressing" (239), as it is euphemistically referred to. As Blackburn notes about the *Jesuit Relations*, "torture appears in the *Relations* as a visible manifestations in this world of the consequences of the absence of the belief and the abandonment of and by God" (63). *The Orenda* opens with Christophe suffering in a desolate winter landscape where "Lucifer's fires are ice" (7) and he imagines his death as food for a pack of wild dogs: "As the dogs circle me I will try to smile at them, baring my own teeth, too, and when they begin to eat me I won't feel myself being consumed but will, like You, Christ, give my body so that others might live" (7). According to Blackburn, "Many Jesuits thought that martyrdom was necessary in order to plant the faith in New France" and they "believed that their willingness to die would impress people with the truth of their teaching" (65). The references to martyrdom and other forms of physical violence recall the denigration of the physical world that is at the heart of creatural realism. It is an extension or an attribute of romantic inwardness that shuns historical conditions in favour of

an individual's inward quest for electability. The reference to the consumption of human flesh foreshadows the cannibalism attributed to Indigenous peoples, primarily the Haudenosaunee. The text presents extreme violence with graphic descriptions of severed body parts and piercings of flesh that renders Indigenous people as uncivilized and in need of civilizing. The text is consistent in its ruthless portrayal of a New World that necessitates the imposition of European colonialism to bring law and order to the "sauvages" in the wilderness. As Blackburn notes, cannibalism became "a signifier of the worst kind of savagery" (64).

The sky gods suggest, "*the crows,*" or Jesuits, "*cawed that our magic was unclean*" and "*that word […] like an illness, like its own magic, it began to grow*" (*The Orenda* 3). The implication is that the Jesuit's actions amounted to a criticism of Indigenous spiritual practices rather than a more systemic assault as has been noted by Blackburn above. This criticism of Indigenous spirituality as "unclean" was internalized and somehow began "to grow" into self-loathing to become a contributing factor in the demise of their "magic." The text suggests that "an illness," or insecurity in the Indigenous belief system, already existed at the moment of first contact, and perhaps even before. As a result, every debilitating factor that followed can be attributed to a flaw that was not an effect of colonialism. This is how the text's colonial logic naturalizes the atrocities of colonization as disasters beyond the control or accountability of European interference in the lives of Indigenous people. Later, the sky voices directly imply that the events of the text are a matter of personal responsibility: "*What role did I play in the troubles that surround me?*" (*The Orenda* 281). The text minimizes the invasion of Europeans as a matter of individual responsibility. The focus on the "I" as the cynosure of "the troubles" isolates the individual and fosters a settler worldview that relies on the atomization of its subjects to maintain its domination. For example, Bird arranges a meeting with the Haudenosaunee who demand

wampum "meant as peace offering" (91), and the return of Snow Falls. On the journey to the meeting, Bird leaves it unattended in a canoe. Christophe picks up the "hide pack" (80) unaware of its contents, and loses it after falling down an embankment (81). He decides he cannot inform Bird he lost it out of fear for the consequences. However, when Bird discovers the wampum has disappeared he blames "the girl" (92), Snow Falls. When he meets his Haudenosaunee counterpart, the latter says, "That's not what we agreed upon" (95), and a brutal battle breaks out. This scene can be read as an allegory of the text's colonial politics. The European, present because he has been invited into the Indigenous community, acts with the best intentions and unwittingly intervenes, causing dire consequences. He avoids responsibility and the Indigenous male character blames a female for the cataclysmic conflict that ensues. Extrapolated into the present, the settler state plays the role of the well-intentioned priest that has not invaded but has been invited onto Indigenous land and inadvertently exacerbates already existing tensions among Indigenous peoples. The most vulnerable members of the community, in this case Indigenous women, are subjected to an inordinate amount of blame and abuse. Colonialism is thus reconfigured as a problem that begins within Indigenous communities.

"A Conquest of Souls"

The main focus of *The Orenda* is on spiritual matters, Hegel's inward realm of the heart which is exposed to the religious appeals of the Jesuits and witches like Snow Falls (152), or sorceresses like Gosling (125). *The Orenda* is the spiritual system of Indigenous peoples, specifically the Wendat, and the struggle is between this orenda and Christianity battling for Indigenous peoples' hearts and souls. In the text, the private and public realms of Indigenous peoples are not separated as they are with the French. The "sole interest" for Samuel de Champlain "is the conquest of this land," while for the Jesuits it "is the conquest of souls" (106).

The explicit separation between the spiritual and material worlds, Fanon's "psycho-affective" (2004 148) and "historical conditions" (2008 62) of colonialism, is portrayed as an advantage that enables the Europeans to "birth the next great civilization" in New France (*The Orenda* 103). The text implies Indigenous peoples suffer for their apparent inability to practice a similar form of separation. All their important deliberations and rituals, for example, occur in the "great longhouse," which functions as both a legislature and habitat for "okis" (59), or souls.

When he meets Champlain in New France, Bird expresses his people's "desire to become a great family […] to aid us in our troubles with the Haudenosaunee" (108). This reference to a family recalls how in Chapter 3 Gandhi invoked a family to explain capitalist relations that aestheticizes its exploitative politics. This appeal to romantic inwardness by turning colonialism into a family affair where Champlain is seen as a brother serves a similar function. Bird's request to Champlain can be read as a practical attempt to gain support in the fight against his perceived enemy, but the text prevents access to his point of view at this crucial moment. Instead, the scene is seen from the perspective of the Jesuit, and colonialism, embodied by the figure of Champlain, is portrayed as being welcomed or invited by Wendat characters who seek out European rather than Indigenous alliances in order to gain access to guns or military aid. Champlain "looks like a king" dressed "in his finest robe, his golden medallions of conquest around his neck" (107). Then "He raises his crystal glass, and the light glitters on it, around it, through it like a lit jewel" (107). He addresses Bird and the Huron entourage as "brothers" that "have common troubles" (108) and adds, "But we French have proved ourselves strongest. The evidence is that we are still here, despite the British doing everything they could to dislodge us from this place and you people that we love" (109). Champlain is a benevolent and powerful figure who protects the interests of both the French and Indigenous peoples. The text suggests Indigenous people

collaborated with Europeans in forming the foundational relationship that eventually became Canada. This fosters the view that the settler state resembles a family, rather than the network of political arrangements involving dispossession that actually structure it. In fact, according to Richard White, an "accommodation" actually did exist "for long periods of time in large parts of the colonial world," in the form of a "middle ground […] in between cultures, people, and in between empires and the nonstate world of villages" (XXVI) engaged in political, economic, and social exchanges. However, *The Orenda* obfuscates this historical record by narrowing the novel's context to discussions of military collaboration and spiritual competition. White suggests, this "middle ground" eventually broke down and "Indians" were recreated "as alien, as exotic, as other" (XXVI). According to Franks, this occurred in the nineteenth century when "truly nationalist histories began to appear" and "sympathetic appreciation of the Indian vanished" (570).

A Brutal Death

The first-person point of view of Christophe at the end of the text while he is being tortured and eaten alive emphasizes the barbarity of Indigenous people and the victimization of Europeans:

> With my good eye, I see Joseph come to me, holding a knife. He looks me in the eye, and then cuts deep into my sternum. I can feel his hand enter my chest.
>
> *May it be for us a foretaste of the heavenly banquet in the trial of death.*
>
> I can feel my life slowly pulsing in his hand. (*The Orenda* 426)

This portrayal of creatural realism, where gratuitous violence is represented as a way of promoting romantic inwardness through fetishizing the demise of the flesh for the advancement

of the soul, takes place from the perspective of the martyr, Christophe. He is the intended victim and the target for sympathy, thus reinforcing the valourization of romantic inwardness. He watches the heart of inwardness being devoured by a savage transgressor. Indigenous peoples dispossess themselves of any right to make claims for sympathy or justice because they embody the barbarism that erodes the apparatus upholding such rights. While Labelle notes that "spiritual and ritualized eating of body parts during torture or prisoner ceremonies" occurred (2013 224), it is nothing new to attribute extreme violence to Indigenous peoples. In fact, the text reproduces and amplifies these acts of torture that have become common stereotypes. As Georges Sioui writes, "we have been conditioned by early historiographers to attribute undue significance to [the subject of war and violence in Amerindian society]" (174) but "the truly significant aspects of Wendat society are those that reveal its ability to nurture, edify, and grow" (174). *The Orenda* perpetuates this "undue significance" of violence and war, which reinforces colonial stereotypes of Indigenous people engaged in "riotous living" (Marx 873)[89] and in need of civilizing. Moreover, the instigator of this "riotous living" is an Indigenous cannibal feasting on the pulsing heart of a tortured Christian priest from the land of the romance's origins, Brittany. Not only are Indigenous peoples a threat to romantic inwardness; they are cruel savages sadistically devouring Hegel's conduit to God, or the Absolute – the heart.

A few moments after Christophe's heart is removed, he watches the scene unfold, "from above now as Joseph smiles, lifting the red weight of it to me so that, as my sight fades, I may glimpse what he holds in his hand. He bites into it, and I can see myself again, a small boy reaching for a branch, grasping then biting into the stolen fruit" (*The Orenda* 427). Christophe

[89] In the context of primitive accumulation Marx somewhat wryly notes, "long ago there were two sorts of people; one, the diligent, intelligent and above all frugal elite; the other, lazy rascals, spending their substance, and more, in riotous living" (873). In this way, the "civilizing mission" links Indigenous peoples to the historical process of "proletarianization" (Coulthard, *Red Skin, White Masks* 8). See Marx, 1976, and Coulthard, 2014.

equates his own fall involving the original sin of seizing the "stolen fruit" with the young Indigenous man he had earlier baptized - "Joseph" - but who has rejoined the Iroquois and is also known as "Hot Cinder" (262). The implication is that Joseph too has fallen but now lacks the redemptive apparatus of the Christian faith to be saved from the hell fire his translated Iroquois name invokes. However, by consuming the heart of the Jesuit priest, Joseph/Hot Cinder has actually internalized the heart of Hegel's romantic inwardness in a distinctly unchristian form of the Eucharist. Moreover, the reference to Christophe's home in Brittany and allusion to biblical "fruit" moves the setting from the chaos of Indigenous lands to the biblical world where good and evil are rewarded or punished, signaling the text's triumph of the inward realm of spirituality over the historical conditions of Indigenous dispossession. In fact, Brittany is not only Christophe's French home (122), it is also the original context for the romance and a major influence on the romance mode in the form of Chrétien de Troyes's Arthurian tales. According to David Staines, King Arthur's Round Table may be an allegorical representation from Brittany of "a desire for equality" (xiv). *The Orenda* establishes an equalizing narrative that levels the historical playing field in favour of achieving colonial universalism where elect Indigenous individuals such as Bird and Gosling, are reconciled - as "subjects of empire" (Coulthard 2007) - into the logic of colonialism.

The ending of the text situates the main Indigenous characters in the realm of inwardness. After burying Snow Falls and fleeing Wendake, the narrative collapses into the internal monologue of Bird. Gosling, his lover, is pregnant and as they reach Gahoendoe Bird expresses hope and contentment for the future of his own family. As he is being comforted by Gosling "like a little boy" (*The Orenda* 433), he finds reassurance in her words:

I listen as she tells me the story of the Birds who will come after I am gone,

> how they'll be great warriors and great hunters and great seers. On this night she makes me see that life goes on despite so much of it around us having so brutally expired. We hold each other beside this lake, the frogs' singing gone quiet now, the fire warm, the stars turning above us in their slow and dizzying walk. (433)

The hope for "the Birds who will come after" is a reference to Boyden's earlier text, *Through Black Spruce*, in which Bird's modern relative is introduced in the character of the Cree native, Will Bird (2008). *The Orenda* concludes as other texts from previous chapters, with individuals located in a domestic or intimate setting retreating into deep feeling as a refuge from politics, in this case the colonial violence that seeks to obliterate the orenda in order to absorb Indigenous peoples into the colonial project.

Chapter Five

Gothic Universalism: Eden Robinson's *Monkey Beach*

According to the website, Beyond 94, as of October 2021 only 13 of the TRC's 94 Calls to Action had been completed (Beyond 94).[90] This record underscores the problems associated with the settler state's approach to its policy of Reconciliation. In this chapter, the "reconciliation gothic" (Bracken, 2015 7)[91] inverts the qualities of the romance mode's 'elect' individual into a form that is unacceptable to the settler state. At the conclusion of Eden Robinson's *Monkey Beach*, Lisamarie, the text's main character, has become an unelectable hero from the settler state's perspective. *Monkey Beach* performs the reconciliation gothic by addressing historical conditions as they have impacted the lives of Indigenous people living on the north coast of British Columbia. For example, the text confronts the issue of residential school abuse and uncovers the ways in which colonialism dispossesses Indigenous peoples of their lands, communities, and subjectivities by inverting romantic inwardness into an engagement with the historical conditions that structure the colonial relationship between Indigenous peoples and the settler state during the period I identify as the Multicultural Reconciliation era.

Within the current Canadian context, I suggest the government's ongoing preoccupation with inward-focused remedies, Fanon's "psycho-affective" (2004 148) conditions of colonial relationships, continues to perpetuate the dispossession of Indigenous peoples today. I begin this chapter by arguing that Charles Taylor's 1994 essay, "The Politics of Recognition,"

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[90] According to its website, "In March 2018, CBC News launched Beyond 94, a website that monitors progress on the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's 94 Calls to Action." See Beyond 94.

[91] While I am indebted to Christopher Bracken's "Reconciliation Romance: A Study in Juridical Theology" (2015), which applies a similar critique in the juridical realm, I extend Hegel's notion of romantic fiction to settler texts by Canadians and government policies such as multiculturalism.

demonstrates how romantic inwardness, in the words of Glen Coulthard, "leave[s] uninterrogated deeply rooted economic structures of oppression" (2007 446). Coulthard presents Taylor's essay as emblematic of the settler state's "hegemonic assumption" that "Indigenous-state relations in Canada" (437) can be resolved through inward-focused policies based on Hegel's notion of reciprocity. In his essay, "Subjects of Empire: Indigenous Peoples and the 'Politics of Recognition' in Canada" (2007), Coulthard concludes that Taylor's politics of recognition is primarily an assimilative model that seeks to accommodate Indigenous peoples within the settler state. According to Coulthard, Taylor overlooks how the context of colonialism perverts the equal recognition necessary for genuine reciprocity. The unequal distribution of recognition appears in such policies as multiculturalism and Reconciliation in which Indigenous peoples are not recognized as a distinct group with collective rights, but instead are regarded as any other immigrant group in Canada. I follow this discussion by offering a literature review summarizing some of the main critiques of *Monkey Beach* before applying my own analysis.

The Distribution of Recognition

According to Taylor, the relationship between the state and "aboriginal peoples" (1994 52) must be based on "a politics of equal recognition," which is "the appropriate mode for a healthy democratic society" (36). Taylor's form of "equal recognition," adapted from Hegel's notion of reciprocity, is a key element that enables an individual's self-consciousness to be apprehended. In *The Phenomenology of Spirit*, Hegel writes, "Self-consciousness exists in and for itself when, and by the fact that, it so exists for another; that is, it exists only in being acknowledged" (111). According to Taylor in his book, *Hegel*:

> The operation of reciprocal recognition is therefore one that we accomplish together. Each one, says Hegel, accomplishes for himself what the other tries to achieve in relation

> to him. My interlocutor sees in me another, but one which is not foreign, which is at one with himself; but this cancelling of my otherness is something that I must help to accomplish as well. (1975 153)

This desire to be recognized as a self-determining/autonomous self-consciousness depends on another's recognition. Taylor is describing a cooperative arrangement between two parties who believe in a mutually beneficial outcome. Taylor attempts to address Fanon's critique of Hegel's reciprocity by acknowledging the harm misrecognition can inflict. He writes, "The projection of an inferior or demeaning image on another can actually distort and oppress, to the extent that the image is internalized" (1994 36). Coulthard challenges "Taylor's use of Fanon in this context" (2007 443). While Taylor refers to "reciprocity" (1994 49) and Hegel's "dialectic of the master and the slave" (50) as intrinsic elements in the politics of recognition, he minimizes Fanon's crucial analysis of how the colonial context problematizes equal recognition. In the colonial context, Fanon writes, "the master differs basically from the master described by Hegel. For Hegel there is reciprocity; here the master laughs at the consciousness of the slave. What he wants from the slave is not recognition but work" (2008 footnote 172). Fanon underscores the unequal distribution of power inherent in colonial relations. Taylor's misrecognition of Fanon creates the context for inwardness to obfuscate the political conditions that hinder settler and Indigenous relations. This misrecognition can be read as a form of incommensurability that in turn, complicates Reconciliation efforts.

Coulthard inverts Taylor's deployment of Fanon and exposes the limitations of the "liberal politics of recognition" (2007 437) as insufficient for the emancipation of Indigenous peoples from colonial domination. For Robinson's characters, romantic inwardness is not a "home," but is a location where the political consequences of colonial violence occur.

Robinson's *Monkey Beach* inverts romantic inwardness into the reconciliation gothic where settler aspirations are turned upside down or abandoned. The reconciliation gothic is the opposite of romantic inwardness. Where the latter results in an elect individual who accepts the norms and aspirations of the settler state, the reconciliation gothic produces an unelect individual who rejects the tenets of the settler state. *Monkey Beach* achieves this by engaging with the historical conditions of colonialism such as the legacy of residential schools. As a recipient of colonial violence, Lisa has no illusions about the state's purported ideals and is therefore in a unique position to see it differently than others who have not been exposed to the same violent legacy. As a result, her inward quest produces a critical awareness of her own identity as it relates to the settler state. As Fanon notes, "the colonized must initiate the process of decolonization by recognizing *themselves* as free, dignified and distinct contributors to humanity" (in Coulthard, 2007 454). I read Robinson's text as an act of decolonization that succeeds in demystifying and problematizing current Indigenous/settler relations. Freedom for Lisa means acknowledging the actual horror of her predicament. Through this awareness she is transformed but the political structures sustaining her horror remain. As a result, at the end of *Monkey Beach* Lisa's fate remains uncertain.

Indigenous Resurgence

Scholars such as Taiaiake Alfred, Audra Simpson, Glen Coulthard, and Leanne Simpson[92] share a commitment to "Indigenous resurgence" (Coulthard, *Red Skin, White Masks* 154), which is a way "to think about Indigenous liberation" (Leanne Simpson, 2016 28), rather than one premised on Western models. Coulthard states, "the most explicit theorization of the Indigenous resurgence paradigm can be found in the writings of two Indigenous scholar/activists

[92] For purposes of clarification, I use "Leanne Simpson" and "Audra Simpson" throughout this dissertation.

[…]: Mohawk political scientist Taiaiake Alfred and Anishinaabe feminist Leanne Simpson" (*Red Skin, White Masks* 154). Alfred recommends Indigenous people "turn away from the legacies of colonialism and take on the challenge of creating a new reality" (2005 19), while Leanne Simpson urges decolonization "without the sanction, permission or engagement of the state, western theory or the opinions of Canadians" (2011 17). *Monkey Beach* demonstrates this "turn away" by focusing on the experiences of the Haisla. Settlers are incidental to the narrative, suggesting reconciliation involves Indigenous peoples healing themselves apart and away from the state. These resurgence scholars also share an avoidance of engaging in the "at times fraught" (Reder and McCall 8) conversation between postcolonial and Indigenous studies and have "turned their backs on postcolonial theory in favour of Indigenous-centered" (9) approaches "with a focus on decolonization" (Archibald-Barber 14).[93] Throughout this dissertation I have attempted to identify and highlight how romantic inwardness has occluded historical conditions within the settler context demonstrating "how the state's vaunted discourse of reconciliation has become an alibi for its ongoing exercise of colonial power" (Wakeham, 2012 19-20). As Leanne Simpson notes, "the state has coopted narratives of justice in complex ways, especially against Indigenous and Black peoples. For example, the Canadian state land claims processes purport to be about righting the wrongs of the past, but they are really just a way of terminating Indigenous rights and bringing legal certainty to land conflicts" (2016 20).[94] As a non-Indigenous, unsettled scholar, I view my role as enabling Indigenous conceptions of justice to flourish. I have borrowed this term from Rita Wong's 2015 poetry collection, *undercurrent,* to situate myself as

[93] See Jesse Archibald-Barber's "Native Literature Is Not Postcolonial," 2015.

[94] According to Leanne Simpson, "Justice is a concept within Western thought that is intrinsically linked to settler colonialism. Indigenous thought systems conceptualize justice differently" (21). See Leanne Simpson, 2016.

someone who views the current legal and epistemological arrangements between the settler government and Indigenous peoples as unsettled and/or unresolved. According to Lai and Wong:

> Canadian citizens are born into a state where they are expected to be complicit with the violent history of colonialism, but many people refuse that dehumanizing and unethical position. To take personal-political responsibility in such a context means [...] educating yourself about the history of where you live [and] working as an ally to support decolonizing and reindigenizing efforts, understanding that this is not only a responsibility but also a viable and desirable path to a future that materializes peace and justice, act by act, relationship by relationship, place by place, working from the ground on which we live, work, dream and play. (Lai and Wong, 2014)

As I have attempted to demonstrate with this dissertation, much of this effort has to do with demystifying the assumptions that are embedded in canonical Canadian literary texts and scholarship. When Indigenous narratives and lives are privileged, "the position that land occupies as an ontological framework for understanding *relationships*" (original italics, Coulthard, *Red Skin, White Masks* 60) for Indigenous peoples can be centered. Leanne Simpson and Coulthard articulate a concept called "grounded normativity" [95] as a way of enabling "the repatriation of Indigenous land and life" (Tuck & Wang 21):

> Grounded normativity houses and reproduces the practices and procedures, based on deep reciprocity, that are inherently informed by an intimate relationship to place. Grounded normativity teaches us how to live our lives in relation to other people and nonhuman life forms in a

[95] For more on this concept, see Coulthard, p. 60-64, *Red Skin, White Masks,* 2014; see also Coulthard and Leanne Simpson, 2016.

> profoundly nonauthoritarian, nondominating, nonexploitive manner. Grounded normativity teaches us how to be in respectful diplomatic relationships with other Indigenous and non-Indigenous nations with whom we might share territorial responsibilities or common political or economic interests. Our relationship to the land itself generates the processes, practices, and knowledges that inform our political systems, and through which *we practice solidarity*.[96] (Coulthard and Leanne Simpson, 2016 254)

Restoring this profound connection to the land is one crucial way for Indigenous peoples to flourish. In the context of *Monkey Beach*, grounded normativity offers an approach to colonialism that is an alternative to Reconciliation efforts because it leaves out the settler state as the arbiter and places power in the hands of Indigenous peoples.

Settler Anxieties

Joshua Whitehead has written, "This country is a graveyard is a haunted house is a necropolis" (2018 191). Billy-Ray Belcourt also uses gothic imagery to question the legitimacy of the settler state. In "Canadian Horror Story" from *NDN Coping Mechanisms,* he asks, "An entire citizenry is implicated [...] How does it feel to live in an asylum you built bone by sooty bone?" (2019 34-35). Indigenous writers like Whitehead, Belcourt, and Robinson remind settlers about the colonial violence at the heart of their shared history. What follows is a summary of some of the ways in which scholars have grappled with Robinson's work.

[96] According to Alfred, "Land is created by another power's order, therefore possession by man is unnatural and unjust. The partnership principle, reflecting a spiritual connection with the land established by the Creator, gives human beings special responsibilities within the areas they occupy, linking them in a natural and sacred way to their territories […]. Conventional economic development clearly lacks appreciation for the qualitative and spiritual connections that indigenous peoples have to what developers would call "resources" (2002 470). See Alfred, 2002.

Robinson's work unsettles "that most quintessential of colonial activities: the improvement of the colonized, or, in an old phrase, the civilizing mission" (Razack 7). She exposes such settler projects as residential schools to be a cover for genocidal practices and as a result, her writing has posed problems for scholars since she published her first book, a collection of short stories entitled, *Traplines* (1996). Some scholars have approached Robinson's work with expectations or assumptions based on what Cynthia Sugars calls, "a non-Indigenous sensibility" (2014 232). As Sugars notes, Robinson "frustrates the reader's desire to interpret her characters on the basis of their ethno-cultural identity" (2004 78). Robinson's first novel, *Monkey Beach* (2000), an "ethno-cultural" (Sugars, 2004 78) text set on Haisla territory in northern B.C., was for Rob Appleford not ethnic enough. According to Appleford, Lisa, the text's Indigenous protagonist, appears "ignorant of Haisla traditions and knowledge" (2005 92). However, Lisa's character changes through the story and her growth depends on her knowledge of Haisla traditions increasing. Kit Dobson suggests *Monkey Beach* "risks universalizing its violence" (2009 64) and asks, "whether colonialism is effaced in the process such that Canada is let off the hook" (2009 65). This observation seems misplaced considering the centrality of residential schools in the narrative, which strongly implicates Canada in the text's colonial violence.

Robinson's text also upsets expectations based on the psycho-affective conditions of Reconciliation. For Jennifer Andrews, *Monkey Beach* enacts a "distinctly Aboriginal reformulation of the Canadian Gothic" (2009 206). She suggests it "undermines Western tendencies to use the Gothic as a means of normalizing or at least pathologizing what is perceived as primitive or "'Other'" (206). As Justice notes, if we read "*Monkey Beach* as simply a realist or even magical realist or Northern Gothic text, then all the encounters with the Spirit

World - the little man with red hair, and the sasquatch (*b'gwus*) - are ultimately reduced to little more than delusional projections by the narrator Lisamarie, or dismissed as mere symbolism" (2018 154). According to Lee Bailey, in Western culture "psyche [is] restricted to the skull," and "when experienced outside this container […] psyche must always be a delusion, an error that must be 'withdrawn' back inside" (in Castricano 809). Terry Castle notes western materialism has been focused on, "eradicat[ing] superstition and plac[ing] all seemingly supernatural phenomenon on a solid psychological footing" (1995 163). The tendency to restrict psyche "to the skull" is one way the settler state pathologizes Indigenous conventions. Robinson's text inverts this pathology and releases inwardness in the form of trauma outwards where it implicates the historical conditions of colonialism.

Scholars like Shelley Kulperger, Julia Emberley, and David Gaertner share a similar approach to *Monkey Beach*. They defer to a definition of the gothic as a literary enactment of Sigmund Freud's theories on repression[97] and the uncanny that make up the "spectral turn" (Kulperger 100) of trauma studies. In "Familiar Ghosts: Feminist Postcolonial Gothic in Canada" (2009), Kulperger begins by citing Jacques Derrida's work on genre studies and concedes that her concept of the "postcolonial gothic" will inevitably suffer from an "inadequacy […] to capture a myriad of literary practices, narratives, and voices" (97). Nevertheless, she suggests that the term has "critical currency and specificity" (97) and remains applicable. To be clear, Kulperger is actually pursuing a "*feminist* postcolonial gothic" genre (original italics 97). She writes, "in adding feminist to postcolonialism, it addresses the often suggested salience of the Gothic for both postcolonial nations and for women. The postcolonial nation, like the female

[97] According to Freud, "the theory of repression is the cornerstone on which the whole structure of psycho-analysis rests" (143). See Freud, 1995.

body, is routinely and increasingly understood as a gothic space, attracting gothicized discourses" (98). While this may be the case for the "postcolonial nation," Kulperger's analysis subsumes Indigenous nationhood within a Eurocentric paradigm. For example, when referencing the "postcolonial gothic" she is implicitly including Indigenous nations like the Haisla, and by extension, Indigenous women in with the "postcolonial nation." Although she acknowledges *Monkey Beach* enacts "a reterritorialization of colonized space" (107), her article does not address the distinction between her concept of the "postcolonial nation" and an Indigenous one. Kulperger also notes, "Postcolonial gothic literature serves to remind us that there is ample consciousness of guilt – and justice – to be developed in response to 'home-grown' atrocities (101). The implication is that guilt can be developed to address atrocities. However, this assumes that romantic inwardness will be able to generate political consequences. In fact, feelings like guilt may be a reason for why colonialism has not yet become genuinely "post," and for why justice has not been fully developed to meet the demands of the present. Instead, emotions are tended to at the expense of historical conditions and colonial violence directed against Indigenous peoples continues. A case in point involves former Prime Minster Stephen Harper's 2008 apology to residential school survivors. It illustrates how settler guilt can be assuaged through affective governance while leaving historical conditions in place. It accompanied the Indian residential schools settlement agreement that initiated the TRC, and as Pauline Wakeham notes, "in the process of purportedly acknowledging these grievances, the federal government labours to depict them as exceptions to the imagined norm of Canadian civility" (2013 279-280). She adds, "the accumulation of redress claims in the contemporary era begs the question as to why, if Canada is indeed such a civil society, does it have so much to apologize for" (2013 280). Moreover, the fact that colonial practices continue is evidence of how little power guilt has in

bringing about justice for Indigenous peoples.

Kulperger addresses what she terms as the "mundane supernatural" (109), or the "unexplained" (110) in *Monkey Beach.* She writes, the "postcolonial Gothic leaves the unexplained open and at the thresholds of knowledge in a deliberate and feminist resistance to phallogocentric thought" (110). However, any perceived inaccessibility could be read as a strategically designed obstacle for such Western constructs as the postcolonial gothic, for example. As Robinson writes in *The Sasquatch at Home* (2011), "In times past, it was recognized that whatever the missionaries knew about our culture, they tried to suppress. The less they knew, the safer our traditions remained. Nowadays, we simply realize that there are aspects of our traditional perspective and values that non-Haislas would never be able to understand" (13). What Kulperger identifies as "feminist resistance" may actually be a Haisla strategy of survival. Lisa's so-called friend (and future rapist), Cheese, explains to her that the Haisla "were masters of the psych-out. When the Haida or the Tsimshians paddled down the channel, they knew they were coming into the territory of some of the greatest shamen who ever lived. That's how we survived" (*Monkey Beach* 221). The "resistance" Kulperger identifies may actually be the "psych-out" the Haisla community deployed to scare off would-be attackers.

Julia Emberley's chapter on *Monkey Beach*, "The Accidental Witness: The Wilkomirski Affair and the Spiritual Uncanny in Eden Robinson's *Monkey Beach*," applies the "medicine wheel" to *Monkey Beach*'s narrative, which she suggests is "a central organizing principle in Indigenous epistemology" (121). Her analysis suggests the novel's final section, "The Land of the Dead" is "where [Lisa] is able to connect to her brother Jimmy and to find out the truth about his death" (122). Emberley's reading of the transactional relationship between Lisa and "the tree spirits" (127) illuminates the complexity of Lisa's powers: they allow for an access that is both

dangerous and enlightening.

In "'Something in Between': *Monkey Beach* and the Haisla Return of the Repressed" (2015), David Gaertner offers a concession regarding Freud's theories, noting, "To begin from the assumption that psychoanalysis always can be smoothly immigrated into an indigenous text is an act of literature nullius, an erroneous belief that a given book is not populated with its own systems of knowledge and hermeneutics" (1). Gaertner's interpretation of Freud's theory of repression,[98] and his reconfiguration of the "return of the repressed" (2) as Leanne Simpson's "resurgence," (3) is interesting but ultimately unsupported by the text. Gaertner's analysis falls short of addressing the larger context, including the historical conditions in which Indigenous resurgence might occur. Central to this misunderstanding is Gaertner's neglect of the figure of b'gwus. As a result, his reading implies a happy ending where this reader finds none. Gaertner writes:

> In returning to the repressed at the end of the novel, Lisamarie finds herself finally at home with her "ghosts" and the connections to Haisla culture and knowledge they represent for her. [...] While the figures of her relations are dark and blurry, their indistinct representation is no longer an effect of colonial repression, but of Lisamarie's rebirth into her Haisla inheritance, made most explicit in her sudden ability to comprehend the language. (9-10)

The suggestions of Lisa feeling "finally at home" or of her being reborn "into her Haisla inheritance" at the end of the novel are quite remarkable given the available evidence. What to make of "the figures of her relations [being] dark and blurry"? Or of her eventual return to a

[98] According to Freud, "*the essence of repression lies simply in turning something away, and keeping it at a distance, from the conscious*" (147), (original italics). See Freud, 1995.

community devastated by the deaths of both Jimmy and Josh? Gaertner's analysis also neglects addressing the crucial factor of current historical conditions of colonialism, and as a result, he applies an interpretation based on Lisa succeeding in her quest for "electability." The question of whether Lisa can be "at home" with two different sovereigns - an Indigenous one and that of the settler state - remains unanswered. Gaertner also overlooks the novel's critical final paragraph that immediately follows what he identifies as Lisa's "rebirth" (9). This paragraph includes a telling reference to Lisa's proximity to b'gwus as she lays supine on the ground: "Close, very close, a b'gwus howls – not quite human, not quite wolf, but something in between. The howl echoes off the mountains" (*Monkey Beach* 374). She is "very close" to the monster and is immersed in its "howl" echoing all around her. Lisa has identified with b'gwus throughout her life and now her connection is formalized. While the figure of b'gwus has offered her comfort (315-316), in the eyes of the settler state b'gwus is a monstrosity, an "unelect" savage, unlike the commercialized Kokanee sasquatch who lounges around "on mountaintops in patio chairs" (317). There are few if any options available for the "uncivilized" in the settler state. The gothic inversion turns Indigenous resurgence into a horrifying prospect for a settler state structured by the historical conditions of colonialism. Can an Indigenous person be "at home" in the settler state while being "at home" in their own culture? This is what multiculturalism requires of its immigrant settlers, but Indigenous peoples are not multicultural immigrants. *Monkey Beach*'s gothic inversion presents an example of incommensurability. Lisa's "rebirth" can be read as just the beginning of her problems as she will inevitably return to her village to face the fallout from the incidents involving Josh, Jimmy, and Adelaine freighted with newly acquired but untested Haisla knowledge. Will anyone support her? These are concerns the text gestures towards as being the inheritance of colonialism's ongoing - and perhaps inescapable - legacy.

Andrews suggests that what "is most fascinating and radical about Robinson's novel is her pointed reversal of the native as 'Other'" (Andrews, 2009 223). Andrew's reference is to Frye's concept of the "garrison mentality" (Frye, 2003 355). Frye's metaphor of the garrison describes, "fear of Indian attacks, and protection against an implacably indifferent nature" (2003 647). Robinson's text inverts Frye's concept by situating the Haisla village of Kitimaat as the "garrison" and settler communities like Terrace and Vancouver as locations that threaten Indigenous peoples. While Andrews notes, "rather than depicting the Haisla characters […] as potential threats to the safety of a white, Eurocentric community" (212), *Monkey Beach* actually inverts settlers into savages who threaten the survival of Indigenous peoples.

Some of the above readings reflect a discomfort with Robinson's aesthetics that, to borrow Sugars' words, "prioritiz[e] settler anxiety over contemporary Indigenous experience" (2014 215). As Whitehead notes, horror is spelt differently for settlers and for Indigenous peoples.[99] What this illustrates is more profound than anxiety over a misunderstanding: it resembles Lyotard's "differend" (1988 xi). According to Lyotard, "a differend [*différend*] would be a case of conflict, between (at least) two parties, that cannot be equitably resolved for lack of a rule of judgment applicable to both arguments" (xi). Robinson's texts "otherize" settlers by inverting historical conditions and problematizing cultural accessibility. The target of the colonial gaze, Robinson as Indigenous subject, understands settlers, but settlers can no longer assume the same. As she writes in *The Sasquatch at Home* (2011), "Nowadays, we simply realize that there are aspects of our traditional perspective and values that non-Haislas would never be able to understand" (13). I understand this not as an inability on the part of settlers to

[99] "If I horrify you, I am sorry, I spell horror a little differently (194)." See Joshua Whitehead "Writing as a Rupture: A Breakup Note to CanLit," 2018.

comprehend, but as an unwillingness to help settlers understand. As Robinson writes, "The less they knew, the safer our traditions remained" (13). As Audra Simpson has argued, "the very notion of *indigenous* nationhood which demarcates identity and seizes tradition in ways that may be antagonistic to the encompassing frame of the state, may be simply unintelligible to the western and/or imperial ear" (2000 114). Romantic inwardness proceeds with the assumption that people share essentially the same understanding and assumptions of such words as "truth" and "reconciliation." *Monkey Beach* exposes this premise as a hope and not necessarily a reality when it comes to Indigenous and settler relations. For example, when Lisa calls out the "lies" (*Monkey Beach* 69) in her school history book which says, "the Indians on the northwest coast of British Columbia had killed and eaten people as religious sacrifices" (68), her teacher stares at her as though Lisa "were mutating into a hideous thing from outer space" (69). Indigenous truth, which can upset established settler narratives that maintain the historical structures of colonialism, is treated like a monstrous interruption. After refusing to acquiesce to her teacher's demands "to sit down" (69), Lisa is punished. This scene exemplifies the potential incommensurability from an Indigenous perspective that accompanies efforts to establish truth within an Indigenous/settler context. Those with power to enact change, like a classroom teacher, may remain indifferent or even hostile unless the request meets their standards of what "truth" is. Lisa's reaction to a false caricature of her nation is dismissed because her method was inappropriate- she rudely interrupted the lesson. From a settler perspective, manners and conduct take priority because they maintain the structures that sustain its participants (in this case, the teacher's authority) under the guise of a civilizing education in this context. Moreover, *Monkey Beach* presents reconciliation as having very little to do with the feelings of settlers. The novel's

focus on Lisa's family and community renders settlers as peripheral when it comes to the repair that genuine reconciliation entails.

Although the text appeared in 2000, it continues to enable settler initiatives to be reimagined from a perspective that allows for decolonization. As the novel's final page makes clear, Lisa's entire efforts are directed at finding her brother and achieving contact with her ancestors: "The voices are faint, but when I close my eyes I can still see the pale after-image of Jimmy shaking his head. 'Tell her.' *Aux'gwalas*, the others are singing. Take care of her yourself, wherever you're going" (374). Lisa's efforts result not from the help of settlers, but in spite of settlers. The reconciliation gothic, unlike the romance mode, is not a reassuring or comforting tale. It is a stark vision of life where Indigenous resurgence and decolonization are not welcoming options under conditions set by the settler state.

One way *Monkey Beach* transforms the romance mode into the reconciliation gothic is through the act of storytelling. Lisa is associated with the Haisla figure b'gwus, the "wild man of the woods" whose mask is traditionally carved with open eyes and a closed mouth signifying a producer of stories.[100] According to Claude Lévi-Strauss, "masks […] cannot be interpreted in and by themselves as separate objects" (12). Like myths, Lévi-Strauss suggests a mask only finds its "sense" (12) in the context of its broader "transformation set" (12), which includes others from the same "set" or tradition. He writes, "one type of mask […] echoes other types whose lines and colors it transforms while it assumes its own individuality" (12-13). In *Monkey Beach* two figures are referenced who are often portrayed by masks: b'gwus and T'sonoquoa. However, in the case where two cultures meet with different "transformation sets," such as settlers and Indigenous peoples, meaning may be inverted, distorted or obfuscated. The result is

[100] See Willie Seaweed, "Mask: Wild Man of the Woods, Bak'was, or Bukwus" (B'gwus), Museum of Anthropology. U.B.C.

another example of an impasse, or differend, where each culture fails to comprehend the other. Moreover, Robinson engages in metaphorical mask wearing for the sake of challenging her audience's assumptions. Ma-ma-oo, for example, is both supportive and ambivalent. For example, when teaching Lisa about the "Old ways" she says, "Old ways don't matter much now. Just hold you back" (*Monkey Beach* 153). She provides insights but then seems to undermine them at other times. Her ambivalence can be read as a result of colonialism's ongoing efforts to eradicate Indigenous knowledges or "old ways." Through repeatedly being subjected to colonial violence, Ma-ma-oo's belief system is precarious or unstable. Other characters like Cheese, Lisa's friend turned rapist, or Uncle Mick whose behaviour in a revealing scene suggests he might be more than her uncle (122), appear to wear masks that complicate Lisa's ability to apprehend her power. These ambivalent and at times duplicitous figures can be read as a result of colonialism's corrupting influence on the traditional order of kinship.

Reconciliation Gothic

Lisa's story is an external representation of an inward phenomenon – her own personal struggle – which ultimately transfers colonial abuse from inwardness and restores it to its external origins in the settler state's efforts to eradicate Lisa's Indigenous identity. This process epitomizes the reconciliation gothic which identifies romantic inwardness as a threat to Indigenous peoples because it neglects the source of their suffering - the political structures of colonialism. Unlike the texts from the preceding chapters, *Monkey Beach* partakes in an inversion of romantic inwardness. According to Bracken:

> The romance mode […] is constantly exposed to the possibility of inverting into its opposite, the gothic, which retains romance's generic features while reversing their polarity […] There is a trend today among

> Indigenous authors to displace romance into horror, as if to signal the incapacity of romance to reconcile competing sovereignties within the settler state. The result of this trend might be called reconciliation gothic. (Bracken, 2015 7)

I treat the gothic as a dialectical inversion of the romance mode in which it is transformed into its opposite. Bracken also identifies how Robinson's short story from *Traplines*, "Contact Sports," embodies the "reconciliation gothic." He writes, "The target of Robinson's gothic attack is no longer the notion that reconciliation can only be achieved through assimilation, but that in reconciliation the penitent wins redemption through self-perfection" (12). This change from "assimilation" to "self-perfection" is key to understanding how Robinson inverts inwardness into a space engaged with Fanon's historical conditions that are foundational to colonialism (2008). Robinson's characters do not pursue "a doctrine of personal perfection" (Auerbach 136) to become "one of elect" (136), but rather the opposite that results in an Indigenous subject who recognizes themselves as one of the *unelect* from the perspective of the settler state. This inversion of the romance mode exemplifies the reconciliation gothic. Lisa is trying to understand her powers, which in the parlance of my project can be linked to apprehending her Indigenous identity. However, this is not an inward quest and it results in an unromantic outcome. She monsterfizes herself and the closer she comes to achieving the status of an elect Indigenous woman, the more unelectable she is as a settler subject.

Storms

Indigenous survival is, as Alfred notes, irreconcilable with settler sovereignty (2009 185). Lisa's struggle exposes the foundational assumptions that underpin the settler state as being complicit in her suffering. The novel opens with a Haisla proverb, "It is possible to retaliate

against an enemy, But impossible to retaliate against storms" (Preface *Monkey Beach*). The trauma generated from colonial violence, specifically the abuse caused by residential schools, cannot be reduced to an enemy but appears as an all-pervasive, all-consuming force that seems to take on a life of its own. Under current conditions, colonial violence is reified as a normalized feature of reality. Under the regime of romantic inwardness, the individual is a potentially free and autonomous member of the elect who might transcend this history, but with the reconciliation gothic individual freedom depends on the historical conditions of the larger community. In *Monkey Beach,* this transcendence appears impossible to achieve as the community is entangled in history.

Order of Kinship

The background of *Monkey Beach* involves a missing Indigenous male, Jimmy, Lisa's younger brother. On the first page we learn that the fishing boat he is working on has gone missing. The narrative then travels back in time as Lisa struggles to find out what happened to Jimmy. While it is not unusual to be concerned about a missing loved one, in the case of Lisa her entire fate is at stake in unraveling her brother's story. The novel suggests that when she accomplishes this feat, she achieves the self-awareness that illuminates her Indigenous identity. This "kinship responsibility" (James Youngblood (Sakej) Henderson 271) where Lisa's place in the world depends on the understanding of another puts the individual in a collective space, "with all the forces of the circle of life" (270). James (Sakej) Youngblood Henderson refers to an "Aboriginal order of kinship" (270) that "recognizes a matrix of reciprocal relationships" (270). Thomas King explains that the Native phrase "all my relations" encompasses "all the animate and inanimate forms that can be seen or imagined" (1990 ix). What Leanne Simpson describes as a series of "radiating responsibilities" (2016 9) inverts settler assumptions from inward-focused

sensibilities into a collective relationship involving others. However, as a result of the reconciliation gothic, the collective is not a welcoming community, but has been corrupted by colonialism. As the incestuous abuse that Josh inflicts on Adelaine, Jimmy's fiancé, makes clear (*Monkey Beach* 365), the order of kinship in *Monkey Beach* is inverted into a curse of kinship as a result of historical conditions. Leanne Simpson's "radiating responsibilities" result in Jimmy taking revenge on Josh, leading to their separate tragic fates, which will impact the entire Haisla community.

"Go Down"

At the beginning of the story Lisa is "Half-awake" (1), and the text's narrative emerges from this in-between space, open to multiple realities at once. However, by the end it becomes apparent that this "in between" (374) state is actually Lisa struggling to stay alive. She hears the crows making the sound, "*La'es*, […], *La'es, la'es,*" which is interpreted as "Go down to the bottom of the ocean" (1). The crows' caws can be read as an invitation to go beneath the surface to recover what was lost before the flood of missionary colonialism devastated the Haisla community.[101] At the end of the novel, Lisa is alone on Monkey Beach after journeying south from her village on a powerboat and recalling to herself the story of Jimmy's disappearance and her own growth from a young girl to a woman. This motif of a drowning or transformed narrator is a feature of such noir films[102] as *Sunset Boulevard,*[103] which is closely related to the gothic.[104]

[101] The biblical connotations are intended as Christianity is implicated in the abuses of the residential school system.

[102] For Sianne Ngai, film noir is "commonly understood (even to the point of cliché) as being aesthetically and ideologically driven by an entire spectrum of dysphoric feelings: paranoia, alienation, greed, jealousy, and so forth" (13). See Nagai, 2005.

[103] As Andrew Gibson writes, "In *Sunset Boulevard*, the dominant voice (the narrator's) is indeed that of a ghost, since the story is told by Gillis after his death" (654). See Gibson, 2001.

[104] James Naremore notes noir films would be "shelved somewhere between Gothic horror and dystopian science fiction" in a video store (12). See Naremore, 1995.

Her voice is not yet smothered or silenced, much like Indigenous peoples under the historical conditions of colonialism, but she is experiencing a metaphorical death from the eyes of the settler state. Lisa is dying as one of the settler state's "electable" subjects, while continuing to survive in the guise of something else.

Lisa poses a threat not only to those representing settler state norms like her teacher and psychiatrist, but also to her own parents. Her ability to hear voices and ghosts, and to communicate with the spiritual and animal worlds is pathologized. Lisa's mother dismisses her claim that the crows "were talking" to her by responding, "you need Prozac" (3). Both her mother and father have made efforts to assimilate into Canadian society and according to Ma-ma-oo, Lisa's mother has notably stifled similar visions that she was experiencing when she was Lisa's age. Ma-ma-oo tells Lisa, "Your mother's side of the family has it strong" (153), but "She doesn't tell you when she sees things. Or she's forgotten how. Or she ignores it. You'll have to ask her" (154). Her mother's ambivalence can be read as a result of colonialism, which has also assaulted the matrilineal links of the Haisla community. Lisa's powers are treated as an illness to be medicated or sedated out of existence. As James Waldram notes, "early Europeans perceived a substantive amount of psychopathology among the Aboriginal population" (2004 106). *Monkey Beach* reveals how these attitudes remain embedded in the colonial conditions that structure the present and are even supported by Lisa's own parents. Her struggle is to comprehend her powers and overcome such attempts to extinguish them. However, her efforts will not produce the deep feeling of the elected individual that confirms romantic inwardness, but "a monster" that confirms the horrors of the settler state's colonialism.

When Lisa's parents bring her to a hospital in an attempt to cure her situation, she is confronted with the settler state's attempt to domesticate or assimilate Indigenous people through

remedies like psychiatry. Ms. Jenkins, a "shrink" (272), declares at the end of their "first and last session" (273) that "with a little work" Lisa will "be back to normal in no time" (274). This scene demonstrates the long-held "conviction" among settlers that Indigenous cultures are "inherently psychopathological" (Waldman 109) and that beliefs in the supernatural signal mental disorders. This scene also illustrates how these biases, present in Lisa's parents as well as Ms. Jenkins, represent settler attempts to confine Lisa's supernatural experiences to inwardness where they can be managed without impacting the structures of domination that mediate relationships between the settler state and Indigenous peoples.

"Indian Time"

Uncle Mick, who Lisa's middle name, Michelle, is meant "to be a touching tribute" (*Monkey Beach* 24), provides inspiration, and along with being her likely biological father, he functions as a mentor. They also share a connection to Elvis Presley; Mick is an extreme fan who disappears "for almost a month" to drive to Graceland (63) and Lisa's entire first name, Lisamarie, is an amalgamation of Elvis' real-life daughter, Lisa Marie Presley. Elvis first makes an appearance on page two of the text in the form of a clock that is "always either an hour ahead or an hour behind […] it's on Indian time" (2). The figure of Presley functions as more than a passing pop culture reference[105] - he starred in three films in which he portrayed Indigenous characters and one in which he married one.[106] In "Elvis as Indian in Film and Life" (2012), Michael Snyder documents the Indigenous ties that are supposedly linked to the singer, such as

[105] Snyder notes, "Presley embodies a rich nexus of discussion on race and ethnicity, class, gender, and sexuality" (55). See Snyder, 2012.

[106] Presley plays a mixed-blood Cherokee in *G.I. Blues* (1960); the son of a white father and Kiowa mother in *Flaming Star* (1960); his character marries a mixed-blood woman of Indigenous Hawaiian and French ancestry in *Blue Hawaii* (1961); and he plays a Navajo in *Stay Away, Joe* (1968) (57-63). See Snyder, 2012.

the belief that he was of Cherokee heritage[107] and that he had earned the nickname "The Chief" in the early days of his fame, long before anyone ever thought to call him 'The King'" (56). Elvis' rise from poor working-class origins to become "The King" and then finally die from a prescription drug overdose at age forty-two while on a "black ceramic commode" (Williamson 318), epitomizes the tragic arc of romantic inwardness through the inverted logic of the reconciliation gothic that begins with the promise of electability but ends tragically. The settler state offers a promise of reconciliation and equal recognition to Indigenous peoples but it ends with what Alfred calls a "surrender" of "Indigenous existence" (2009 185).

"The Old Stories"

As mentioned above, the text raises the possibility that Mick may actually be Lisa's real father. On a trip to Kitlope, Lisa walks in on her mother while Mick "was sneaking up on her, and [she] stepped back onto the porch so [she] wouldn't ruin the surprise. He came up behind her, encircled her waist with his arms and gave her a gentle kiss on the neck. She pulled his arms off, slowly, then pushed him away, eyes downcast" (*Monkey Beach* 122). This intimate scene suggests Lisa's family may be harbouring some dark secrets. The possibility of an adulterous affair between her mother and uncle makes Lisa feel like she could "throw up" (122). This scene depicts a love triangle that informs the stories of the b'gwus who are believed to inhabit Monkey Beach. Later, Ma-ma-oo tells Lisa of one of "the old stories" about a b'gwus involving adultery, drowning, and murder:

> There was a beautiful woman who was having an affair with her husband's brother. She and her husband were paddling back to the

[107] According to Snyder, "Presley's maternal great-great-great-grandmother was a full-blooded Cherokee woman named Morning Dove White, who was born circa 1800, died in 1835, and was buried in Hamilton, Alabama" (56). See Snyder, 2012.

> village […]. She lifted her paddle and clubbed him. While he was in the water, she used the paddle to hold his head under until he was still. Thinking he was dead, she paddled back to the village and told everyone he drowned. But the next day, when the wife and the husband's brother went back to hide the body, they found large footprints in the sand. Worried he might be alive, they followed the trail into the woods. They discovered the man – transformed into a b'gwus – who then killed his adulterous wife and brother. (*Monkey Beach* 211)

As becomes apparent at the end of the text, the way Jimmy kills Josh is remarkably similar to this story. According to Ronald Olson, the Haisla have a tradition of tales involving the violation of marriage taboos by both human and supernatural agents (in Appleford 90). The text incudes other taboo love triangles – Jimmy, Josh, and Adelaide; Mick, and Lisa's parents, Albert and Gladys; and Lisa, Cheese, and Frank. Uncle Mick and Lisa's parents' love triangle explains how Uncle Mick violated Haisla norms by having an affair with Gladys that resulted in Lisa's birth. Uncle Mick eventually drowns in circumstances that remain unknown. When his body is discovered, it has been partially eaten away by sea creatures. Ma-ma-oo's story reinforces the gothic inversion as the abuses, murders and rapes continue without the direct involvement of settlers. *Monkey Beach* addresses the horror that confronts Indigenous peoples within the context of ongoing colonial conditions: while they remain victims of colonial violence, they now perpetrate abuse upon themselves as a result of its ongoing pernicious influence. For Indigenous peoples, reconciliation involves their own kin and communities. It takes place apart from settlers. In fact, during TRC events, Commissioner Murray Sinclair reminded people "that the majority of survivors are not especially interested in reconciling with Canada, but rather with members of

their own families." He adds, "the work of creating a better relationship between Indigenous peoples and settler Canadians will continue long - likely for generations - after the TRC's 2015 conclusion" (Robinson, et al., 2016 7).[108]

Uncle Mick cultivates Lisa's political consciousness by teaching her to take pride in her heritage and to be skeptical of things settler related. He is a residential school survivor, was a member of the American Indian Movement and a veteran of the "Red Power" struggle. He even bears a bullet scar from his days as an activist (*Monkey Beach* 98). As a warrior, he attacks the settler state's legitimacy. After his brother, Lisa's father Albert, complains about paying taxes, Uncle Mick responds, "I don't see why we have to file at all […]. The whole fucking country is on Indian land. We're not supposed to pay any taxes on or off reserves" (30). However, Mick struggles to transform his resentments into a productive response. He continues to suffer from the abuse he experienced at residential school and turns his anger towards himself and on his own family members. While on the Kitlope trip with the family, he awakens from a nightmare sobbing and yelling at Aunt Edith for "saying grace" (109) earlier in the evening. He shouts, "You never went to residential school. You can't tell me what I fucking went through and what I didn't […]. You're buying into a religion that thought the best way to make us white was to fucking torture children" (109-110). Here Mick connects Christianity and its inwardness with an assimilating function, in this case turning Indigenous people "white." This comports with my argument that romantic inwardness functions to absorb subjects into the settler state. Moreover, Mick is locating the source of his inward trauma in the abuse he experienced at the residential

[108] Despite the flaws I identify, Robinson, et al. argue, "the TRC remained throughout its life a venue of possibility. Rather than being solely an expression of the state's desires for the conclusion of Indigenous grievances, it was also a space animated by the agency of the thousands of survivors who both guided and participated in its proceedings" (7). See Martin, et al., 2016.

school. *Monkey Beach* demonstrates that trauma cannot be confined to an individual – it inevitably spills over to impact others. Inwardness is destructive to the victim of colonial abuse and is incapable of managing its trauma. While the influence on others can be substantial, when the abuse is made visible it can at least be addressed. Moreover, Mick's reaction, directed at another Indigenous person within his own family, is an example of the extent to which colonialism has decimated families and entire communities and inverted the "forces of the circle of life" (Henderson, 2000 270) into a circle of horror.

"Little Warrior"

Mick gives Lisa her nickname, "monster," providing a gothic inversion of the more stereotypical "princess" from the romance mode. Lisa later learns from Ma-ma-oo that "monster" was also Mick's nickname when he was a child (*Monkey Beach* 195). Lisa inverts the epithet into a positive label and it reinforces her sense of individuality by setting her apart from other children, especially her girlfriends. She deliberately avoids being "a wussy girl" (61) and leaves her girlfriends to hang out with the boys in class. Her alterity provides a kinship with other "monsters," such as the b'gwus and T'sonoquoa. Her "monster" comes out while in school when she is forced, "to read a book that said that the Indians on the northwest coast of British Columbia had killed and eaten people as religious sacrifices" (68). As mentioned previously, Lisa tells the teacher, "Ma-ma-oo told me it was just pretend, the eating people, like drinking Christ's blood at Communion" (69). The teacher orders Lisa to sit down, but Lisa responds by singing, "Fuck the Oppressors" (69) and is sent to the principal's office. Lisa's rejection of the settler state's historical narrative and defense of her own culture results in her being punished. This scene ends at Mick's home where he frames the teacher's disciplinary note and displays it in the centre of the living room like the proud father he likely is. He embraces Lisa and chokes

up, calling her his "little warrior" (69). This scene is an example of Lisa directly confronting colonialism in a location – a public school - that resonates with connections to the residential systems where to "kill the Indian in the child" (*TRC Summary Report* 131-132), or torture children, included being forcefully assimilated into the settler state. In Lisa's case, the incident exposes how colonialism continues to operate in the present by converting coercive measures, such as physical abuse, into weapons of soft power, such as public school curriculums enforced by seemingly innocuous public servants – in this case, teachers.

By the novel's end, Lisa references another monster, "T'sonoquoa" with "poor vision" (*Monkey Beach* 337), who provides her with a female example of a "magical" (316) being. The figures of b'gwus and T'sonoquoa have been represented in masks carved by Willie Seaweed, who portrayed b'gwus with open eyes and closed mouth,[109] suggesting, as mentioned above, a producer of stories, while portraying T'sonoquoa with an open mouth and closed eyes, suggesting a consumer of stories.[110] Lisa identifies with both although by the end she is closer to b'gwus, suggesting she is the author of her own story.

"The Gift"

Despite expressing ambivalence at times, Lisa's maternal grandmother, Ma-ma-oo, provides her with insights and stories about her Haisla heritage. They go on walks together "tromping through the bushes" (161) where Ma-ma-oo teaches Lisa about the berries and plants, such as oxasuli. Ma-ma-oo explains oxasuli is "Powerful medicine. Very dangerous. It can kill you" (151). As they continue on their walk Lisa confides that she has seen a vision of "a little

[109] See Willie Seaweed, "Mask: Wild Man of the Woods, Bak'was, or Bukwus" (B'gwus), Museum of Anthropology, U.B.C.

[110] See Willie Seaweed, "Carved wooden mask depicting Dzunuk'wa" (T'sonoquoa), Museum of Anthropology, U.B.C.

man with red hair" (152). Ma-ma-oo says "you have the gift […] like your mother" (153), but warns, "there's good medicine and bad […] like oxasuli. Tricky stuff" (154). Indigenous medicine has the potential to be both good and bad, much like Ma-ma-oo herself who the text suggests killed her abusive husband, Sherman, also known as Ba-ba-oo (355-356). Ma-ma-oo also encourages Lisa to learn the Haisla language and often uses it in her granddaughter's presence. She says to Lisa that "to really understand the old stories […] you [have] to speak Haisla" (211), which encourages Lisa to learn "a new Haisla word a day" (211). As Andrews notes, this emphasis on speaking Haisla, "reinforces Eurocentric readers' sense of distance and exclusion from this world of otherness, inverting the typical privileging of white, Western values and the English language" (218). This defamiliarization is unsettling and reinforces settlers as the genuine "others" on Indigenous land as it may have been at first contact. In fact, Lisa has felt alienated from English and admits, "None of the stories I read in English had anything to do with my life" (*Monkey Beach* 166). This another example of how the reconciliation gothic operates. It upends typical assumptions of who or what is the novel's intended audience. Later in the text Lisa narrates a brief history of the Haisla language, centering the point of view on the "Early explorers traveling through the Douglas Channel" who "were probably daunted by both the terrain and the new languages they encountered" (193). This Indigenous history functions as an inversion of settler history mediated through the assumption of *terra nullius* and the "two founding races" of English and French (Dunton 3). According to Lyons, "pre-Columbian Native North America was constituted by a great diversity of peoples, cultures, languages, lifestyles, beliefs, and forms of political organization" (2010 114-115) and included "at least 300 languages representing more than 50 different language families" (114). Lisa goes on to explain how Haisla is pronounced and sounds, "In much the same way that Spanish is similar to French, Haisla is

similar to the languages spoken by the people in Bella Bella and the people in River's Inlet" (*Monkey Beach* 194). Lisa is comparing European and Indigenous languages suggesting they are of equal stature, while reminding the reader that the place settler's call North America was - and still is – diverse Indigenous land. At the end of the novel, Lisa is able to hear her dead relatives speaking and singing in Haisla and she understands them: "For a moment, the singing becomes clear. I can understand the words even though they are in Haisla and it's a farewell song, they are singing about leaving and meeting again" (373-374). This demonstrates how by the novel's end Lisa has begun to overcome the historical conditions that have attempted to erase the Haisla language and culture, even as her life appears to be hanging in the balance. But as noted previously, this apparent resurgence of Indigenous identity is tempered by the settler context in which it is occurring. Although she may be recovering her language, the balance of power over her ancestor's land still rests with the settler state. The rich linguistic diversity that once flourished in the northwest of British Columbia is at stake in the ongoing assault of colonial violence. The connections *Monkey Beach* makes is an example of what Jodi Byrd calls reading "mnemonically":

> To read mnemonically is to connect the violences and genocides of colonization to cultural productions and political movements in order to disrupt the elisions of multicultural liberal democracy that seek to rationalize the originary historical traumas that birthed settler colonialism through inclusion. Such a reading practice understands indigeneity as radical alterity and uses remembrance as a means through which to read counter to the stories empire tells itself. (Byrd xii-xiii)

In the guise of a monster, Lisa enacts this "radical alterity" in order to perform a gothic

attack on the "the stories empire tells itself" by exposing them to a critical Indigenous point of view through the inversion of the reconciliation gothic.

"Highway of Tears"

The colonial takeover of Indigenous land appears to have deprived Lisa of any safe space. When she is a young teen, she drives with Jimmy and her father to Terrace, about an hour from Kitimaat, for Jimmy's swimming competition (249). She is allowed to go window-shopping on her own and bumps into Erica, a friend from school who is being followed by "three guys" in a car: "They pulled a U-turn and the driver called out that he'd teach her how to fuck a white man" (250). Lisa intervenes to protect Erica, shouting, "With what, you dickless wonder?" (250). The driver calls her "a feisty little squaw" (250), pulls the car over and steps out to confront her as she realizes that Erica has disappeared. She is now alone "as the other guys get out," and the driver threatens, "Now we're going to teach you a lesson" (251). They are just about to "grab her" when "a hulking white guy with a long grizzled beard and tattoos" (*Monkey Beach* 251) steps in and scares them into backing off. After they drive away he says to Lisa, "that temper of yours is gonna get you killed one day" (251).

Terrace is on Highway 16, the 725 kilometer "Highway of Tears" that runs from Prince George to Prince Rupert where "since 1970, dozens of women and girls, a disproportionate number of them Indigenous have disappeared or been murdered" (Ryan 2020). This scene foregrounds how this long neglected violence impacts young Indigenous girls firsthand, while illustrating how the environment beyond the "garrison" of Lisa's village is deadly territory. While the scene inverts settlers into savages preying on young Indigenous girls, the fact that a white settler comes to Lisa's aid is a reminder of how help or danger can appear in a variety of unexpected guises. In the settler state, Indigenous life is precarious and depends on random

interventions in order to survive or not. This becomes apparent when Lisa returns to her village where she is subjected to abuse at the hands of a so-called "friend." The next day, her Aunt Trudy advises her to "to be more careful […]. Those guys would have killed you" (255). Lisa is unconvinced and replies, "They wouldn't have done anything." Aunt Trudy insists, adding, "if you were some little white girl, that would be true. But you're a mouthy Indian, and everyone thinks we're born sluts" (255). Trudy compares the abusive young men to the "tons of priests in the residential schools […] that 'helped' themselves to little kids just like you" and "got away scot-free" (255). This scene links the historical abuse of the priests at residential schools with the contemporary behaviour of young settler men getting "away scot-free" for crimes because they involved Indigenous victims. Colonial violence is ongoing and targets Indigenous women disproportionately and *Monkey Beach* connects the history with present conditions, including the *MMIWG* report.[111] The reconciliation gothic inverts settler narratives by exposing how colonialism and its influence is not something that happened in the past - it is ongoing and invasive. Just how invasive is made clear a few days later when Lisa attends a party where her beer is spiked and she is raped by Cheese, her school friend (257-258). Lisa is neither safe on her own home turf nor in settler society. Both events reveal the extent to which colonial violence has infiltrated every aspect of Lisa's life. For Lisa, there is no refuge from the historical conditions of colonialism. From residential school abuse and settler narratives of discovery, to personal relationships, colonialism inverts kinship into a cycle of abuse and death.

[111] According to the *MMIWG* report, "Indigenous women in Canada experience disproportionately high levels of life-threatening forms of violence, spousal homicide, and enforced disappearances" (190). See *Reclaiming Power and Place*, 2019.

Matrilineal Links

Both Mick and Ma-ma-oo meet tragic ends. Uncle Mick falls into the water while checking on his nets, gets tangled and drowns (134-135). Later, Lisa remembers when her "father […] pulled Mick's corpse from the net and wrapped him in a tarp. Mick's face, right arm and part of his left leg had been eaten off by seals and crabs" (148). Towards the end of the text, Ma-ma-oo dies in a fire at her home. Lisa is present as the "volunteer firemen" carry "her body up out of the rubble. She had no hair, no skin. She was charred and smelled like bacon" (293). These disturbing and explicit scenes of defiled human flesh function as an inversion of Auerbach's "creatural realism" (247). In *The Orenda* the demise of the flesh served the narrative of romantic inwardness that promotes the salvation of the soul. However, in *Monkey Beach* "creatural realism" serves the ongoing colonial appetite for Indigenous flesh that sustains the historical and material conditions of the settler state. One of the main sources of this deadly formula is Indigenous women. Historical conditions have severed the matrilineal links between Lisa and her mother and she has not been tutored about how to handle her special gifts. She receives a premonition prior to the deaths of Uncle Mick and Ma-ma-oo but fails to read the signs. Knowledge that might have yielded valuable information has been lost. The severing of Indigenous matrilineal authority has been a target of the settler state since at least the nineteenth century. According to Lawrence, "In complete contradiction to community custom" (25) the Indian Act of 1876:

> removed the Indian status of all Native women who married individuals without Indian status (including nonstatus Canadian Indians and American Indians, as well as white men), and forced them to leave their communities. The same act gave Indian status to white women who married status Indians; this would remain

> part of the Indian Act until 1985. Loss of status was only one of many statutes that lowered the power of Native women in their societies relative to men. (8)

The loss of her two mentors causes Lisa to leave her village of Kitimaat, and she drops out of grade eleven to live in Vancouver (*Monkey Beach* 296). She moves into Vancouver's Downtown Eastside, one of the poorest urban areas in Canada, where she is exposed to extreme poverty and drug abuse and succumbs to self-destructive impulses. She admits she "would have stayed that way for years if it wasn't for Tab," her cousin (297). Tab appears to Lisa as a "death sending" (313), a ghostly apparition who explains she "just got bumped off by a couple of boozehound rednecks" (301). Tab advises Lisa to get her act together and "go home" (301). Lisa follows her advice. On her return to Kitimaat, when she is "halfway to Smithers […] a man came out of the bushes" (315). Lisa explains, "[t]he memory of him is imprinted on my brain – the dark brown fur on his back, the lighter fur on his chest, the long hairy arms, the sharply tilted forehead and the row of pointed teeth he flashed at me when he snarled" (315). Lisa understands it as a "b'gwus sighting" (315). She expresses profound contentment, thinking, "I felt deeply comforted knowing that magical things were still living in the world" (315-316). This is an inversion of the historical settler state's response to Indigenous spirituality and practices, which is to fear and destroy them as a pathological threat to the settler state.[112] For Lisa, the experience is a source of reassurance and joy in the existence of an Indigenous worldview. The sighting is a reminder of Indigenous stories and the potential of what might be possible if Indigenous peoples regained control over their lands.

Transition and Transformation

When Lisa arrives at Monkey Beach on the way to Namu to join her parents and find

[112] See Christopher Bracken, *The Potlatch Papers: A Colonial Case History*, 1997.

Jimmy (298), she is beckoned into the trees by a "voice" whispering, "'We can help you'" and "Give us meat'" (336). She admits she "should get in [her] boat and ignore" the voices (360), but decides, "if the things in the trees can help me, maybe Jimmy can keep his happy ending" (360). She uses "a gutting knife" (361) saying out loud, "'I don't have any meat. But I have blood'" (361). She proceeds to cut herself, admitting "The cut I make in my left hand is not deep […]. For a moment there is no pain […] then the cut begins to burn, to sear […] and the blood runs under my sleeve and down my forearm" (365-366). Lisa then hears, "a stealthy slither," confirming she is not alone. The narrative slips from the first person to second person. The presence "wraps its pale body around yours and feeds" (366), apparently on Lisa. She continues to struggle: "Push yourself away when your vision dims. Ignore the confused, painful contractions in your chest as your heart trip-hammers to life, struggles to pump blood. Ignore the tingling sensations and weakness in your arms and legs, which make you want to lie down and never get up" (366). The time before when Lisa was in the presence of such a "ghost" it was with Ms. Jenkins, the psychiatrist. The text suggests this may be a similar apparition that is now intervening to colonize her and take her life while she is in the process of apprehending her own traditional powers.

The text ends in a climactic section titled, "The Land of the Dead" (367) where Lisa continues to struggle, but this time from drowning. First, she experiences a vision of Jimmy killing Josh, followed by his own drowning. She continues on, further and further into the land of the dead, ignoring the ghost of Ma-ma-oo and her calls to "Go home and make me some grandkids" (373), as well as the ghost of Uncle Mick who encourages her to "go out there and give 'em hell. Red power!" (373). She finally meets Jimmy who voices the text's final spoken words, "Tell her" (374). This is a reference to Adelaine, his promised fiancée who was sexually

abused and impregnated by Josh, her cousin. Jimmy had asked Lisa on the morning he left on the boat with Josh, to "Tell her I love her." Lisa replied, "Tell her yourself" (363). Now Jimmy's ghost was asking her again, seeking an ending that is anything but "happy" (360), but if fulfilled might alleviate some of Adelaine's suffering.

By the end of the text Lisa is lying "on the sand" in the "Land of the Dead" (374). Very close to her "a b'gwus howls – not quite human, not quite wolf, but something in between" and in the distance is "the sound of a speedboat" (374). The time is "early evening," twilight, and she feels "so light [she] could just drift away," but "The clamshells are hard against [her] back," suggesting a heavier weight. Is she able to "Ignore" (366) the sensations that "make [her] want to lie down and never get up"? (366). Has she transformed into a b'gwus, one of the monstrous, "magical things" (316)? The reconciliation gothic inverts the qualities of the romance mode's "elect" individual. Lisa has become a monster, an Indigenous person who will not be assimilated through the logic of romantic fiction into the settler state's "realities of the present" (Hegel *LA Vol. I* 593). Lisa was never seeking Reconciliation, so according to Alfred, she never surrendered "the very essence of any kind of an Indigenous existence" (2009 185). The conclusion suggests the effort of breaking free from historical conditions will require Lisa to be radically transformed beyond the recognition and Reconciliation the current iteration of the settler state offers when she ultimately returns to her village.

Under Colonialism

In conclusion, the reconciliation gothic inverts the romance mode into a narrative that involves a young Indigenous woman struggling under the historical conditions of colonialism to obtain a sovereign identity. *Monkey Beach* portrays Lisa and her community decimated by the settler states' aspirational and affective attempts to reconcile an illegitimate sovereignty on stolen

land. In the end, Indigenous peoples like Lisa may be incompatible and unrecognizable to the settler state, but they remain a potent source for overcoming colonial violence.

Conclusion: *Grounded Normativity*

In my introduction I raised a series of questions related to Hegel's conception of "romantic fiction" and proposed a reading method that identified Canadian romantic inwardness as a predominant aesthetic practice in settler literary texts written in English. Throughout this dissertation I have identified how literary texts written in English correspond to the romance mode.

The question of how literary texts have aided colonial violence involves assessing how they participate in the aestheticization of political life. As I concluded in "Chapter One: Reconciled Universalism: Michael Ondaatje's *In the Skin of a Lion*, *The English Patient*, and *Anil's Ghost,*" literary texts achieve this by portraying characters withdrawing from political engagement to accept what Hegel calls "the realities of the present" (*LA Vol. I* 593). I have referred to this resignation into deep feeling as romantic inwardness. When literary texts appeal to aspirations involving the achievement of an elected status through trial and error, the focus on individual ability and merit obfuscates larger political factors that play an important role in outcomes. I concluded narratives such as *In the Skin of a Lion* that valourize individualism and posit romantic inwardness as a more preferable way to achieve change than political engagement, enable the continuation of the political structures that sustain colonial violence. Politics are transformed into personal virtues or vices, rather than policies enacted by the state. When politics are aestheticized through characters like Patrick Lewis, grievances over the exploitation and death of his fellow workers are substituted for the compassion he receives from the bureaucrat, Rowland Harris. Michael Ondaatje's texts facilitate the aestheticization of politics by raising the emotional life of his characters above the political structures they inhabit.

I also asked how stories that valourize personal quests are a preferred aesthetic in the Canadian settler context. As I established in "Chapter Two: Hybrid Universalism: Fred Wah's *Diamond Grill*," personal stories are better suited to respond to the historical conditions of colonial violence when "writers of colour and Aboriginal writers," according to Wah, engage "in dialogues that relocate the responsibility for their own subjectivity within themselves" (*Faking It* 75/76). Texts like *Diamond Grill* reduce racial politics to individual agency and suggest personal responsibility is the hallmark of an "elect" subject who can overcome the racism that accompanies settler colonialism. This appeal to personal responsibility has the effect of internalizing the racism of the settler state and unsettling its victims even further. Rather than providing an empowering narrative, romantic inwardness exacerbates precarity in the service of affective appeals like diversity.

In "Chapter Three: Reified Universalism: Rohinton Mistry's *A Fine Balance*," I demonstrated how individual characters who stand in for political structures can obfuscate the impact of economics and history. When the figure of Dina Dalal subsumes the exploitative logic of capitalist relations, genuine economic structures appear as immutable, reified formations. Capitalism is rendered as a family affair, rather than an economic system that might also be involved in family relations. When Dukhi visits the Pandit Lalluram for example, his "legendary reputation for justice" (*A Fine Balance* 112) is associated with the spiritual tradition he represents. As a result, his personal predilections are conflated with justice. This chapter also demonstrates how politics are spiritualized by Mahatma Gandhi's efforts to substitute an inward response for public politics. Gandhi appealed to individual compassion in order to alleviate the prejudice the Chamaars of the novel have historically endured, rather than seek a legislative remedy that would have targeted the Hindu caste system and the structural oppression it

enforces. The tendency to substitute individuals for political structures finds parallels in the settler context in the mode Audra Simpson identifies as "affective governance" (2016). As I demonstrated in Chapter Four with Prime Minster Justin Trudeau's speech to the Assembly of First Nations in 2016, prime ministers have appealed to individual emotions and feelings in order to articulate the settler government's policy of Reconciliation, while avoiding legislation that would address structural politics. *A Fine Balance* also exemplifies how Frye's theory of displacement enables the portability of the romance mode to be manifested in the text's rendering of realism. The novel also embodies the historical conditions of the settler state in the 1990s when multiculturalism was being influenced by international trends such as globalization and cosmopolitanism. As a result, the India represented in the text is inextricably bound up with the settler state's project of managing difference through its policies in Canada.

In "Chapter Four: Colonial Universalism: Joseph Boyden's *The Orenda*," I demonstrated how Boyden's text elucidates the ways in which "claims to universal inclusion" such as romantic inwardness, "colonize and absorb alternatives" (Nichols, 2014 112). I suggested romantic inwardness is expressed through Erich Auerbach's "creatural realism" (247) which denigrates the physical world in order to valourize a spiritual realm. As Nichols points out, *"*By focusing on the historical experience of settler colonialism […], we cannot avoid foregrounding the fact there may be some forms of life or modes of governance that are universalizing in the sense that they literally colonize and absorb alternatives. They create the world after their own image" (2014 112). By relying too much on the *Jesuit Relations* as a source, Boyden reproduces the desired Indigenous person as a "subject of empire" (Coulthard, 2007) who responds to the affective appeal of self-empowerment that locates the source of colonialism within the realm of Indigenous responsibility.

In "Chapter Five: Gothic Universalism: Eden Robinson's *Monkey Beach*," I demonstrated how romantic inwardness is incapable of addressing the political realities of colonial violence. Rather, *Monkey Beach* performs a gothic attack on its affective appeal, revealing romantic inwardness to be a source of colonial violence for Indigenous peoples. As a result, I conclude romantic inwardness is in fact an obstacle to the flourishing of Indigenous peoples and in its most severe incarnation can lead to a form of state-sponsored dispossession. By minimizing historical conditions, romantic inwardness dismisses the violence that has afflicted Indigenous communities.

"Universal Universalism"

The ways in which romantic inwardness and the romance mode have been applied and manifested within the settler context ultimately rely on historical precedents emanating from Europe that Immanuel Wallerstein calls, "European Universalism."[113] In *European Universalism: The Rhetoric of Power,* Wallerstein articulates a shared desire of moving beyond European based universalisms "to something much more difficult to achieve":

> a universal universalism, which refuses essentialist characterizations of social reality, historicizes both the universal and the particular, reunifies the so-called scientific and humanistic into a single epistemology, and permits us to look with highly clinical and quite skeptical eye at all justifications of "intervention" by the powerful against the weak. (79)

[113] Wallerstein writes, "the universalism of the powerful has been a partial and distorted universalism, one that I am calling 'European universalism'" (xiv). See Wallerstein, 2006.

As Wallerstein suggests, genuine universalism subjects the powerful to the same constraints as those whom they seek to rule and is by definition a collective pursuit of vital public interest. In an effort to move beyond European based universalisms, my formulation of universal universalism recognizes such Indigenous epistemologies as grounded normativity, which, as mentioned previously, is:

> based on deep reciprocity, that are inherently informed by an intimate relationship to place. Grounded normativity teaches us how to live our lives in relation to other people and nonhuman life forms in a profoundly nonauthoritarian, nondominating, nonexploitive manner. Grounded normativity teaches us how to be in respectful diplomatic relationships with other Indigenous and non-Indigenous nations with whom we might share territorial responsibilities or common political or economic interests. Our relationship to the land itself generates the processes, practices, and knowledges that inform our political systems, and through which *we practice solidarity*. (Coulthard and Leanne Simpson, 2016 254)

While Manuel and Derrickson make no reference to universalism, they do refer to "justice," but their conception need not align with European models. As Leanne Simpson notes, "Justice is a concept within Western thought that is intrinsically linked to settler colonialism. Indigenous thought systems conceptualize justice differently" (Leanne Simpson, 2016 21). With this in mind, Manuel and Derrickson make an appeal based on the historical record of alleviating oppression that would fulfill an Indigenous worldview on Indigenous land:

> there is no downside to justice. Just as there was no downside to abolishing slavery, to the winning of equal civil rights for blacks in Canada and the United States, to the emancipation of women. The moves away from the racism and

> misogyny in the past have only enriched the lives of all of us. The same will happen when racist doctrines still in force against Indigenous peoples are replaced by recognition of our rights. (171)

They offer reassurances that "There is room on this land for all of us and there must also be, after centuries of struggle, room for justice for Indigenous peoples. That is all that we ask. And we will settle for nothing less" (21). It is a proposition that requires concrete practices of decolonization, including demystifying Canadian literary texts of romantic inwardness.

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