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In Place/Of Solidarity: Acknowledgement and Reciprocity
with/in Indigenous and Asian Canadian Writing

by

Janey Mei-Jane Lew

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the

requirements of for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in

Ethnic Studies

in the

Graduate Division

of the

University of California, Berkeley

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ABSTRACT

In Place/Of Solidarity: Acknowledgement and Reciprocity
win/in Indigenous and Asian Canadian Writing

by

Janey Mei-Jane Lew

Doctor of Philosophy in Ethnic Studies

University of California, Berkeley

Professor Sau-ling Wong, Chair

In Place/Of Solidarity argues the exigence of developing Asian Canadian critical praxes that align and move in solidarity with Indigenous sovereignties and radical resurgence movements. In the dissertation, I analyze a body of literary texts by contemporary Indigenous and Asian North American writers whose works contain instances of reciprocal representation. I argue that actions proceeding from and grounded in praxes of *acknowledgement* and *reciprocity* constitute openings to solidarity. By enacting Asian Canadian studies explicitly with decolonial solidarities in the foreground, I argue that Asian Canadian studies may not only work in ethical alignment with Indigenous knowledges and methodologies, but may also enliven and reconstitute the solidarities upon which Asian Canadian studies is premised.

Bringing Asian Canadian studies into dialogue with scholarly work from Indigenous studies and recent research on Asian settler colonialism within a transnational Asian (North) American context, this dissertation considers reciprocal representations across a number of literary works by Indigenous and Asian Canadian women. Analyzing key texts by SKY Lee, Lee Maracle, Marie Clements, and others, and writing self-reflexively into the analysis through Trinh T. Minh-ha's concept of "speaking nearby,"¹ I theorize forms of relational critical praxis based on acknowledgement and reciprocity. The project takes up key urges read in the undercurrents of Asian Canadian studies to argue that even as

1. See Nancy N. Chen, "Speaking Nearby: In Conversation with Trinh T. Minh-ha."

the field grapples to enunciate its own coalitional position from which to initiate solidarity, it needs concurrently to deterritorialize and resituate Asian Canadian agency on new grounds.

The goal of this project is to posit a praxical framework for enacting Asian Canadian creative solidarity that: first, moves in alignment with Indigenous resurgence and sovereignty movements grounded in place; second, is animated by a love-based ethic for research, writing, and activism that hails from legacies of intersectional, Women of Colour, and Indigenous feminisms; and finally, shifts from analyzing Asian Canadian settler-colonialism to illuminating practices of and directions for Asian Canadian unsettling and solidarity.

For the matriarchs, 梁劍好 and 許用金.

“And of course I am afraid, because the transformation of silence into language and action is an act of self-revelation.” (Audre Lorde)

“She walks out carrying the light that will burn through all the complicated violence she’s been taught to call love.” (Ariel Gore)

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much of your life as a writer with me and it urges me forward to speak my truth. Finally, to my chair, Sau-ling Wong: I came to Berkeley to study with you because you were one of my intellectual heroes, and of course it changed my life. I could not have hoped for a more caring, encouraging, generous, and patient mentor. You have been committed to me and my project through all of life's interruptions, even when "Murphy" knocked on my door, set up camp in my house, and started moving the furniture around. When I finally needed a quiet place to write in the home stretch, you offered me a roof and even shared your Serena (who baked hot cross buns!) for a housemate. This dissertation is not what I originally imagined, but you gave me the courage to write it the way it needed to be written, and you have made it better in every way simply because I knew you would be reading it. *Happy retirement!*

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Lastly and mostly, Alex and Ernest (Buddy) Richmond. You are love, and love is the reason. LOML, you deserve your own PhD for living with me through mine; thank you for this journey we have walked together and for that which we have yet to walk. My dear Ernest Bud, I thank the universe every moment for the gift of you. *Now we dance!*

PREFACE

“IN PLACE”: SITUATING MY QUESTIONS

SEPTEMBER 8, 2017

From my dining table, where I sit today, writing, I can see directly out my front window Burrard Inlet, the northeastern edge of Stanley Park, the Lion’s Gate bridge, and two bright yellow sulphur piles foregrounding the outline of the North Shore mountains. The view this morning is smoggy, on account of smoke blowing in from wild fires that have been burning all summer in the southern interior of British Columbia. Another academic year has just started, one way of marking the change in seasons. The rain this morning, the first we have had in months, is another sign that autumn is coming.

On the other side of Burrard Inlet, within a ten kilometre radius and less than fifteen minute drive from my home, are two reserve communities: Tsleil Waututh (selilwutlh) to the northeast and Squamish (skwxwú7mesh) to the northwest. The main Musqueam (xʷməθkʷəy̓əm) village¹ is located less than twenty kilometres southwest of here, at the mouth of the Fraser River, not far from the University of British Columbia where I work. The neighbourhood where I live, and from which I’m writing today, is called Hastings Sunrise or more recently the East Village. I attended high school here in the 1990s, when the student population was shifting from primarily working class second- and third-

1. Through my work at UBC, I have heard of Musqueam community members providing feedback that they prefer the word village to reserve.

generation Italian Canadians to one more mixed with new immigrant and refugee students, many of us from East Asian and Southeast Asian backgrounds. Relocating to Hastings Sunrise fifteen years later as an adult, I am witnessing and to some degree participating in its gentrified rebranding with grand openings of boutique coffee shops, craft breweries, restaurants specializing in brunch, and second-hand record stores. Since moving back, I have taken more time to notice the longshoremen and their families who for decades laboured, lived, and continue to remain in this portside community, the First Nations people who live, raise families, make artwork, and come here to access the network of urban Native community services and housing that have over time established themselves here, and my queer and trans- neighbours who visibly build community and share space here. And I recently learned that the intersection of Wall, Semlin, and Powell streets just down the block from where I live is a Squamish landmark called *xepxápayay*, meaning “lots of cedar trees there” (Kwi Awt Stelmexw).

I begin my dissertation situating my project and its questions in a specific time, place, and perspective, acknowledging the many overlaps of history, relationships, and knowledges that intersect here, and offering my writing as a partial and iterative act, to suggest this as an opening gesture of solidarity. This project has now lived with me for ten years. It began as an attempt to document, compare, and analyze Indigenous and Asian North American literary texts and histories of cultural activism in order to make an argument about the comparative racializations of Indigenous and Asian North American subjects within the Canadian and U.S. settler-colonial states and to trace moments of collaboration and alliance-building through instances of creative, cultural activism. While the core ideas and materials of the project remain intact, the focus, scope, guiding frameworks, methodology, and purpose have transformed. What began as a work of comparative cross-racial, transnational literary analysis with the goal of drawing conclusions about the different impacts of settler-state racialization for Asian diasporic and Indigenous subjects in Canada and the U.S. has become a project with much humbler and more explicitly personal and political goals: to assemble, engage with, and learn from a set of Asian and Indigenous Canadian literary texts containing reciprocal representations, to experiment with and model forms of relational critical praxis I am calling *acknowledgement* and *reciprocity*, and to stake a number of claims that argue in support of Indigenous resurgence and sovereignties grounded in place, a love-based ethic for research, writing, and activism animated by intersectional,

Women of Colour, and Indigenous feminisms,² and shifting from analyzing Asian Canadian settler-colonialism to illuminating practices of and directions for Asian Canadian unsettling and solidarity.

APRIL 11, 2018

Last night, I attended a catered dinner held in the UC Berkeley Ethnic Studies department's Barbara Christian conference room.

Vincent Medina and Louis Trevino of mak-'amham, contemporary Ohlone cuisine, have prepared the dinner, following a talk by Elizabeth Hoover on her book *The River is in Us: Fighting Toxics in Mohawk Community*, and will join us for the meal. During her talk, Hoover makes reference to Eve Tuck's call to suspend "damage-centred research" and instead focus efforts on "desire-based research frameworks" (Tuck 416). Introducing the meal, Medina speaks of the location of traditional Ohlone territories, identifies significant places including the hills surrounding where our meal is taking place, names the foods and where they had been gathered, and explains some of the meanings, stories, and practices surrounding each dish. He speaks with feeling about being born and raised on his family's traditional lands, and how he and his partner Trevino had begun to work with their Ohlone foods through conversations with family and community members, and by interpreting ethnographic sources. He introduces Kickapoo chef Crystal Wahpepah and thanks her for her mentorship, as well as her commitments to and innovations in Indigenous food revival. Medina speaks the word "love" into the room several times as he introduces the foods and how these foods connect Ohlone people across generations, from ancestors to today's young people. By foraging, making, and eating these foods, Medina says, it brings them out of the past tense: "We can no longer say Ohlone people 'ate' these foods."

I think about how I moved to the East Bay in 2007, spent three years living and studying here, and still how little I have learned about Ohlone peoples, their histories, and contemporary lives, lands, laws, and politics. The anxiety and shame of being unsettled can be paralyzing, but for now I am a guest here at this dinner, and I am learning to live with my discomfort. Besides, there are more important things to attend: there is a feast before us, and after we listen, we sit down to eat.

2. I do not specifically mention LGBTQ/two-spirit positionalities and queer theorization here because my analysis does not centre this work. I would not preclude queer/two-spirit strategies and knowledge praxes from the love-based ethic that I am positing, but nevertheless acknowledge this limitation in my focus and that more work could be done in these areas.

INTRODUCTION

“OF SOLIDARITY”: WHAT IS THE PURPOSE?

“Solidarity is an uneasy, reserved, and unsettled matter that neither reconciles present grievances nor forecloses future conflict.” (Tuck and Yang 3)

“Constellations in relationship with other constellations form flight paths out of settler colonial realities into Indigeneity. They become doorways out of the enclosure of settler colonialism and into Indigenous worlds.” (L. Simpson 217)

This dissertation, *“In Place/Of Solidarity: Acknowledgement and Reciprocity with/in Indigenous and Asian Canadian Writing,”* argues the exigence of developing Asian Canadian critical praxes that align and move in solidarity with Indigenous sovereignties and radical resurgence movements. In the dissertation, I analyze a body of literary texts by contemporary Indigenous and Asian Canadian writers whose work contain instances of reciprocal representation,³ or what I call “acknowledgements.” I argue that actions proceeding from and grounded in praxes of *acknowledgement* and *reciprocity* constitute openings to solidarity that may be taken up and lead to further invitation to work and walk in (to borrow Leanne Betasamosake Simpson’s word) “constellation” with movements to radically overturn the interconnected

3. Julia Lee uses the term “reciprocal representations” interchangeably with “interracial representations” in her comparative study of late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century African and Asian American Literatures; see *Interracial Encounters*. Quynh Nhu Le writes of “moments of literary contact” in Asian and Indigenous North American literature; see *Unsettling Solidarities*.

structures of violence and death that uphold settler-colonial statehood and ideologies: heteropatriarchy, white supremacy, capitalism, imperialism, coloniality, and carcerality. Equally as important, by enacting Asian Canadian studies⁴ explicitly with decolonial solidarities in mind, we may not only foreground and work in concert with Tuck's desire-based research frameworks, but we may also enliven and reconstitute the solidarities upon which Asian Canadian studies is premised, and that breathe force into and open space for Asian Canadian creativity and ethical relationalities.

Acknowledgement and reciprocity are concepts I write into in this dissertation, but they are by no means concepts that originate with me. Rather, I came to identify, reflect upon, and practice them through experiences working, listening, and being nearby and in community with specific Indigenous people and non-Indigenous allies in a specific place (Vancouver, the traditional, ancestral, and unceded territories of Coast Salish Tsleil Waututh, Squamish, and Musqueam peoples), and by seeking engagement with critical Indigenous studies scholarly and creative works. My experiential learning, witnessing, practicing, and thinking through of acknowledgment and reciprocity are partial, limited, ongoing, non-authoritative, and provisional. Acknowledgement and reciprocity are concepts that come from my own learning-in-place over time studying, teaching, and working at the University of British Columbia, which is located on the traditional, ancestral, and unceded lands of Musqueam people. My conceptualization of acknowledgement and reciprocity also comes from my own experiences-in-place as a gendered-racialized Chinese Canadian settler born and raised on Coast Salish territories and the histories of my mother's and father's families who experienced diasporic displacements and separations across several generations of migration from the 四邑 (Four Counties) region of southern China to Turtle Island. Finally, my focus on acknowledgement and reciprocity emerges from a desire to imagine and practice strategies for existing and acting in ethical relationship with the Indigenous hosts on whose lands I am an uninvited interloper.

This project asks what it might mean for Asian Canadian studies to acknowledge, commit ourselves to, and engage from our own positionalities with, what Glen Coulthard and Leanne Simpson call "grounded normativity." Coulthard and Simpson describe grounded normativity as "the ethical frameworks provided by these Indigenous place-based practices and associated forms of knowledge" (254). Grounded normativity is, by this definition, specific and plural ("*these*"). It is also a name or conceptual formation articulated and

4. I am indebted to Christopher Lee for teasing out Asian Canadian studies as a site of action in "Enacting the Asian Canadian."

mobilized by Indigenous scholars to describe specific and differential knowledges, ways, and practices, that are relationally constituted and sustained in place.

As Asian Canadianists, how can we hold up grounded normativity without appropriating it? In the process, how might we open possibilities for transforming ourselves, our thinking and actions, and our relationships to settler-colonial subjectivity? What are our opportunities for invitation in Indigenous engagements with grounded normativity, and when invited, how can we show up in ways that reframe our relationships and commitments with Indigenous peoples, politics, and places? What are the limitations (and how can we respect them) for Asian Canadian engagements with grounded normativity? And finally, in the interests of solidarity, by engaging these praxes, what do we have to contribute?

As a concept, grounded normativity is helpful for a number of reasons, and it is also important to note that these specific and plural place-based practices and associated forms of knowledge exist, constitute, and sustain themselves with or without the terminology of “grounded normativity.” Coulthard and Simpson go on to write, “Our relationship to the land itself generates the processes, practices, and knowledges that inform our political systems, and through which we practice solidarity” (254). This sentence provides crucial insights for anyone seeking to practice solidarity with Indigenous peoples and potentially for understanding solidarity more broadly. If grounded normativity informs Indigenous ethical and political approaches, practices, and processes, and, in turn, formations of Indigenous solidarity, then solidarity too may be understood and approached as specific, relational, place-based, and plural.

Imagining solidarities as contingent and multiple, but also *grounded* and *in movement*, suggests possibilities for openings to solidarity, while attending to solidarity’s specificities, embodiments, and locations. The promise of these possibilities is significant for anyone who has experienced paralysis or the desire to retreat when faced with the “uneasy, reserved, and unsettled” nature of solidarity work. Eve Tuck and Wayne Yang’s incisive and important observations about solidarity may, indeed, sound grim—*Who would want to pursue something that neither reconciles past grievances nor forecloses future conflict?* But Tuck and Yang do leave an opening, albeit a vexed one, for solidarity in the present. Tuck and Yang’s “Decolonization is Not a Metaphor” makes a significant intervention urging anyone who aligns themselves with or adopts a stance of decolonization to think again and think harder about what the stakes are of making these claims. The authors are straightforward and upfront in

pointing out that claims for decolonization are, above all, *land claims*⁵. Whether one reads these as cautionary words or nuanced clarifications, it is important not to read Tuck and Yang as altogether rejecting solidarity. Writing collaboratively across obviously differential positionalities and drawing attention to the insides and outsides of these differences throughout the text (for example, in their use of pronouns “our/they”), Tuck and Yang’s article is material evidence of solidarity work that substantiates Edward Said’s exhortation of “Never solidarity before criticism” (*Representations* 32).

Leanne Simpson’s reflections on solidarity carry inflections of light and hope in her references to “constellations of co-resistance,” but critique is present here too. Her revisiting of Indigenous solidarity formations and mobilizations during the Idle No More movement (a grassroots movement for Indigenous sovereignty that began with protests and public actions such as teach-ins, flash mobs, and round dances and peaked in intensity in the winter of 2012-13) carefully excavates the quality of relationships and the varying effects of relational work accomplished, the groundedness of the organizing tactics, and the structural complexities and complicities that revealed themselves in the process. Simpson offers her situated reflections on Idle No More from her position as a visible public intellectual who actively participated in the movement during its peak and contributed to its narrativisation and documentation through her editing of the anthology *The Winter We Danced*.⁶ The tone of her critique is never distancing nor condemning; instead, she situates her analysis of the events and tactics embedded within a reflective, critical narrative with the aim to document and learn from this instance how to “organize and mobilize within grounded normativity in a way that is effective in the present” (219). The point is that solidarity is not an abstract thought experiment or scholarly exercise; it is lived, grounded, iterative praxis. As Leanne Simpson writes, “we must not just ask what is the alternative: we need to do the alternatives over and over until we get it right” (227). Recalling the Nishnaabeg

5. Earlier debates about decolonization and anti-racism also turn on the point of land, and how land, relationships, and meaning are understood. In “Decolonizing Anti-racism” (2005), Enakshi Dua and Bonita Lawrence caution against the uncritical co-opting of decolonization discourses within anti-racism: “To speak of Indigenous nationhood is to speak of land as Indigenous, in ways that are neither rhetorical nor metaphorical” (124). In “Decolonizing Resistance: Challenging Colonial States,” Nandita Sharma and Cynthia Wright critique Lawrence and Dua and contend that “[d]ecolonizing *relationships* has proved to be much more difficult than decolonizing *territories*” (130), leading them to posit an alternative politics of space, one premised on the idea of a “commons” (131). Sharma and Wright’s argument is provocative, but it is not historically contextualized and also relies on an epistemological framework that assumes (human) relationships are separate from land, rather than relationality as principally tied to land.

6. See Kino-nda-niimi Collective, *The Winter We Danced*.

story of Gchi Ojiig (the Big Dipper constellation) to theorize solidarity as constellated formations from a Nishnaabeg perspective, Leanne Simpson notes that “This story is about mistakes, struggle, mobilization, sacrifice, love, negotiation, and sharing” (215). Acknowledging, honouring, and appreciating each of these aspects of solidarity helps to inform Leanne Simpson’s understanding of the process and creates the necessary ethical, empathetic framework for her understanding of and approach to solidarity.

It might seem—from statements such as Tuck and Yang’s that declare, “decolonization is not accountable to settlers, or settler futurity” (36)—that there is little room within decolonization or Indigenous resurgence movements for settler-allies of any sort, racialized or otherwise. Is there even a place for Asian Canadians within decolonization? What forms the basis for positing Asian Canadian and Indigenous solidarities, when there are very real historical, political, and socio-economic differences between Asian Canadian and Indigenous peoples? Perhaps we are simply not needed, and it would be more respectful to step back or stand aside. “Moving over” is indeed a viable suggestion and one that has been reiterated, for instance, by Indigenous women writers at particular moments of coalitional women’s cultural organizing that happened in Canada in the 1980s and 1990s;⁷ since they took the time to offer this advice, we should probably listen, heed, and do better at it. But what if in doing so we find ourselves still in the way? If settler futurity is not an option in decolonization, what remaining strategies are left for accounting for our settler presences besides evacuation? Is this even viable, or would it just be another way of evacuating responsibility for the messes of settler-colonialism and leaving it back in the hands Indigenous people? The second half of Tuck and Yang’s statement is, “Decolonization is accountable to Indigenous sovereignty and futurity” (36). This is the crux of the decision that we settlers who desire anti- and decolonial solidarities are tasked to make—are we willing to give up our settler privileges and frameworks, regardless of our own historical and

7. In an essay titled “Moving Over,” Lee Maracle reflects on feminist relationships and allyship. In the essay, Maracle invites white feminists to acknowledge their racial privilege and to make space for Indigenous women and women of colour in the feminist movement; in short, she invites white feminists to be better allies by “moving over” (9). Larissa Lai also writes, “The appropriation debates of the 1980s and 1990s were led by Lenore Keeshig-Tobias of the Chippewas of Nawash Unceded First Nation. In a 1990 article in the *Globe and Mail*, she asked white writers and filmmakers, specifically Darlene Quaife and W. P. Kinsella, to ‘stop stealing Native stories’” (*Slanting* 22). For a literary analysis that highlights ways that Anglo-Canadian writers have historically appropriated First Nations images and storytelling, see Margery Fee, “Romantic Nationalism and the Image of Native People in Contemporary English-Canadian Literature.”

contemporary struggles, in order to choose Indigenous sovereignty and futurity? Speaking to a wide audience, Coulthard and Simpson write, “When we disappear Indigenous presence from our intellectual endeavors, our movement building, and our scholarship, we not only align ourselves with the wrong side of history, we necessarily negate any form of solidarity and become actors in the maintenance of settler colonialism” (255). I would add to this that when we as settlers attempt to gloss over or deny our complicities within settler-colonialism and to disappear ourselves from accountability to Indigenous sovereignties and futurity, the results are also the same.

ASIAN CANADIAN STUDIES: FUTURES AND FORECLOSURES

Asian Canadian studies has emerged from its developmental narrative of vexed arrival into a critical period that emphasizes promising futurity. If, by the turn of the millenium, Asian Canadian studies was (to riff off Iyko Day) “almost a subject” (“Transnationalism” 198), it is has now reached a critical mass worthy of forecasting hope for its “future students” and assessing and projecting its most promising research directions (Cho 234).⁸ Recently, scholars have been considering Indigenous and Asian Canadian relations in their work, ranging from comparative racialization and visual and cultural analysis, to literary intersections, to historical remappings of Indigenous and Asian Canadian “colonial proximities” and connections through “carceral” state-making practices.⁹ In the last few decades, amid longstanding calls to “decolonize” and “indigenize” the academy made by Indigenous intellectuals and Indigenous studies scholars¹⁰, those outside of Indigenous studies have also begun to look

8. See also Lee and Kim in “Asian Canadian Critique Forum” and *The Asian Canadian Studies Reader*, especially Pon et. al.’s introduction “Asian Canadian Studies: Directions and Challenges,” and Kwak’s “Asian Canada: Undone.”

9. See Iyko Day’s *Alien Capital*; Marie Lo’s “Model Minorities, Models of Resistance”; Rita Wong’s “Decolonizasian”; Malissa Phung’s “Asian-Indigenous Relationalities”; Lai’s “Epistemologies of Respect”; Renisa Mawani’s *Colonial Proximities*; Masumi Izumi’s “Resituating Displaced/Replaced Subjects in and of Japanese Canadian History”; and Mona Oikawa’s “Cartographies of Violence”

10. Two now canonical interventions are Linda Tuhiwai Smith’s *Decolonizing Methodologies*; and Devon A. Mihesuah and Angela Cavender Wilson, eds. *Indigenizing the Academy*. These calls have only intensified in Canada since the official apology for residential schools and subsequent calls for reconciliation. See, for instance, Battiste et. al., “Decolonizing Education in Canadian Universities”; Haig-Brown, “Working a Third Space”; Pidgeon, “Moving Beyond Good Intentions”; Johnson, “Indigenizing Higher Education and the Calls to Action”; and Louie et. al. “Applying Indigenizing Principles of Decolonizing Methodologies to University Classrooms.”

towards “indigenizing” as a radical critical move.¹¹ Moreover, in post-Truth and Reconciliation era Canada, reckoning with indigeneity has been invoked with increased frequency and intensity as a priority for scholars across diverse fields. Asian Canadian studies scholars, who have been scratching at the edges of this research for some time, could be poised to make significant interventions in, to borrow Laura Kwak’s words, “confronting settler-colonialism” (357).

In positing and formulating itself as a field of knowledge production, Asian Canadian studies has consistently moved to resist foreclosure. It is a field that has defined itself through resistances to containment, semiotic deferrals, “unfinished projects,” and capacious encounters.¹² Asian Canadian indeterminacy has been a generative space, and careful work has been done to situate the field and articulate its critical commitments. Nevertheless, I argue that as it moves to confront settler colonialism, Asian Canadian studies advances in a direction towards voluntary foreclosure—here I emphasize a practical definition of foreclosure in the sense of relinquishing assets or investments paid into the structures of capital and privilege within settler colonialism. While I am by no means arguing that analyses of Asian Canadian settler colonialism are unnecessary (indeed this research is crucial to coming to terms with the historical and political conditions as well as the affects that shape the realities of our contemporary moment), I do suggest that such analyses invariably lead to the radical necessity of confronting foreclosure—something Asian Canadian studies has yet to address. If decolonization is indeed a goal for Asian Canadian studies, we not only need to see ourselves and our complicities within settler colonialism, but we also need to focus our attention on seeing our ways out of it and making moves to surrender from it, to dispossess ourselves as settler subjects.

What is the process? Entering into foreclosure, as it involves giving up something that one has already sunk significant investment into, as it involves necessary losses of equity, is not likely to happen without some pain. But, I would argue that Asian Canadian studies has already been grappling, either consciously or unconsciously, with other pains of anxiety over living with insecure debts garnered on dubious terms over lands that were, in the first place, stolen. Asian Canadian anxiety is also built into the structures of heteronormative, patriarchal white supremacy, which rely on tight hierarchies of

11. For instance, Len Findlay’s “Always Indigenize.” As Albert Braz notes, Findlay’s exhortation has been somewhat curiously canonized. Braz is among several critics who have called Findlay into question. Others include Cheryl Suzack, “On the Practical ‘Untidyness’ of ‘Always Indigenizing’” and Elina Hill, “A Critique of the Call to ‘Always Indigenize.’”

12. See Roy Miki, “Asiancy” in *Broken Entries*; Christopher Lee, “The Lateness of Asian Canadian Studies”; Guy Beauregard, “Asian Canadian Studies: Unfinished Projects”; and Pon et. al. “Asian Canadian Studies Now.”

denial and deferred recognition. Asian Canadian anxiety is a condition of settler colonialism. However, diagnosing settler colonialism, much like diagnosing anxiety, is only the very first step to working through it. Moreover, I suggest that efforts spent analyzing settler colonialism, like analyzing anxiety, may lead to some insights to help undo it but can also lead to an unproductive fixation that unwittingly reinforces it. Remaining tied to the objects of our losses will not lead us through foreclosure. Our attachments to and imbrications within settler colonialism are important to understand. Equally important, if we are to seriously posit solidarities with Indigenous sovereignties and resurgence movements, we need to join efforts to experiment with strategies, work nearby, and take up invitations to, in Leanne Simpson's words, "do the alternatives over and over" (227). To survive foreclosure, Asian Canadians also need to renegotiate and recover surrender from a capitalist vocabulary that equates it with losses.

This project, in part, suggests critical praxes of solidarity that involve surrendering to doing the alternatives and learning in place. It takes up key urges read in the undercurrents of Asian Canadian studies critical scholarship, a field that has been long been grappling with the complexities of coalition, to argue that even while we enunciate and admit to the full contours of Asian Canadian as a position from which we move to initiate solidarity, we need concurrently to deterritorialize and resituate Asian Canadian agency on new grounds; to do so will mean unlearning and undisciplining ourselves from the laws and norms of settler colonialism, acknowledging what we do not know, excavating our own "otherwise,"¹³ and opening ourselves up to negotiating our presences within specific Indigenous grounded normativities from the places we situate ourselves and our work and in the partial ways they may be offered to us.

Larissa Lai compellingly states that the very term Asian Canadian, which arises from a discursive need to articulate coalitions, is "deeply relational" and that the "site of relation [is] always a struggle" (*Slanting I* 4-5). Keeping in mind that each and every site of relational struggle is unstable, specific, and contingent, I argue that by returning to some of these sites, particularly sites that

13. Kandice Chuh's theorization of imagining otherwise as "grounds" for approaching Asian Americanist critique informs my thinking here. As Chuh writes, "To imagine otherwise is not simply a matter of seeing a common object from different perspectives. Rather, it is about undoing the very notion of common objectivity itself and about recognizing the ethicopolitical implications of *multiple epistemologies*—theories about knowledge formation and the status and objects of knowledge—that underwrite alternative perspectives" (my emphasis x). I would suggest that the very heart of Asian Canadian solidarity efforts and actions lie in "recognizing the ethicopolitical implications of multiple epistemologies," and it is therefore crucial to turn towards "otherwise" for insights, as well as to imagine otherwise for inspiration.

have been animated by the organizing of Asian Canadian women in coalition with others across differences, there are significant lessons to be learned about solidarity to carry forward to this moment. Centring intersectional, Women of Colour, and Indigenous feminist analyses and praxes at the core of Asian Canadian approaches to solidarity not only focalizes the importance of the processes of working, learning, and struggling across differences so foundational to coalitional practice, but it also illuminates pathways through solidarities that may already exist or stir the ashes of past solidarities that may previously have been exhausted, denied, or dormant. Furthermore, to centre intersectional, Women of Colour, and Indigenous feminist knowledges and praxes is to surrender toward the leadership of (other) women, thus approaching solidarity from a position of humility and radical difference.

This dissertation poses some key questions for Asian Canadian studies as the field advances in the direction of critical work examining the intersections of Asian/Indigenous racialization and comparison. Having spent the better part of two decades critiquing its own institutional position and setting itself up as a legitimate field of knowledge production, Asian Canadian studies has identified Asian/Indigenous relations as one of its most promising directions for generative scholarly inquiry. Through my project, I aim to speak from and into Asian Canadian studies, asking: What is there to learn from past imaginaries, contexts, wins, and bruises of solidarity, coalition, and allyship amongst Indigenous and Asian Canadians? What are our goals for taking up this work? How transparent are we about our investments? And, where are we locating ourselves in the matrix of settler and Indigenous futurities?

Bringing Asian Canadian studies into dialogue with scholarly work from Indigenous studies and recent research on Asian settler colonialism within a transnational Asian (North) American context, this dissertation considers reciprocal representations across a number of literary works by Indigenous and Asian Canadian authors to illuminate praxes of acknowledgement and reciprocity, and in turn, to explore these as possible frameworks for beginning to enact contemporary Asian Canadian solidarities with Indigenous sovereignty and resurgence movements. When I propose “beginning to enact,” I am not by any means suggesting my work as a point of origin or assuming that previous acts of solidarity have never happened; quite the contrary, in this dissertation I urge working from the assumption that previous relationalities (whether or not they are or have been acknowledged) exist and are always already with us in the present. Rather, I include the word *begin* because I conceive of coalition, solidarity, allyship, and relation as necessarily unstable formations—we are always in movement through them, reforming them, and tending them. Thus, it

is crucial to approach solidarities with *a beginner's mind* (初心).¹⁴ Solidarities, to borrow some additional terminology from Said, are an amateur's game (*Representations* 82).

Moreover, interrogating recent trends to leverage decolonization and indigeneity in the academy, I put pressure on Asian Canadian studies to examine and clarify the stakes of our commitments to ensure that our moves towards solidarity result in something other than the reinforcement of our own cultural capital.¹⁵ The recent body of interdisciplinary research in Asian Canadian studies that opens the interstices of Asian/Indigenous relations and confronts settler-colonialism is, I contend, valuable, productive, and important. Nevertheless, as I proceeded to consider and research reciprocity in Asian/Indigenous relations, it occurred to me that the interest in this topic has, to date, been somewhat one-sided. While some scholars, such as Juliana Hu Pegues,¹⁶ locate their work across Asian North American and Indigenous studies, and recent efforts to conceptualize critical Ethnic Studies has also opened up fertile grounds for these discussions, apart from some work by scholars such as Danika Medack-Saltzman that, for instance, takes up transnational, comparative, and Asian indigeneities,¹⁷

14. 初心/*shoshin* is a concept popularly associated with Zen Buddhist meditation and practices. In an essay explaining the relevance of "beginners mind" for cross-cultural pedagogies and storytelling in the theatre arts, Wendy Saver quotes Shunryū Suzuki's definition of *shoshin*: "If your mind is empty, it is always ready for anything; it is open to everything. In the beginner's mind, there are many possibilities, but in the expert's there are few" (294).

15. My thinking on this matter has been touched by Mark Chiang's arguments in *The Cultural Capital of Asian American Studies*. Chiang analyzes key moments in the formation of Asian American studies as a part of the larger narrative of the emergence of Ethnic Studies, interrogating the problematic situation of Asian American studies' political project and its institutionalization. Chiang succinctly poses the question, "what [does] it [mean] when academic work that strives to be political instead becomes cultural capital" (4). Chiang maintains that "all work in the academy must engage in capital accumulation" (16), a point that I find difficult to argue with, but at the same time would like to put under pressure. This vexedness, I argue, is particularly accentuated in situations where the academic work of Asian American (or Asian Canadian) studies seeks alignment or solidarity with Indigenous studies or decolonizing politics, since, on the one hand, Asian racialization, as Iyko Day has shown, is so tied to settler colonialism through the logics of capitalism (see *Alien Capital*), and on the other hand, settler colonialism has been entrenched in academia through a double-handed logic of Indigenous elimination and appropriation. See Zoe Todd, who writes, "In academe, Indigenous bodies, stories, knowledge, and 'contacts' ('informants', 'participants' or 'interlocutors') act as a kind of currency or capital that is concentrated in the hands of non-Indigenous scholars and administrators."

16. See Pegues' "Picture Man," and "Rethinking Relations."

17. See Medack-Saltzman's "Transnational Indigenous Exchange" and "Empire's Haunted Logics."

relatively little of this work is coming out of Indigenous studies.¹⁸ What's more, in *As We Have Always Done*, Leanne Simpson comments on the racial politics of solidarity, and the need to “develop personal relationships with other communities of coresisters beyond white allies” (231). Yet, in Leanne Simpson's interpellation of these other communities, Asian representation appears to be absent or muted. While Leanne Simpson names “white allies,” and “Black and brown individuals and communities on Turtle Island and beyond that are struggling in their own localities against these same forces” (228), she never specifically calls or locates Asian allies in the struggle—or perhaps she leaves it up to Asians to identify themselves somewhere in the matrix of white, black, or brown. Rather than interpreting this elision as an instance of “under-recognition,”¹⁹ I suggest Asian Canadians need to fully inhabit and work through on our own fraught relationalities and “show up anyway”²⁰ if we are actually seeking to be called in as allies or to align ourselves as anti-colonial or decolonial “coresisters.”²¹

18. Colleen Lye observes a similar imbalance in Asian Americanists' interest in theorizing Afro-Asian relations compared to African Americanists. See “The Afro Asian Analogy.” Additionally, this is not to say that there has been no movement within Indigenous studies to posit critical, comparative work that theorizes connections and potential solidarities with other racialized groups. For instance, Paul Lai and Lindsey Claire Smith edited a special issue of *American Quarterly* on “Alternative Contact: Indigeneity, Globalism, and American Studies” that “emphasiz[es] ‘alternative contact’—contact apart from narratives of ‘first contact’ between Native Americans and Europeans (including Euro-Americans)—among Indigenous Americans and other populations in the United States and the world” (408-409). In Canada, especially post-TRC, there has been some work done on Indigenous and settler relationalities; but often this work is couched in language that elides racialized presence. See, for instance: Dewar et. al., eds., *Cultivating Canada*; and Gabrielle L'Hirondelle Hill and Sophie McCall eds., *The Land We Are*.

19. Commenting on the politics of an Asian Canadian and Asian American comparativism and transnationalism from the position of an Asian Americanist moving to Canada, Lisa Yoneyama observes that “If the distinctiveness of Canada is lost in the United States, the statements about ‘Asian Canadian’ I frequently encounter in Canada—whether as census category, object of academic inquiry, or grounds for collective organizing—generally underscore its under-recognition” (196).

20. Leanne Simpson makes a case for the productive potential for alliances when Indigenous resurgence and sovereignty movements to focus efforts away from centring whiteness, and that when this happens, “our real white allies show up in solidarity anyway” (231).

21. See L. Simpson, “Constellations of Coresistance” in *As We Have Always Done*.

NOTES ON METHODOLOGY

THE UNRULY AND THE EROTIC

In 2012, I interviewed my father for a documentary for the Chinese Canadian National Council called Paper Sons and Daughters.²² In a part of the footage that was not included in the final cut, he talked about how for the first several years in Canada he struggled with almost no support network, especially after his grandfather who had sponsored him became ill with heart disease and then died. Dad spoke of his difficulties finding work as a new immigrant with very little social status and few viable connections, exacerbated by the fact that he could not speak English and invariably “fell asleep” in his night school ESL classes because he had been working all day washing dishes during eleven hour shifts in Chinatown.

I asked him, “What do you hope your future generations to know about your history in Canada?”; to which he replied: “I hope that they’ll know how I came to Canada, how I survived. You definitely must pursue an education. You can’t really do anything without an education. If you’re not educated, if you have no knowledge, then you’ll have a hard time finding work, right? Once you’ve excelled at school and found a way to support yourself in life, then there you go.”²³

Audre Lorde is famously quoted as saying, “*the master’s tools will never dismantle the master’s house*” (112) These words are sometimes invoked to tune our attention to the contradictions inherent in trying to enact radical resistances whilst we are always already embedded and complicit in complex structures of domination. The conundrum of how to access the appropriate tools to dismantle the master’s house, when the master’s tools are seemingly all we know or the ones we know best, can be tricky business. Rita Wong offers a succinct example in her essay “Decoloniasian” when she writes, “The very language in which I articulate these thoughts, English, is weighted with a colonial history particular to the land called Canada, in contrast to the languages I might desire to circulate this essay in, be they Cree, Siouan, Salishan, or Cantonese” (159). In reciting Lorde’s words, I resist the urge to dwell on the conundrum it raises but instead look to bolster its context. To do so, I turn to a longer version of the quotation:

Those of us who stand outside the circle of this society's definition of acceptable women; those of us who have been forged in the crucibles of difference -- those of us who are poor, who are lesbians, who are Black, who are older -- know that survival is not an academic skill. It is learning how to stand alone, unpopular and sometimes reviled, and how to make common cause with those others identified as outside the structures in order to define and seek a world in which we can all

22. See Angrave, dir., “Paper Sons and Daughters.”

23. Interview for “Paper Sons and Daughters.” See Ken Yoon Sing Lew.

flourish. It is learning how to take our differences and make them strengths. *For the master's tools will never dismantle the master's house.* They may allow us temporarily to beat him at his own game, but they will never enable us to bring about genuine change. And this fact is only threatening to those women who still define the master's house as their only source of support. (emphasis in original 112)

As important as what she has to say about the master's tools or house is what Lorde has to say about solidarity and survival in this quotation. Lorde hails a series of overlapping solidarities in which she also locates herself through the repeated phrase "those of us who...those of us who..." to speak an affirmation. It is an affirmation of knowledge and of survival. "Those of us who..." are named in the quotation "know that *survival is not an academic skill.*" Here, Lorde acknowledges that survival is knowledge; that survival itself is worthy of attention; and that acquiring academic skills is not the same as survival. This is not to say that academic skills might not help you survive. Survivors know that survival is agile and not zero-sum. Indeed survival often requires mobilizing whatever is available and accepting high levels of contradiction.

Lorde's point is not to construct false dichotomies or reinforce violent hierarchies of separation. Indeed, it is precisely this trick of singularity within hierarchies of thinking rigorously honed to assign value to *this or that* which play into the hands of the master's game. The master's game is one of pursuing *mastery* (to the violent exclusion of else). Mastery posits itself as a process to ostensibly lift us up out of survival, but as Lorde points out, playing the game of mastery will never bring about genuine change. Significantly, while survival may not be academic, it does involve other forms of learning. Indeed, learning is key. As I read in Lorde's text, survival is learning towards the flourishing of one/another. *Learning solidarity* is thus a form and possible outcome of survival.

I have held up the question of methodology many times working through this project. When I began, I situated it primarily as a work of literary and cultural studies analysis, which to some degree, it still is. At the same time, in the process of research and writing, and upon realizing that my project is about *learning solidarity*, my approach has transformed into something much unrulier. Perhaps this is true for any sustained research and writing project, yet I contend that unruliness in this case is not merely a matter of course, but rather constitutive of my approach to the work. I consider Laura Kwak's discussion of the unruly in Asian Canadian studies as a point of departure in reflecting here on my own methodologies and approaches.²⁴ I cannot say that learning solidarity necessarily leads to an unruly research methodology (though it might), but in my

24. See Kwak's "Asian Canada: Undone."

specific case it has led me here, and since Kwak makes a point to invite unruliness into Asian Canadian studies' research praxes, I will take a moment to describe how I arrived at unruliness as a method in my own work.

Lee Maracle writes, "Canadians need to understand Indigenous law more than they need to understand Indigenous people" (*Memory Serves* 115). Indigenous people, even while they have been constructed as "vanishing," are actually far from absent in academic discourses. Quite the contrary, in some comparable ways to how the phenomenon of Orientalism has constructed an idea of the East through research, projection, and representations, one could go so far as to argue that *the Native is also a career*.²⁵ Indigenous studies scholarship has devoted ample space to demonstrating the ways that objectifying, Western research and representational practices have misrepresented, dehumanized, appropriated, and damaged, Indigenous people, cultural practices, and communities.²⁶ For instance, according to Marcia Crosby, Canadian nationalist discourses deploy the image of an "Imaginary Indian" particularly in visual culture and analysis to serve its own political interests and needs, simultaneously celebrating the "prescribed space" it sets aside for Indigenous representation and disavowing responsibility to actual Aboriginal people and politics" (219). Canadian discourses of pluralism, inclusion, and difference, as Crosby demonstrates, invariably serve and obscure the settler colonial project at the heart of Canadian nationalism, a project whose ability to conceal its violence behind values of sympathy and inclusion renders it all the more damaging. In *Going Native*, Shari Huhndorf suggests that U.S. nationalism relies not just on articulating and performing "Imaginary Indian" stereotypes, but more pointedly on assuming and naturalizing Native practices and identities as American. She writes, "European Americans have imitated Natives to construct their individual and collective identities" (7). Going native involves, according to Huhndorf, "the more widespread conviction that adopting some vision of Native life in a more

25. Daniel Francis wrote about the term "Imaginary Indian" which he defines as a generic symbol that reduces diverse Indigenous peoples and cultures to singularity while, at the same time, transforming itself into different forms to suit changing hegemonic values and purposes. In this way, Francis' "Imaginary Indian" functions much like an Orientalist trope. In stating that "The Indian is the invention of the European" (4), Francis draws upon language that nearly replicates Edward Said's in the opening sentences of the latter's treatise on the vast cultural and intellectual apparatus known as *Orientalism*: "The Orient was almost a European invention" (1). Just as Edward Said writes, "the Orient has helped to define Europe (or the West) as its contrasting image" (1-2) Francis argues that "non-Natives in North America have long defined themselves in relation to the Other in the form of the Indian" (8).

26. Many Indigenous intellectuals have written about this, including Vine Deloria Jr. "Anthropologists and Other Friends" in *Custer Died for Your Sins*; and Linda Tuhiwai Smith, in *Decolonizing Methodologies*.

permanent way is necessary to regenerate and to maintain European-American racial and national identities" (8).

My original project was to read a set of literary texts to reveal ways that Indigenous, Asian, and white racialization triangulates to produce and reinforce white supremacist, settler colonial nationalist projects in Canada and the U.S. Recent work by Renisa Mawani, Iyko Day, and others has provided solid grounding, historical support, and strong theoretical cases for this kind of work that explores comparative racialization. At the same time, I began to realize that this analytic framing and approach tends to reveal more about the laws, norms and ideologies of settler colonialism and not much about Indigenous laws and history. As much as I argue for the value of continuing research on the specific forms and functions of Asian Canadian settler colonialism and Asian/Indigenous comparative racialization in the Americas in order to illuminate how to renegotiate Asian Canadian responsibilities and relationships to Indigenous peoples and sovereignties,²⁷ I also suggest there is a gap in articulating methodologies for Asian Canadian studies research that seeks to align itself with decolonization. Maracle's provocation to learn more about Indigenous law rings loudly as I seek to frame a methodology for my work. Following Wong's question, "What happens if we position indigenous people's struggles instead of normalized whiteness as the reference point through which we come to articulate our subjectivities?", I ask Asian Canadian studies, *What would happen if we were to position Indigenous and decolonizing methodologies more centrally in our scholarly and intellectual practices while rigorously resisting appropriation of these approaches, and look to Indigenous laws as reference points for learning and for engaging our relationalities with the land and one another?*

Ethnographic and other forms of empirical research collected about Indigenous people may sometimes be useful to Indigenous resurgence. I think about the value that Vincent Medina and Louis Trevino ascribed to the ethnographic data that was collected about Ohlone foods and food practices in their learning to re-make these foods and traditions in a contemporary context.²⁸

27. In addition to Sharma and Wright who directly contest the terminology of settler when applied to migrants and people of colour, Malissa Phung has also asked provocative questions about the nuanced position of people of colour within a settler colonial framework. See Phung "Are People of Colour Settlers Too?"

28. Deborah Miranda provides a powerful revision of conventional understandings of ethnographer and informant roles in her essay "They were Tough, Those Old Women Before Us." By "flipping the premise" of conventional ethnographic methodology, Miranda reinvests agency and authority in Indigenous ethnographic collaborators such as Isabel Meadows. Miranda writes, "the immense and powerful reservoir of these materials is actually *Isabel Meadow's body of work*,

At the same time, as Linda Tuhiwai Smith and others have argued, even as it is vastly oversimplifying to make generalizations about Western academic knowledge practices and research traditions, it is also fair to say that the structures of power and feeling that have framed most research on Indigenous peoples have continually protected, privileged, and sustained the elevation of Euro-American paradigms and status in the relationship and either not served or actively damaged Indigenous peoples participating and/or represented in the research. As Linda Smith writes, “The finer details of how Western scientists might name themselves are irrelevant to indigenous peoples who have experienced unrelenting research of a profoundly exploitative nature” (92). Academic research on Indigenous peoples has also often been implicitly embedded within an unequal and fundamentally colonizing structure of resource extraction and capital accumulation. Linda Smith illuminates the implicit and explicit rules and rule-making that sustains academic methodologies and disciplining practices, explaining that:

Whilst there may not be a unitary system, there are ‘rules’ which help make sense of what is contained within the archive and enable ‘knowledge’ to be recognized. These rules can be conceived of as rules of classification, rules of framing and rules of practice. Although the term ‘rules’ may sound like a set of fixed items which are articulated in explicit ways as regulations, it also means rules which are masked in some way and which tend to be articulated through implicit understandings of how the world works. (93)

However, in *Decolonizing Methodologies*, Linda Smith also argues that relocating the aims and processes of research within Indigenous knowledge paradigms and relocating tools and practices of research into the hands of Indigenous peoples and communities—even if the communities may not call what they are doing “research”—may be necessary to advance decolonization and Indigenous sovereignty.²⁹ Linda Smith writes, “This form of naming is about bringing to the

establishing her as a storyteller, scholar, and cultural activist who essentially uses [ethnologist] Harrington as a note-taker for communicating with future Indian communities” (374).

29. Since the publication of Smith’s *Decolonizing Methodologies* 1999, many other Indigenous scholars have contributed to theorizing research methods for Indigenous studies. A brief list includes: Bagele Chilisa, *Indigenous Research Methodologies*; Shawn Wilson, *Research is Ceremony*; Maggie Walter and Chris Anderson, *Indigenous Statistics: A Quantitative Research Methodology*; Margaret Kovach, *Indigenous Methodologies*; and Michelle Pidgeon “Moving Between Theory and Practice within an Indigenous Research Paradigm.” Interestingly, Chris Anderson and Jean M. O’Brien make “an appeal for methodological promiscuity,” noting that Indigenous Studies “continues to draw on a huge array of disciplines and methodological debates to inform [its] perspectives and work, and it has tended to do so in a context with little collective strategy or long-term planning” (1-2). In defining “promiscuity,” Anderson and O’Brien “[refer] to its

centre and privileging indigenous values, attitudes and practices” (214). Some underlying principles that guide my methodology, then, are to avoid exploitation of, extraction from, and elimination of Indigenous and other oppressed peoples in the ways I mobilize and represent information and ideas, and to attempt to centre, privilege and dialogue with Indigenous values, attitudes, and practices in framing my own approaches to my work. In particular, as this is a project mostly concerned with considering and formulating different ideas, these principles are utterly crucial to how I treat my own and others’ ideas, creative products, and claims.

Throughout the dissertation writing process, I have been told on a number of occasions, “it is an academic exercise.” This may be so, but it also leads me to a bind as I circle the question of methodology and try to complete this academic exercise when the subject of my work is learning solidarity, something I am coming to see as *not an academic skill*. Linda Smith writes, “Research is also regarded as the domain of experts who have advanced educational qualifications and access to a specialized language and skills” (214). While the genre of the dissertation to a certain extent necessitates performing proof of advanced educational qualifications and competency in specialized language and skills, I am nevertheless beginning to chafe at the idea of pursuing, wielding, or reproducing the tropes and patterns of academic expertise when expertise has been so long denied to Indigenous peoples about their own knowledges and histories; when it has been wielded specifically to exploit Indigenous peoples; and particularly when my goal in the work is something more akin to learning “how to make common cause with those others identified as outside the structures in order to define and seek a world in which we can all flourish” (Lorde 112). Mastery is *decidedly not* what I am seeking when I seek to be guided by and to centre Indigenous research practices and decolonizing methodologies. Nor is appropriation. But these principles I have outlined (non-exploitation, non-extraction, non-elimination, non-mastery, non-appropriation) are all ones defined in terms of the negative, or refusal.³⁰ I want more than to simply

original Latin use, meaning ‘mixed, indiscriminate, in common, without discussion’ (2). I find such an approach consonant with my own tendency towards unruliness in framing a methodological approach for this dissertation.

30. Articulating a politics of rejection and refusal has been generative for Indigenous scholars such as Glen Coulthard and Audra Simpson. Coulthard traces a path to liberation through a reading of Fanon that posits that “those struggling against colonialism must ‘turn away’ from the colonial state and society and find in their own *decolonial praxis* the source of their liberation . . . the empowerment that is derived from this critically self-affirmative and self-transformative ethics of desubjectification must be cautiously directed *away* from the assimilative lure of the

appropriate the language of refusal offered by Indigenous scholars and extract refusal from the particularities of the arguments in which they are grounded in formulating my methodology. While refusal is important, so are other forms of action. But to locate myself and my actions *in solidarity*, to be recognizable as someone willing and ready to be called into alliance, I need first to stand aside and act mindfully from my own position. For that to happen, I need to clarify and locate my position. In my case this is, at the outset, a place of unruliness.

Even as Maracle urges Canadians to learn Indigenous laws, her reason is not for us to master or mimic them. Instead, she offers laws and a history that has led to the effacement of Indigenous laws to explain what is needed from settlers to enter into conversation with Indigenous peoples, for self-determination to be realized, and for “genuine sharing” to occur (*Memory Serves* 127). This is the homework settlers/Canadians/arrivants³¹ need to do before any meaningful conversation starts and in order for gestures of solidarity or sharing to be accepted as (in Maracle’s words) genuine—a homework of un-learning³² settler colonialism and acknowledging other paradigms of knowledge, laws, and norms. As I proceed to listen more carefully to what has been offered in the form of different Indigenous laws by Indigenous intellectuals and legal scholars,³³ I

statist politics of recognition, and instead by fashioned toward our own on-the-ground struggles of freedom” (emphasis in original 48). In her analysis of Mohawk sovereignty, Simpson offers refusal as “a political alternative to ‘recognition’” (11). Refusal is an assertion of political agency that resists multiculturalism’s appropriative power. Simpson goes on to write that “Refusal comes with the requirement of having one’s *political* sovereignty acknowledged and upheld, and raises the question of legitimacy for those who are usually in the position of recognizing: What is their authority to do so? Where does it come from? Who are they to do so?” (11).

31. Jodi Byrd’s use of the term “arrivants” gives nuance to the complex and vexed conditions that are sometimes lost in settler colonial discourses that imply settler as an undifferentiated category. Byrd writes, “arrivants [is] a term I borrow from African Caribbean poet Kamau Brathwaite to signify those people forced into the Americas through the violence of European and Anglo-American colonialism and imperialism around the globe” (xix). Nevertheless, Byrd’s point is to demonstrate that arrivants too bear complicity in the ongoing reinforcement of “deep settler and arrivant colonialisms” (xix). For the purpose of my project, it matters less to me whether Asian Canadians define ourselves as settlers or arrivants because in either case, the result and ongoing function is to uphold colonialism whilst obscuring the imbricated structures of “racialization and colonization [that should] be understood as concomitant global systems that secure white dominance through time, property, and notions of self” (Byrd xxiii).

32. Spivak discusses “unlearning one’s learning and unlearning one’s privileges” in an interview with Sara Danius and Stefan Jonsson (Danius 24). See Danius et. al. “An Interview with Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak.”

33. For instance, John Borrows, *Justice Within*; Johnny Mack, “Hoquotist”; and Val Napoleon, *Thinking About Indigenous Legal Orders*.

also recognize that from my position as an Asian Canadian settler, I must necessarily engage with this information in an unruly manner, or by standing aside as an unruly outsider. Being unruly does not preclude me from respecting what I learn or doing something about it, but it does highlight the unlearning still left for me to do, and it also highlights the fact that while I may be able to acknowledge and learn from Indigenous laws and eventually perhaps reciprocate towards them, there may be limits to how I can know them.

As Leanne Simpson would have it for activism and solidarity, I am guided in thinking through methodologies for research, writing, and solidarity. The process is crucial: “Again and again, it matters to me how change is achieved” (L. Simpson 226). I am not suggesting that being guided by unruliness equates to being inattentive to process. Rather, it requires rigorous attention not only to process, but also to purpose, motivation, and consequences (which are implicated but can be overlooked in process).³⁴ Here, I am guided by Edward Said in his articulation of the role of the intellectual³⁵ and his critique of professionalism, which he defines as:

thinking of your work as an intellectual as something you do for a living, between the hours of nine and five with one eye on the clock, and another cocked at what is considered to be proper, professional behavior—not rocking the boat, not straying outside the accepted paradigms or limits, making yourself marketable and above all presentable, hence uncontroversial and unpolitical and “objective.” (*Representations* 74)

Drawing explicit attention to this dissertation’s *partial* rather than objective standpoint and positing an unruly methodology, I reach towards Said’s alternative to professionalism: “*amateurism*, literally, an activity that is fueled by care and affection rather than by profit and selfish, narrow specialization” (emphasis in original, *Representations* 82). This brings me to a second degree of unruliness I bring to this work that conjoins with Said’s call for intellectual work

34. See Margaret Kovach’s chapter “Situating Self, Culture, and Purpose in Indigenous Inquiry” in *Indigenous Methodologies* for a robust discussion of the importance of situating purpose as part of Indigenous research practices (109-120).

35. Solidarity is a theme runs through much of what Said has to say about the work of intellectuals, even as he persistently emphasizes the need for intellectuals to thoroughly question their own motives, attachments, and the effects of their work on others. Far from disinterested, intellectual work according to Said is explicitly moral and “always” involves moral choices and imperatives (32). With that declaration, Said stakes his own position, one that not only sides with the oppressed but also reaches toward solidarity: “For the intellectual task, I believe, is explicitly to universalize the crisis, to give greater human scope to what a particular race or nation suffered, to associate that experience with the sufferings of others . . . This does not at all mean a loss in historical specificity, but rather it guards against the possibility that a lesson learned about oppression in one place will be forgotten or violated in another place or time” (44).

fueled by the care, affection, and the unruliness of an amateur. To situate my theorization of Asian Canadian solidarity, I turn toward amateurist care and affection. This leads me to posit the erotic as method and love as ethic. In other words, I pair a rigorous interrogation of our attachments to Asian Canadian specialization and expertise (particularly where this reinforces our settler privilege and capital) with an approach that relinquishes the pressures and control of expertise and instead surrenders toward love as a framework for guiding critical praxis. This, I argue, is particularly important for a project which has the goal of learning something about solidarity and which seeks to align Asian Canadian critique with decolonization.

Centralizing love is perhaps risky in an academic endeavour, but I return to Lorde's words—*survival is not an academic skill*. If the purpose is learning solidarity, I suggest we need to move love into the foreground of our methods. As unruly as this feels, I am certainly not the first to propose it. Indeed, I merely stand behind Indigenous women and feminists, black feminists, and women of colour feminists who have spoken, written, and breathed love into their lives, their work and their communities.³⁶ Defining the erotic, Lorde writes, "The very word erotic comes from the Greek word eros, the personification of love in all its aspects -- born of Chaos, and personifying creative power and harmony" (55). Lorde links love directly to the unruly in this quotation through the notion of chaos, but the allusion to Greek mythology and the figure of Chaos also reminds that love creates itself from a void. Love is a seed of creative power and its own source of vitality. Lorde continues, "When I speak of the erotic, then, I speak of it as an assertion of the life force of women; of that creative energy empowered, the knowledge and use of which we are now reclaiming in our language, our history, our dancing, our loving, our work, our lives" (55). Love is what can come alive out of nothingness and create more life.

Moreover, I offer the erotic as an example of unruly methodology for Asian Canadian studies to consider as a means to work in concert with Tuck's call for a moratorium on damage-centred research in favour of desire-based research frameworks.³⁷ I contend that Asian Canadian settler colonial desires for

36. At the height of Idle No More, Dory Nason wrote a compelling piece situating Indigenous women's love as not only central to the movement but also as an enduring feature upholding Indigenous knowledges and values and driving Indigenous resistance and resurgence activism through history; see "We Hold Our Hands Up." Other black feminists besides Lorde have written about and theorized love, for example June Jordan and bell hooks. Jennifer Nash's "Practicing Love" provides a succinct literature review of love-politics within black feminism.

37. Recent work on queer and Two-Spirit Indigenous literary studies has contributed significantly to this area. See Driskill et. al. eds., *Sovereign Erotics*; and Lisa Tatonetti, *The Queerness of Native American Literature*.

reconciliation perhaps drive us eagerly towards settling and claiming solidarities that in fact need continual grounding. Simultaneously, to temper this eagerness for reconciliation and settlement, there is a tendency to proliferate research that explains, analyzes, and accounts for our settler colonial complicities. An alternative route for Asian Canadian studies to disengage from settler colonial futures is first to imagine and then to create other futures—a process, I argue, we need to travel through love to get at. By considering how Asian/Indigenous relationalities have been represented in some specific critical creative works by Indigenous and Asian Canadian women writers, I argue for the importance of surfacing love (in its complexities and including its failures) as a basis for learning solidarity. Furthermore, I posit developing robust critiques and methodologies to complexify Asian Canadian love (an area which has been so far been undertheorized in the field) as a potential direction to transform Asian Canadian studies critique.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT AND RECIPROCITY

In Doretta Lau's short story "How Does a Single Blade of Grass Thank the Sun," a crew of twentysomethings representing a diverse Chinese Canadian diaspora with nicknames and rapid-fire banter demonstrating an expert knowledge of transnational Asian/American vernacular and pop culture spends a Friday night up to their usual fecklessness. The story begins with the five protagonists, "Yellow Peril, The Chairman, Suzie Wong, Riceboy and [the] Sick Man of Asia" gathering at their usual haunt, a public schoolyard, to plan their night (108). The "dragoons" as narrator Sick Man calls them (108), are a tribe, and the story is rooted in the complex love between the friends, one that gestures toward coalitional relationship. The crew's bond at once acknowledges and exceeds differences in transnational politics: "Our views on the Motherland differed, but we lived in Lotusland, so that was the tit we had to suck on" (111), and at the same time is punctuated by petty bickering and the vicissitudes of youthful romance. The opening scene sets up a central question in the story: *What are we going to do?* Behind their bravado and lofty ambitions, the crew (and the action) for most of the story is stuck in place. As they finally settle down to a meal in Chinatown, Sick Man reflects, "We had so much potential, but sometimes it seemed as if we would amount to nothing" (115). The group's inertia weighing on him, Sick Man makes a vague suggestion to take action, and the group eventually follows through with a plan to vandalize a mural at a nearby beach that "depicted the joys of colonial life, roughing it in the wilderness, and the triumphs of the settlers over the natives" (115).

The story presents an ambivalent portrait of Asian Canadian anxiety over settler colonialism and solidarity with Indigenous peoples, even while it gestures at “so much potential.” Rather than sticking with the original plan to “remove the near-naked depictions of First Nations people . . . and paint moustaches on all the settlers” (115), the friends end up painting over the entire mural beige. At the end of the story, they appear satisfied as they “gazed at the blank slate before us” (117). The story nevertheless ends with an unsettling image: “us, sleeping giants shaking off a long slumber, presiding over” the mural (117). On one hand, the ending can be read as an image of empowerment and a reclamation of the Orientalist/yellow peril projection of China as a “sleeping giant.” In this case, the crew of friends reappropriates the symbol of the sleeping giant, and instead of an economic menace, select a new mode of takeover—representation. The defacement of the wall and its scene of imperialist nostalgia can be read as a demonstration of Asian Canadian agency (powerfully signaled by the word “presiding”) through a collective act of representational refusal or resistance. Such a reading supports Marie Lo’s argument that Indigenous representations in Asian Canadian literature can be read “as models of anti-racist resistance and as enabling figures of social-political critique” (“Model Minorities” 97). Lo posits that Indigenous figures perform a kind of “ideological work” when represented in Asian Canadian literature that serve to “model” forms of being and belonging that exceed the model minority myth and its mobilization of Asian Canadian racial capital for settler-colonial nation-building (“Model Minorities” 98). Lo’s conceptualization of modeling is both useful and provocative as it raises questions about both the possibilities and limits of representation for reframing Asian Canadian racialization and marginalization within settler colonialism.

Reading Lau’s story through Lo’s framework of model minority discourses precisely highlights the limits of Asian Canadian agency and subjectivity under settler colonialism. As Lo notes, “model minority” encompasses “the models of intelligibility, both of containment and resistance, available to minoritized and racialized groups within a hegemony that persistently frames racial discourse in terms of binary relations” (“Model Minorities” 98). Lau’s deft layering and weaving of popular culture allusions in drawing her characters and the group ethos, overlaid with individual characters’ ironic and subtly self-aware reflections on their own racialized positionalities, speaks directly into Lo’s model minority thesis. The dragoons are masters of pop culture, with a minor in politically incorrect wokeness. For instance, after debating the relative merits of Hong Kong cinema stars who have attempted crossover careers in Hollywood, Sick Man and Riceboy enter into a pissing match over their nicknames:

“Why’d you choose such a dickless name?” I said, spitting on the ground with gusto, just like I’d seen those coolie-types and fresh-off-the-boats do in Middle Kingdom Town. I was practicing to be the best possible Chinaman I could be, embracing the vices as well as the virtues with equal dedication.

“The Sick Man of Asia? How’s that any better?” Riceboy hiked up his giant pants, which were riding so low they would have revealed his boxer shorts, except he was wearing a T-shirt that nearly reached his knees. He was taller than me and had a twenty-five pound advantage, but his style choices were a definite handicap in a fight.

“It’s a reclamation,” I said. “I’ve taken the slang of the West and altered the meaning for my own usage, thereby exercising a certain mastery over the language of the colonizer. So I ask again, why’d you choose such a dickless name?”

“Chigga, what?” Riceboy raised his fists at me. (110)

In the above scene, Sick Man admits to putting forward a self-consciously crafted performance of model minority “mastery,” from acting out his persona to selecting his nickname. As he describes the scene—from his exaggerated performance of Asian machismo stereotypes, to his sharp undermining of best friend Riceboy’s Afro-Asian dress and slang, to the seamless way he shifts his register of language to ironically mimic the tone and language of the colonizer—Sick Man’s narration reveals a high degree of skill in navigating the “models of intelligibility, both of containment and resistance, available” to himself as a gendered, racialized subject within Canada’s settler colonial hegemony. Nevertheless, Sick Man’s efforts to subvert hegemony by (out-)performing or modeling agile displays of cultural hybridity net ambivalent results. This goes for the entire crew of dragoons. Even as they accrue and exchange the cultural capital necessary to demonstrate expertise and a kind of breezy effortlessness in navigating the colonizer’s world of meaning and allusions, and even after they redirect this expertise to “[sidestep] the law” (116-117), they nevertheless remain for most of the story frustrated, restless, and stifled. At the culmination of their grand gesture, they find themselves looking out at a blank horizon of meaning they have yet to make of their own lives. As for the cocksure promises of postcolonial ambivalence, they have, by the end of the story, lost their bravado. Far from achieving hybridity and mimicry’s powerfully subversive identity effects, the gang’s culture play leaves them at the last muted, staring into an abyss.

In this way, “How Does a Single Blade of Grass Thank the Sun?” allegorizes the failures of postcolonialism and poststructuralism to actually transform conditions for postnational Asian Canadian subjects whose lives are caught up, and who are struggling to find a way forward, in the messy

complicities and everyday violences of our globalized neo-liberal present.³⁸ What's more, while the story gestures toward solidarity, the conspicuous absence of any First Nations characters in the story, uneasily echoed in the "blank slate" that is the new subject of the crew's presiding gaze, points to the limits of modeling as a robust means to learn and enact solidarity. Lo's framework for analyzing the presence of Indigenous figures in Asian Canadian literature technically holds for "How Does a Single Blade of Grass Thank the Sun?"; it is the misrepresentation of First Nations people in the mural that spurs the group to action, and thus the Indigenous figures are "models" of a kind that perform an "enabling" function for the characters. However, this approach to reading Indigenous representation within the story leaves open a more pressing need to address and critique the deep-structure of settler colonialism that necessitates situating Indigenous figures within a distancing, objectifying, instrumentalizing, and presiding gaze that ultimately results in eliminating Indigenous representations in the process of Asian Canadian meaning-making and subject formation. If we are to commit to Tuck and Yang's proposition that decolonization is not a metaphor, then we will need reading strategies that push analyses of Indigenous representation within Asian Canadian literature beyond solely figurative functions. To close this section, I want to offer an alternate reading of Lau's story—one that reinterprets the blank slate they have created by the end—that puts it in dialogue with concepts of acknowledgement and reciprocity.

Because of the centrality of recognition in settler-state approaches to managing difference and sustaining settler colonialism, the concept of recognition has received a fair amount of scholarly attention and theorization. Work by Indigenous studies scholars such as Glen Coulthard and Audra Simpson highlight the limits of recognition for Indigenous sovereignty. Tracing the concept of recognition from Hegel through Franz Fanon, through contemporary considerations of the politics of recognition in the work of Nancy Turner, Charles Taylor, Patchen Mitchell and others, and back through Fanon, Coulthard argues for the definitive failure of recognition as a means for attaining Indigenous self-determination. As Coulthard writes:

in situations where colonial rule does not solely depend on the exercise of state violence, its reproduction instead rests on the ability to entice Indigenous peoples to identify, either implicitly or explicitly, with the profoundly *asymmetrical* and *nonreciprocal forms* of recognition either imposed on or granted to them by the settler state and society. (25)

38. Roy Miki takes up some of these questions in *In Flux: Transnational Shifts in Asian Canadian Writing*.

Likewise, Audra Simpson, in her study of Mohawk sovereignty and identification, critiques the politics of recognition as it functions to bolster discourses of multiculturalism and inclusion to contain and manage difference. By unpacking multiculturalism and disengaging it from sovereignty, Audra Simpson effectively refutes recognition as the arena for settling matters of Indigenous political sovereignty. In doing so, she identifies recognition as a particularly insidious strategy of settler colonial governmentality, one that operates by recruiting consent through the language of inclusion and deflects, through a political sleight of hand (what she calls “the trick of toleration”), unresolved conflicts about Indigenous self-determination toward ever splintered mobilizations for “nearly impossible but seemingly democratic inclusion” (A. Simpson 20). What’s more, “Although political recognition is a technique of settler governance, it appears as a transcendent and universal human desire that becomes a political antidote to historical wrongdoing. Thus, it would seem to salve the wounds of settler colonialism” (A. Simpson 20). The political effectiveness of recognition resides precisely here in the affective nerves that it touches, triggers, and then soothes. As I mention earlier, for Audra Simpson as well as for Coulthard, countering a politics of recognition with refusal is a generative basis for enunciating and enacting Indigenous sovereignties. For instance, Coulthard suggests turning toward Indigenous grounded normativities to guide political mobilizations for sovereignty, but clarifies that such efforts “must be cautiously directed *away* from the assimilative lure of the statist politics of recognition, and instead be fashioned toward our own on-the-ground struggles of freedom” (emphasis in original 48). Tellingly, Coulthard follows this with a nod to solidarity, specifically solidarity as articulated by black feminist writer bell hooks.³⁹

Refusal may be a productive place from which to instigate Indigenous mobilizations for sovereignty and resurgence, but for settlers (and particularly for racialized settlers) positioning ourselves in solidarity with decolonization, refusal may not be enough. We see this when we return to Lau’s “How Does a Single Blade of Grass Thank the Sun?” and the image of refusal presented at the end of the story: a blank wall. The problem with which Sick Man and his friends are faced is a vexed one that representational tricks will not solve. In choosing to paint over the mural, the friends are able to identify a problem of representation and articulate a desire to fix it: “We wanted to remove the near-naked depictions

39. Quoting hooks, Coulthard elaborates that turning away from a politics of recognition would mean to “stop being so preoccupied with looking ‘to that Other for recognition’; instead we should be ‘recognizing ourselves and [then seeking to] make contact with all who would engage us in a constructive manner’” (48)

of First Nations people" (115). After spending the entire story spinning their wheels, any action on their part seems laudable. But in making their move, the friends are guided by shaky grounds. As Sick Man goes on to parenthetically comment, "the region was far too cold for the skimpy traditional costumes pictured, *of this I was almost sure*" (emphasis mine 115). The group of friends are impelled forward by vague conclusions they have drawn, to the best of their abilities, from limited information. Their lack of knowledge and limited social circle seem to confine them to act on assumptions. Here we see the much deeper problem in the story: a void where Indigenous life should be—where Indigenous life *is*, except that the dragoons do not know where to look for it. This circles us back to the problem of recognition for oppressed and particularly for colonized subjects. As Audra Simpson explains: "Settler colonialism structures justice and injustice in particular ways, not through the conferral of recognition of the enslaved but by the conferral of disappearance in subject. This is *not seeing* that is so profound that mutuality cannot be achieved" (23).

Acknowledgement, in contrast to recognition, has the potential to counteract the *not seeing* that stands in the way of mutuality. By insisting on seeing and affirming the presence of that which settler colonialism aims to disappear (even when the seeing is fuzzy, imprecise, incomplete, or unsatisfactory), by foregrounding that which settler colonialism obstinately pushes to the background, acknowledgement functions as a repeated first step to set the grounds and open up conditions for solidarity. Markell notes that "in ordinary language the words 'acknowledge' and 'recognize' are used nearly interchangeably" (32). However, whereas recognition has been widely debated in theorizing contemporary liberal democratic politics, the concept of acknowledgement is has received comparably little attention. Scholars who theorize acknowledgement generally cite Stanley Cavell who, instead of focusing on the distinctions between recognition and acknowledgement, puts the emphasis on the distinctions between knowledge and acknowledgement.⁴⁰ As Cavell explains, "Acknowledgement goes beyond knowledge . . . in its requirement that I *do* something or reveal something on the basis of that knowledge" (237). In other words, acknowledgement implies something in excess of knowing—action, deliverance, responsibility. Acknowledgement also foregrounds relationship and a willingness to engage in relationship based upon what we know. Elaborating on Cavell's work on acknowledgement, Markell

40. Others who have theorized acknowledgement proceeding from Cavell include: Jane McConkey "Knowledge and Acknowledgement"; Aletta Noval, "A Democratic Politics of Acknowledgment"; and George Shulman "Acknowledgement and Disavowal as Idiom for Theorizing Politics"

adds:

What matters in our relation to another, Cavell suggests, is not knowing something special about him (his pain, pleasure, humanity, character, or very being) in a way that could evade doubt once and for all. What matters, instead, is *what we do* in the presence of the other, how we respond to or act in the light of what we *do* know. (emphasis in original 34).

The point is not exactly to diminish the importance of knowledge, but rather to identify and foreground the limits of what we are able to know and also to suggest that acknowledgement may serve purposes that knowledge cannot. In this light, the actions of the dragoons in Lau's story might be read differently when we interpret them as proceeding from acknowledgement. Even though they do not possess all the information necessary to prove that the mural's depictions of First Nations people are problematic, what matters is how they respond based on the information they have. What matters is that they choose to risk taking a step towards solidarity and facing an uncertain future.

Acknowledging the limits of knowledge and what we do not know turns out to be as or more important than an attachment to definitive knowledge. Indeed, it is only by confronting the limits of what they know that Sick Man and his friends are able to make a move towards solidarity. Sick Man's admission "I was almost sure," is an acknowledgement of something he cannot quite put his finger on but is *almost sure* exists, an acknowledgement of a set of complex conditions that eclipse him from seeing something right before his eyes and being able to explain what is wrong. Knowledge and expertise have not only been conflated and leveraged in very specific ways to discipline settler colonial subjects and set up self-reinforcing hierarchies of power and legitimacy, but they also have been purposefully weaponized to eradicate Indigenous knowledges, life, languages, agency, self-determination, and presence. But, as Said points out, "'expertise,' in the end has rather little, strictly speaking, to do with knowledge" (*Representation* 79). Perhaps the most significant feature of acknowledgement is how, in affirming and acting on knowledge in its imperfectability, it has the effect of working against denial. Sure, it would be better if Sick Man or any of the dragoons had access to actual cultural knowledge that could confirm why the clothing worn by the First Nations people in the mural is inaccurate. But in spite of their educations, or because of their educations that have made them masters at the colonizer's language, they do not have access to this information and indeed appear to be lost as to where to look for it. It would be easy to critique their actions by countering that, since they did not consult with any First Nations people and do not possess definitive evidentiary proof that the clothing depicted is wrong, they could not be certain that the mural is offensive, thus undermining their analysis and leaving them open to potential punishment, diminishment,

and humiliation. The preceding counter-argument illustrates the general arc of logic underlying settler colonial denial. Denial remains one of the most persistent and potent technologies of settler colonialism, which, as we have discussed, insists upon narratives and logics of disappearance and outright elimination in order to normalize its ideological foundations and state functions.

In *Unsettling the Settler Within*, Paulette Regan writes:

as a non-Native woman who had worked both for and with Indigenous people for over twenty-five years, mostly in non-government contexts, my own deepest learning has always come when I was in unfamiliar territory culturally, intellectually, and emotionally. It seems to me that this space of not knowing has power that may hold a key to decolonization for settlers. (18)

Dispossessing ourselves of the *need to know* and instead tuning our attention to what learning might be possible once we acknowledge we are in *unfamiliar territory* are just the very first steps towards solidarity and decolonization. While acknowledgment, as Markell notes, is modest in its scope, its importance lies in what it enables (38). Without acknowledgement, other actions may not be possible, or they might not be legible, accepted, or reciprocated. Reciprocity itself shifts in meaning in the context of a politics of acknowledgement. Whereas recognition politics defines reciprocity in terms of equivalences of one-for-one, within a context of acknowledgement, reciprocity has more to do with setting the conditions for sharing. This requires acknowledgment on several levels: first, acknowledgement of the impossibility of equivalence (or the persistent reality of non-equivalence); second, acknowledgement of relationships and the differential knowledges and circumstances brought and held by different parties to relationship; third, acknowledgement of unpredictability, risk, and potential conflict; and fourth, acknowledgement of the specific resources, conditions, and limitations circumscribed by place and time. Maracle ties several of these points together when she states: “I believe we are all personally responsible for resurrecting, reclaiming and reshaping the very notions of time and space that will invite the knowledge of others into our fields of study, so that a genuine sharing can occur” (*Memory Serves* 127). Acknowledgement and reciprocity therefore operate in concert to set the table for solidarity: genuine sharing proceeds from invitation, and for the invitation to be acknowledged and accepted, we need to be open to the struggles of transformation (in other words, of learning) in our relationship with others.

My thinking on reciprocity has been profoundly informed by teachings shared by elder Larry Grant and the late Wayne Point of the Musqueam Nation. In a short film that narrates the story behind the name of the *həmləsəm* building of the Totem Park student residences at UBC, Point describes the location of the transformer rock known as *həmləsəm* and elder Grant explains that “*həmləsəm*

is a story of transformation” (Ling). Without going into the details of the story, I will point out two important themes: “sharing knowledge and personal transformation” (Ling). Beyond sharing knowledge, the *həmləsəm* story holds a lesson of sharing resources, in this case, water. The story itself, held within the *həmləsəm* rock located among “the bullrush . . . in the marsh . . . close to the tree line” (Point qtd. in Ling) ties together place and story located in time and also existing across time, with an enduring ethical lesson about reciprocity that also lives in the moment with us, the listeners and witnesses to the film. Thus, the *həmləsəm* story may be considered an example of grounded normativity, or place-based knowledge and ethical praxis, in the sense that elder Grant describes the presence of the transformer as “here, to make sure things were correct for people” (Ling). Engaging with the story and its grounded normativities as a non-Musqueam person, I do so in a non-authoritative and non-definitive manner. I describe only what I heard and how I am transformed in the listening. My point is not to *explain the story* but to accept the invitation to personal transformation, acknowledge a responsibility to share back and to give up something of myself up (reveal my vulnerability) in sharing back what I am learning. My understanding of reciprocity is also guided by Maracle, who writes about the presence of Raven in her stories: “My Raven, my transformer, is the catalyst for internal transformation . . . Raven calls upon the listener/reader to see yourself in this story and respond to creation, to ‘being’” (*Sojourners* 13-14). When a story or teaching is shared, reciprocity involves acknowledging the invitation to see yourself in it, that is, to engage *personally*, to be open to transformation, and to give something of your own back.

CHAPTER SUMMARIES

In the following chapters, I elaborate on the concepts of acknowledgement and reciprocity by engaging in readings of a selection of literary writings by Asian Canadian and Indigenous women and situating their work in a history of creative cultural organizing for solidarity. I also enact and practice acknowledgement and reciprocity in my own writing throughout the project, particularly in the dissertation’s final chapter in which I engage with Trinh T. Minh Ha’s notion of “speaking nearby” to explore what Rita Wong has proposed as a culturally sensitive poetics of water.

CHAPTER ONE: LOVE LETTER TO ASIAN CANADIAN STUDIES: A LITERATURE REVIEW

In this chapter, I explore the relevance of indigeneity and decolonization to Asian Canadian studies by situating the question within a review of a selection of Asian Canadian studies' key critical works, particularly its emergence within Asian Canadian literary studies. Tracing the trajectory of Asian Canadian studies' self-articulation, first in relation to the disciplining dominance of multicultural nationalist discourses, and more recently, as it moves to establish itself as a distinct academic field in close conversation with others (e.g. postcolonial, Asian American, Indigenous, queer and gender studies etc.), I contend that Asian Canadian studies has, to a certain extent, suffered from immobilization due to anxiety. Anxiety is merely one of the buried affects underscoring Asian Canadian studies. In the second part of the chapter, I argue that surfacing these buried affects in order to foreground love is an important move in order to enliven the deep coalitional structure of Asian Canadian studies and thus to propel Asian Canadian action and solidarity. Bringing Sara Ahmed's work on the cultural politics of emotion into conversation with Christine Kim's work on the affective intelligence of Asian Canadian minor publics and Dian Million's work on felt theory, I suggest raising up Asian Canadian queer and feminist histories, knowledges, and critiques to guide Asian Canadian studies to the intellectual grounds for ethical solidarity with Indigenous sovereignty and resurgence movements. In the last section of the chapter, I summarize some core themes and approaches within efforts to document and imagine Indigenous and Asian Canadian relationalities, primarily in public arts and culture venues.

CHAPTER TWO: DISPOSSESSING SKY LEE'S *DISAPPEARING MOON CAFÉ*

This chapter focuses on a novel that has not only been acclaimed as one of the founding texts of Chinese Canadian literature, but has also been widely recognized for its portrayal of Indigenous and Asian Canadian relationships: SKY Lee's *Disappearing Moon Cafe*. Tracing its critical reception alongside an analysis of the novel's commentary on writing and history, I briefly consider *Disappearing Moon Cafe's* intervention in Canadian literature as well as its enduring (and mutable) centrality within Asian Canadian literary studies. Turning to an analysis of the relationship between Wong Gwei Chang and Kelora Chen that has been the subject of more recent critical interest, I offer a close reading of Kelora's characterization within the novel and her function as a minor character who incites a great deal of the narrative action and conflict.

Disappearing Moon Cafe is heralded for its fictional mapping of what Renisa Mawani has called “cross-racial intimacies” and “colonial proximities” (4), even while the novel is driven by a searing critique of heteropatriarchal love and intimate violence. In *Disappearing Moon Cafe*, Lee maps complex intergenerational traumas within settler colonialism through multiple failures of acknowledgement and reciprocity. The source of intergenerational trauma within the family is its “possessive investment” in settler colonial heteropatriarchy and gendered, racial capitalism (Lipsitz vii). By unraveling and illuminating these investments, I urge caution in articulating Asian Canadian commitments to solidarity with decolonization and Indigenous resurgence, and I offer dispossession as a practice to set the grounds for solidarity. In this chapter, I expand upon my proposition that Asian Canadian desires to position ourselves as “model allies” drive us too eagerly towards settling and claiming solidarities that in fact need continual and robust grounding. Although Lee leaves open the possibility for redemptive queer Asian Canadian love and family through the gesture of Kae’s “settler pack up” (Mack 287) and diasporic return to Hermia in Hong Kong, I argue that the novel ultimately resists reconciliation.

CHAPTER THREE: A POLITICS OF MEETING: READING INTERSECTIONAL INDIGENOUS FEMINIST PRAXIS IN LEE MARACLE’S *SOJOURNERS AND SUNDOGS*

In this chapter I trace Lee Maracle’s articulation of an intersectional Indigenous feminist praxis through close readings of meetings in her novel and short story collection *Sojourners and Sundogs*. As I argue, Maracle’s acknowledgements of Asian Canadians throughout her text, particularly Asian Canadian women writers, demonstrates a concerted effort to document and theorize solidarity. Maracle’s steadfast commitments to both anti-colonialism and feminism, as well as her steadfast expressions of solidarity to other racialized women, mark her not only as a leading Indigenous feminist but also as a major theorist of Indigenous intersectionality. As I argue, meetings are sites for acknowledgement and reciprocity in which Indigenous women and women of colour negotiate identification, difference and alliance in their creative and activist practices. At the same time, meetings also unsettle solidarity politics, challenge participants to confront their own assumptions and bring organizers face-to-face with problematics of representation. This chapter asks, what can we learn about decolonial praxis from the history of meetings and friendship among Indigenous and Asian Canadian writers referenced in Maracle’s *Sojourners and Sundogs*? Briefly reading into the friendships between Indigenous protagonists and Chinese Canadian characters in Maracle’s stories, to suggest how “meeting as friends” creates a space for both Indigenous and Asian Canadian subjects to

work through difference toward shared, albeit contingent, strategic goals.

CHAPTER FOUR: WHAT'S LEFT TO SAY AFTER SORRY? HISTORY, PROPHECY AND THE ETHICS OF RECONCILIATION IN MARIE CLEMENTS' *BURNING VISION*

In this chapter, I examine the ethics of interracial reconciliation in the context of settler colonialism through representations of apology and reciprocity in Marie Clements' play *Burning Vision*. Contemporary nation-states increasingly evoke reconciliation discourses to address histories of trauma caused by war, colonialism, and racial discrimination. Official apologies are thus one of the means deployed to occlude state mechanisms of violence and to reinforce the legitimacy of its power. *Burning Vision* takes up questions of reconciliation between the state, First Nations, and diasporic Japanese/Canadian subjects, casting a critical eye on the efficacy of official apologies to reconcile past and ongoing social and political relationships damaged by complex, layered injustices and violence. Remapping the historical contours of the atomic bombing, *Burning Vision* provokes ethical questions about relationships, responsibility, and reconciliation in imagining and dealing with the atrocities of war and imperialism. While official apologies in Canada have been addressed towards both Indigenous and Asian Canadian communities, for example, to recognize the Indian Residential Schools system, or to acknowledge and redress Japanese Canadian internment, state discourses of reconciliation rarely speak to the political relationships between Indigenous and Asian diasporic subjects. Focusing my analysis on a perverse image of "nuclear family" represented at the heart of the play, as well as on a Dene prophecy that foretells the historical events that transpire, this chapter considers how interventions of acknowledgement and reciprocity can unsettle the politics of official reconciliation towards other acts of healing, justice, and solidarity.

CHAPTER FIVE: BODIES OF WATER: ASIAN CANADIANS IN/ACTION WITH WATER

The concluding chapter of the dissertation is a departure into the genre of personal essay that explores water as a guide for form and turns to Trinh's "speaking nearby" to experiment with praxis. It departs from the emphasis on literary analysis that makes up my approach in the preceding chapters, and instead explicitly experiments with forms of writing that bridge the critical and creative divide. In this chapter, I also consider questions such as, in what ways is writing itself a form of action? Initially published in an arts and culture journal that has been associated for decades with Asian Canadian literary and

community activism, the essay plays with the notion of “amateurism” theorized by Said in the sense that it “[chooses] the risks and uncertain results of the public sphere . . . over the insider space controlled by experts and professionals” (*Representations* 87). In the chapter, I consider what causes paralysis (or inaction), while also contemplating ethical ways of thoughtfully proceeding in solidarity (or what I call mobilizing in/action). This chapter contributes to a theorization of acknowledgement and reciprocity by demonstrating my own changes in thinking and action as I learn about water through local water initiatives, global water disasters, Asian Canadian cultural activism, and Indigenous water sovereignty projects.

CHAPTER 1

LOVE LETTER TO ASIAN CANADIAN STUDIES: A LITERATURE REVIEW

*"The question we need to constantly ask, then, is what the intensities of the moment are."
(Lai, Slanting I, 126)*

*"The publication of the Asian Canadian Studies Reader . . . makes me want to weep with joy."
(Cho, "At Home," 232)*

In this chapter, I explore the relevance of Indigeneity and decolonization to Asian Canadian studies by situating the question within a review of a selection of Asian Canadian studies' key critical works, particularly its emergence within Asian Canadian literary studies. Tracing the trajectory of Asian Canadian studies' self-articulation, first in relation to the disciplining dominance of multicultural nationalist discourses, and more recently, as it moves to establish itself as a distinct academic field in close conversation with others (e.g. postcolonial, Asian American, Indigenous, queer and gender studies etc.), I contend that Asian Canadian studies has, to a certain extent, suffered from immobilization due to anxiety. Anxiety is merely one of the buried affects underscoring Asian Canadian studies. In the second part of the chapter, I argue that surfacing these buried affects in order to foreground love is an important move in order to enliven the deep coalitional structure of Asian Canadian studies and thus to propel Asian Canadian action and solidarity. Bringing Sara Ahmed's work on the cultural politics of emotion into conversation with Christine Kim's work on the affective intelligence of Asian Canadian minor publics and Dian

Million's work on felt theory, I suggest raising up Asian Canadian queer and feminist histories, knowledges, and critiques to guide Asian Canadian studies to the intellectual grounds for ethical solidarity with Indigenous sovereignty and resurgence movements. In the last section of the chapter, I summarize some core themes and approaches within efforts to document and imagine Indigenous and Asian Canadian relationalities, primarily in public arts and culture venues.

Why does it matter? To what extent is Indigeneity important to Asian Canadians, or to be more specific, those of us invested in the intellectual (and for some activist)¹ project of Asian Canadian studies? To answer the question, I first need to acknowledge that many of us who have seriously tried to locate our work as Asian Canadianists have, to greater or lesser extent, gone through an exercise of laying grounds for our discussion. I will not repeat the act in detail here, except to note that the urge to question, theorize, situate, and narrativize Asian Canadian subjectivities, literary contributions, historical significance, politics and activist potential, and/or institutional legitimacy and location has been something of a tendency in the field since its inception in the late 1990s to 2000s—and indeed this very self-reflexive preoccupation has been observed and critiqued by those staging the analysis. Scholars who have traced the critical contours of Asian Canadian studies include Guy Beauregard, Donald Goellnicht, Christopher Lee, Iyko Day, Larissa Lai, and most recently several of the contributors to the *Asian Canadian Studies Reader*, edited by Gordon Pon and Roland Sintos Coloma.² Notable amongst the latter is Laura J. Kwak's essay "Asian Canada Undone," which effectively weaves a case for the field's interdisciplinarity and the generative possibilities for future scholarship that this interdisciplinary conversation has the potential to open up. What the *Asian Canadian Studies Reader* accomplishes, according to Kwak, is a basic but nevertheless vital project of identifying and collecting "key readings" representing "scholarly, political, and methodological interventions by scholars of varying disciplines from Comparative Literature to Sociology to Gender

1. Writing in response to the *Maclean's* "Too Asian?" controversy, Roland Sintos Coloma, for example, identifies himself as a "researcher, educator, and activist" (580). Others who have explicitly addressed the activist underpinnings of Asian Canadian studies are: Xiaoping Li, *Voices Rising: Asian Canadian Cultural Activism*; Christopher Lee, "Enacting Asian Canadian"; and Guy Beauregard, "Unfinished Projects."

2. See Beauregard "What is at Stake" and "Unfinished Projects"; Goellnicht "A Long Labour"; Lee "Lateness of Asian Canadian Studies" and "Enacting Asian Canadian"; Day "Lost in Transnation" and "Must All Asianness be American"; Lai *Slanting I, Imagining We*; and most recently several of the contributors to the *Asian Canadian Studies Reader*, edited by Pon and Coloma.

Studies” that “are not often read together and against each other” (353). The rarity of such an opportunity and the expression of desire to *read together and against each other* is a point I would like to pause on and come back to. Another point that Kwak expresses in her essay, one that repeats itself in other reviews of the literature and that first deserves elaboration, is an ongoing tension that exists at the heart of Asian Canadian studies’ self-reflexive ground-setting—a tension between asserting that there is indeed a *there there* and a hesitancy about foreclosing the quality, nature, boundaries, forms, and inclusions/exclusions of exactly *what there is*.³

“THERE IS NO THERE THERE.”

Roy Miki’s essay “Asiarcy: Making Space for Asian Canadian Writing” from *Broken Entries: Race, Subjectivity, Writing* has been, for many working in the field of Asian Canadian studies and particularly for those of us working in Asian Canadian literary and cultural studies, a seminal and influential work. The prominence of literary studies in the interdisciplinary formation of Asian Canadian studies has been mentioned,⁴ but it has not necessarily been reckoned

3. Here, I riff off a popular quotation from Gertrude Stein’s *Everybody’s Autobiography*. Upon returning to her family home in Oakland, California to discover it no longer existed, Stein wrote: “what was the use of my having come from Oakland it was not natural to have come from there yes write about it if I like or anything if I like but not there, there is no there there” (298). Commonly interpreted as an expression of nostalgic dismay over the rapid transformations of urban geography and sometimes as a comment on Oakland’s blandness as a city, in my case I am struck by Stein’s self-reflexive sense of alienation that leads to the layered, multiple disavowals of place and sense of unsettling alienation that end the sentence.

4. I momentarily parenthesize “literary” to highlight the point made by Day, that, “while Asian Canadian studies continues to enjoy steady growth, its main context of representation has been in the realm of literary culture” (“Must All Asianness” 45). Literary scholars have been on the vanguard of differentiating between the use of “Asian Canadian” as a socio-cultural modifier and an academic area of study. One of the first to introduce this distinction, Goellnicht, writes, “by the term ‘Asian Canadian literature’ I don’t mean the literary texts themselves . . . rather, I mean the clear identification of an ethnic minority literature in English, and the academic study of it as such” (“A Long Labour” 2). Asian Canadian pan-ethnicity, too, was introduced as a literary/cultural project. Christopher Lee mentions that, while Asian Canadian literary history “might [be traced] back to poems etched onto immigration detention center walls in British Columbia or the well-known work of the Eaton sisters of Montreal,” the categorical definition of Asian Canadian literature, “strictly speaking,” begins with “the editors of [the anthology] *Inalienable Rice*, [when they] offered a conscious exposition of the term ‘Asian Canadian’” (“Enacting the Asian Canadian” 28). Beauregard agrees with Christopher Lee, noting that what

with. As someone who came to Asian Canadian studies through the study of English literature, this partiality is also embedded within the genealogy of my encounter with myself in the subject, and perhaps accounts for how I locate the importance and centrality of “Asiancy.” In “Asiancy,” Miki critiques dominant narratives of Anglo-Canadian canonization and suggests Asian Canadian writing as a potential site for resisting white, heteropatriarchal ideologies underlying nationalist literature. One of Miki’s significant interventions in “Asiancy” is methodological: he argues for integrating critical strategies from feminism and poststructuralism into Asian Canadian studies “to resist and critique the power of patriarchal nationalist forms and the normative ahistoricism of humanist beliefs in universality” (104). Equally important to note is the context for Miki’s argument: first, in *Broken Entries*, Miki writes from within the institutional space of an academic English department in a Canadian university in the 1990s; second, the arguments in the book specifically address themselves to the sub-discipline of what we now call “CanLit” and which by the 1990s was embroiled in its own canon wars over difference, language, and legitimacy; and finally, Miki’s careful articulation of Asian Canadian writing as a site of disruptive power in “Asiancy” is made to intentionally rub against and show the outlines of the “pervasive power of ‘English-Canadian’ centrality” (102), a centrality that Miki takes pains to point out because at the time within Canada this was not necessarily visible, given, or legible as “raced.” As Miki writes, “Assimilationist assumptions, mostly unspoken, continue to saturate the mass media, and the ideology of white, male, European-based values still reigns in literary institutions, in granting bodies, and in decision-making areas of the publishing world” (108). These factors make up, to borrow Larissa Lai’s phrase, some of “the intensities of the moment” out of which “Asiancy” arises.

I allude to Miki’s *Broken Entries* not only because his interventions continue to be relevant today and precipitate the intensities of this moment, but also because tracing his arguments brings us to the point of Asian Canadian studies’ ongoing tensions and the effects of those tensions for scholarship and solidarity in the present. Referring back to “Asiancy,” Lee urges Asian Canadian studies to model Miki’s “metacritical” position in developing itself as a field of “self-reflexive critical practice that constantly interrogates its own institutional attachments” (“Lateness” 4). The need for such interrogation has partly been due to the lack of institutional space—room and resources for the development of flourishing, complex, vital, rigorous interdisciplinary scholarly conversations

he calls “Asian Canadian studies projects” are defined by their convergent attempts to situate the category “Asian Canadian” through its social, cultural and intellectual formations (“Unfinished Projects” 7-8).

and research methodologies—for Asian Canadian studies until very recently. Even recently, as Pon et. al. point out, the particular institutional spaces that have formed (to date, academic programs in three universities across Canada), while they have accomplished a great deal both in getting off the ground and in creating innovative sites for research and knowledge production, are limited in number and capacity, and are also relatively new (11-12). This anxiety over institutional scarcity and precarity has to some degree shaped discourses in the field. To put it bluntly, the urge to insistently narrate or ground Asian Canadian studies is partially a response (sometimes proleptic) to being told (or implied) by dominant heteropatriarchal nationalist and universalizing liberal humanist discourses within and outside the university that *there's no there there*. Moreover, the backside of this tension within Asian Canadian studies, what I call resistance to foreclosure, is equally reactive against being told by those outside of the field (from within whose institutional spaces we are otherwise captivated or situating our work) the significance, value, and particularities of our racialized bodies, experiences, affinities, and intellectual genealogies. Traversing this tension is the additional pressure of an unspoken imperative to not bite (at least not too hard) the hands that feed us.

Nearly twenty years after Miki's *Broken Entries*, reflecting on the climate of Canadian neoliberal racial politics of the 1980s and 90s whose exhausting effects are still felt in Asian Canadian coalitional cultural organizing today, Lai writes, "All of us are called to fixate upon and mimic whiteness as much as we are called upon not to see or recognize a violently disparate and heterogeneous 'one another'" (223). These deep, affective dimensions of Asian Canadian settler-colonial racialization undergird the ways and means through which we have gone about grounding our scholarship and illuminate our sensitivities when it comes to attachment. Miki specifically mobilizes feminist theories in rendering "Asianness" as a fractured zone of heterogeneity and radical openness from which to locate the work, and in doing so he calls in to Asian Canadian studies an attentiveness to power and positionality whilst resisting the foreclosures of identity politics. This is a strategic intellectual move on his part, one I would argue is made in the spirit of not jumping ahead or claiming (potentially unwarranted) grounds to solidarity without critique. Taking up Miki's encouragement to engage with feminist theories, in the chapter's second section, I engage with Sara Ahmed's work on feminist attachments to explore ways of moving the affects of Asian Canadian studies to set grounds for solidarity. I also look to Asian Canadian and Indigenous feminist and queer histories, knowledges, and critiques to open up a conversation about where the work of solidarity might be located.

Two additional instances of Asian Canadian ground-setting are worth

mentioning; both have been productive areas for Asian Canadian studies research, though they have not resolved Asian Canadian ground-*seeking*. First, spatial metaphors of containment, movement, transit, migration, and diaspora have been theoretically generative for Asian Canadian studies.⁵ Interdisciplinary considerations of Canadian immigration, labour, multicultural, and foreign policies, for instance, illuminate Asian Canadian transit and migration histories and strategies, while also revealing structures informing Asian Canadian racialization, multicultural containments, and pathways to cultural organizing and creative formations. Meanwhile, theorizing diaspora as an uneasy ground for Asian Canadian studies has produced insights not only about the ambiguous and ambulatory positionings of Asian Canadian subjectivity, but also about concurrent anxieties simmering just below the surface of Canadian settler-colonial “imagined community.”⁶ Foregrounding ambivalence in her theorization of Asian Canadian diaspora, Lily Cho’s work complicates the general tendency to position Asian Canadian always apart from and in opposition to a normative Canadian studies, while also not precluding its oppositional potential. She writes, “Being an Asian Canadianist does not exclude one from being a Canadianist; but a Canadianist is not necessarily an Asian Canadianist and, for that matter, an Asian Canadianist is not necessarily a

5. Many working in the field of Asian Canadian literary studies contend that discourses of multiculturalism serve as a means of containing difference. Daniel Coleman and Donald Goellnicht, for instance, write “Liberal multiculturalism has succeeded, consciously or not, in silencing concerns and issues focused on ‘race.’ It presents the illusion of equality of opportunity while ignoring or disguising the asymmetrical distribution of power in Canadian society” (8). As an antidote to state multiculturalism, Miki suggests “the making of a historically situated cultural space for Canadian writers of Asian ancestry, as well as for other writers of colour” (*Broken Entries* 106). Relating to movement, there has also been a trend calling for Asian Canadian transcendence or exhortations to go “beyond.” See Lee’s call to move “beyond identity” (“Lateness” 3); Miki’s discussion of moving beyond identity politics, (“Global Drift”); Eleanor Ty and Christl Verduyn’s essay collection that addresses *Asian Canadian Writing Beyond Autoethnography*; and Henry Yu on the necessity to move “beyond the parallel” in Asian Canadian and Asian American comparison (xii-xiii). On transit, see Glenn Deer’s “Asian North America in Transit.” Yu has posited “migration” as an organizing trope for Asian Canadian Studies (Ho and Yu 92). At the forefront of theorizing diaspora within Asian Canadian studies is Lily Cho’s work, particularly her efforts to posit the notion of “diasporic citizenship.” See, for instance, “Diasporic Citizenship,” and “Asian Canadian Futures.”

6. On “imagined communities,” see Benedict Anderson. As Lily Cho observes, Canadian literature’s own relatively late institutional emergence (in the 1960s) has been continually threatened by the concurrent internal pressures posed by its visible minority literatures that undermine the purported “unity” of the recently formed national subject (“Diasporic Citizenship” 94).

Canadianist" ("Diasporic Citizenship" 94). In offering the notion of "diasporic citizenship," Cho acknowledges the "deeply complicated and vexed relationships" between diasporic subjects and Indigenous peoples even while she wrestles with the affects and effects of Asian Canadian dissonant belonging ("Diasporic Citizenship" 97; 101). Acknowledging this dissonance and spending time in this awkward space of complicity and un/settled be/longing is, I argue, a critical step to take for situating any moves in line with solidarity with Indigenous peoples and politics.

A second important scholarly turn within Asian Canadian studies has been transnationally to situate the work in relation to Asian American studies, particularly through assertions of the hemispheric terminology "Asian North America."⁷ For instance, in *Asian North American Identities: Beyond the Hyphen*, Eleanor Ty and Donald Goellnicht posit Asian North America as a field of study that draws upon historical and cultural connections in the experiences and literatures of Asian Canadians and Asian Americans. Beauregard, Day, and Yu each approach the issue of Asian Canadian and Asian American comparison by noting that such work interjects by naming and defining the methodological and theoretical blind spots of Asian American scholarship.⁸ If the "transnational" turn of Asian American studies was precipitated by a need to look "outside" to illuminate how Asian American national subjectivity is always already constituted by its transnational relations and history, its failure to examine its relation to its *nearest outside* has produced a wide gap that Asian Canadianist have clamoured to fill. As Day and Beauregard each argue, comparative work within of Asian Canadian and Asian American studies not only intervenes on Canada, but also on the U.S., particularly as this work calibrates the United

7. Asian North America materializes by the late 1990s. For instance, Deer's "Asian North America in Transit" appears in 1999; that same year, Tomo Hattori also uses "Asian North America" in an article on model minority discourse and the Eaton sisters. Eleanor Ty has sustained the term "Asian North America" across several works. See Ty, "Rethinking the Hyphen"; and *The Politics of the Visible*. More recently, scholars have begun to address the unspoken bias in the field towards Canada and the US, with a handful of scholars acknowledging the theoretical complications of including Mexico in an Asian North America analytic. One notable exception is Day, who identifies "a growing body of historical scholarship which examines Asian diasporas in the Americas, including the Chinese in Mexico and Cuba, the Japanese in Brazil and Peru, the large Asian populations in Suriname and Guyana, as well as hemispheric cultural associations such as the Nikkei Association" ("Lost in Transnation" 74).

8. For example, Beauregard writes that, in spite of "the importance of dialogues outside Asian American studies' assumed borders" there is still an inability to "name or recognize Asian Canadian critical work as a potential intervention in ways of doing Asian American studies scholarship" ("Asian American Studies" xxvii)

States' relations to "the Americas" and the world.⁹

The move to foreground a hemispheric scale of comparison and analysis through an Asian North American framework has not been without dispute.¹⁰ Yu remarks that "Asian North America" arises in Canada primarily out of a "sometimes laudable, sometimes disturbing need to engage with the growing and clearly generative field of Asian American studies" (Ho and Yu 90).¹¹ Through Yu's description of a "disturbing need" to engage, a spectre of Asian Canadian anxiety and resentment creeps back into the picture. Yu's description characterizes Asian Canadian studies as a guileless victim and Asian American studies as a captivating aggressor whose power and dominance both compels and threatens to absorb Asian Canada in a single cultural imperialist swoop.¹² It would be unfair to say that Asian Americanists are unaware of the field's own blind spots, and indeed scholars such as Sau-ling Wong have persistently cautioned against the narrative of a U.S.-centric developmentalism within Asian American studies. Wong goes on to point out that Asian American interests in Asian Canadian texts represent "well-intentioned . . . coalition-building" efforts

9. See Day "Lost in Transnation"; Beaugregard "Asian American Studies."

10. Scholars on both sides of the border have expressed some skepticism about its meaningfulness. For instance, Asian North America has been called "a 'fudging' term" (Sau-ling Wong 37) and "shorthand" (Ho and Yu 90). On the other hand, Day has offered sustained theorization of Asian North America in her dissertation; see "Out of Place." Additionally, Asian North American can be distinguished from Asian Canadian and Asian American because it is strictly an analytical category, with no grounding in demographic or social realities. As Rob Ho notes, it is "not a term that anyone would use to identify themselves . . . [and] unlike 'Asian Canadian,' there really isn't anything to be gained from convincing people to think about themselves in this way" (Ho and Yu 90).

11. Yu poses an alternative to Asian North America by coining "Pacific Canada"; see "Towards a Pacific History." Yu's "Pacific Canada" may be read as a corollary to Palumbo-Liu's "Pacific America"; see *Asian/America*. Both terms draw attention to the history of trans-Pacific migration and its effect on nation-building and transnational subjecthood. Moreover, as Yu remarks, the notion of "Pacific Canada" refocuses the phenomenon of Asian migration to the Americas, situating it not only within white capitalist hegemony, but also within the context of ongoing "colonialism and the appropriating of land from Native peoples (Ho and Yu 94-5).

12. Asian Canadianists regularly cite the "uncritical appropriation" (to use Lee's term in "Lateness" 7) of Asian Canadian cultural texts into the Asian American literary canon. Lee identifies *Obasan*, Sui Sin Far, Jin-me Yoon and Richard Fung as examples of appropriation ("Lateness"). See also Beaugregard who discusses *Obasan*, Sui Sin Far and Richard Fung, and observes the "consistent appearance of language of *progress* and *expansion*" underlying Asian American transnationalism and comparison as early as a 1989 issue of *Amerasia* ("Asian American Studies" xxiv). Lo's dissertation is devoted to the topic, with a notable chapter on *Obasan*; see *Fields of Recognition*. Yu offers an explication of the historical disjunctures produced in appropriating *Obasan* as a document of Japanese American history; see "Towards a Pacific History."

by Asian Americanists (37). On the other hand, Lisa Yoneyama recently noted that even while she had previously made reference to key texts by Asian Canadian writers and scholars in her Asian American studies courses, “it was only after I crossed the border that I began to take note of their interventions as distinctly ‘Asian Canadian’” (196).

Yoneyama’s observations were included as part of a special issue of *Canadian Literature* on “Asian Canadian Critique Beyond the Nation,” showcasing a wide range of transnational analytic practices “to recognize how the Asian Canadian is connected to and enmeshed in multiple transnational networks that do not exist solely through, and in conversation with, Euro-Canada” (Lee and Kim 12). Such a framework that considers a wide range of global and local transnational attachments intersecting within Asian Canadian studies further demonstrates the multiple and vexed locations from which Asian Canadian critique emerges and to which it articulates itself. My point here is not to tease apart any of these arguments or to offer a definitive position on Asian North American or Asian Canadian transnational analytics; rather, I wish to draw attention to the complicated power dynamics, attachments, vulnerabilities, and interests on all sides in these moves that mark and test the grounds for solidarity.

WHERE IS THE LOVE?

The slipperiness of Asian Canadian groundedness, our anxieties over living on borrowed grounds, our obediences and resistances to having our grounds determined by dominant white, heteropatriarcal, settler-colonial normativities and being told to stay within those boundaries, complicate our solidarities but do not altogether mask longings for solidarity or simply the grounds from which to articulate our divergences. To go back to Kwak’s articulation of Asian Canadian *reading together and against each other* that I began with, I would like to consider the above contrapuntal turns in Asian Canadian self-reflexivity through Audre Lorde’s notion of the erotic, or “the power of our unexpressed or unrecognized feeling” (53).

Across a number of recent contributions to Asian Canadian scholarship are sublimated expressions of feeling akin to Cho’s more unabashed “weep with joy” referenced in this section’s epigraph.¹³ Cho’s book review of the *Asian*

13. Szu Shen writes about being “amazed at the notable population of Chinese descent” after arriving in Vancouver to begin her graduate work in Asian Canadian studies (113). Meditating on her invitation to contribute to the forum section of a special issue of *Canadian Literature*

Canadian Studies Reader reads like a love letter that not only details the academic contributions of the textbook, but also narrates the author's own personal journey in academia and her struggles to find a home base or "field" for her work. Through her story, Cho acknowledges and affirms a commonality of experiences amongst those of us in Asian Canadian studies who have been interminably circling the conundrum of seeking a place that does not exist from which to situate our work. Day also recently offered a brief narrative of seeking an institutional home for her work that follows a similar trajectory to Cho's with some key differences. Day writes about the "profound impact" that an undergraduate course on poetics taught by Fred Wah had on her, and how she "ended up in the US studying Asian Canadian cultural production under the support and guidance of Asian Americanists" because Asian Canadian studies "was virtually nonexistent" (198). This early moment in Day's career is telling because of the unexpressed feeling it alludes to in the words "profound impact." Cho tells her own story about a significant early career experience upon writing her first undergraduate paper on an Asian Canadian text, *Disappearing Moon Cafe*: "It was the first time in my life as a student where I was given the chance to think and write about things that felt so close to me, and that I cared about so much" (232). The weight of this remark lies in the erotic power—including the intimacy, passion, and feeling—it carries. Across undercurrents of dissonant belonging, restless captivity, anxious foreclosures, and unsettled relationality,

focused on "Asian Canadian Critique Beyond the Nation" Smaro Kamboureli, a leading scholar of postcolonial, multicultural, and racialized literatures under the heading of *trans.can.lit*, remarks, "A range of personal and intellectual, as well as highly affective, encounters and turning points were absolutely critical—'critical' in more ways than one—in my varied engagements with 'Asian Canadian critique'" (190). Y-Dang Troeung situates herself as "a former refugee from Cambodia" and weaves her family's story into an essay meditating on "refugee affects circulat[ing]" in rural and small town spaces of Canadian literature (193-194). Critiquing Asian queer invisibility through an analysis of gay pornography, Richard Fung wittily remarks, "In my lifelong vocation of looking for my penis, trying to fill in the visual void, I have come across only a handful of primary and secondary references to Asian male sexuality in North American representation. Even in my own video work, the stress has been on deconstructing sexual representation and only marginally in creating erotica. So I was very excited at the discovery of a Vietnamese American working in gay porn" (88). Fung also asks, "Are there then no pleasures for an Asian viewer?" (93). Deconstructing and analyzing a personal case study in which a former student brought forward a formal complaint against her teaching, calling her "a woman out of control," Roxana Ng notes that "Teaching and learning against the grain is not easy, comfortable, or safe. It is protracted, difficult, uncomfortable, painful, and risky" (198). Lai opens *Slanting I, Imagining We* simply by stating, "Of course this is a personal project" (ix). She goes on to write, "The cultural movements of [the 1980s and 1990s] were saturated with love, joy envy, competition, rage, horror, sorrow, and dismay. These emotions could be crushing, but they could also lead to generative acts of creation and critique" (x).

roll waves of Asian Canadian love.

Love is a touchy, if not unseemly, matter to bring up in scholarly discourse, which tends to measure value in ever increasing levels of disinterestedness. Yet to answer the question of why Indigeneity is important to Asian Canadian studies, I argue that it is absolutely vital to travel through love to get there. Surfacing love/eros as a constitutive force and source of Asian Canadian studies is, above all, how we can arrive at answers to anything that really matters in Asian Canadian studies. As Lorde writes, “The erotic is the nurturer or nursemaid of all our deepest knowledge” (56). Not only that, but in seeking to engage in solidarity with other marginalized peoples, particularly with Indigenous communities, acknowledging love is a crucial act for constituting ethical desire-based research frameworks such as those posited by Tuck (2009). Love is a necessary touchstone for ethical research in that it attunes us to “complexity, contradiction, and the self-determination of our lived lives” (Tuck 416). Love tells us where to look, and it tells us to look more closely and more lovingly, at ourselves and our relations.

When I refer to *us* and *our*, I am not attempting to invoke or reify biological or essentialist notions of identity such as race, gender, sexuality, ethnicity, or culture. Instead, in speaking “us,” I hearken to Lai’s image of “a violently disparate and heterogenous ‘one another’” (223). Speaking “us,” I actively interpellate toward the idea of Asian Canadian, and in doing so I invite or “call in” to coalition even as I acknowledge forgoing control over who hears and answers the call.¹⁴ Lai’s *Slanting I, Imagining We* is a major work that documents and analyzes key works and moments of Asian Canadian coalitional cultural organizing in the 1980s and 1990s alongside a historicized analysis of Asian Canadian studies development. In it, she contends that “the designation ‘Asian Canadian’ is a porous one. It is genealogically produced and deeply relational” (5). Citing Spivak, Lai argues that the term “Asian Canadian” functions as a strategic essentialism rather than a sign of stable identitarian signification (5). For Lai, the “power of the term comes not from a particular essence as such, but from the coalitional work it does” (5)—and as a sign of coalition, Asian Canadian is a site of *relational struggle*. Lai writes, “the radical work of coalition building is the building of relation, and the production of narrative, theoretical, or poetic content at the site of relation—always a struggle

14. Another approach, offered by Christine Kim, is to consider participation in Asian Canadian “publics,” which Kim defines as, “malleable collectives, [that] choose to define their membership through participation in debates about Asian Canadian concerns rather than solely through claims to Asian ethnicity, heritage, or nationality” (8). Lauren Fournier’s analysis of coalitional subjectivities suggested through collaborative Asian Canadian ethnopoetics in “Meeting the Other” pushes this discussion in yet another direction.

and, until recently, largely invisibilized" (4). To cast love onto sites and processes of relational struggle is to illuminate or *uninvisibilize* these sites and processes. In this way, love operates in tandem with acknowledgement to counter entwined logics of denial underlying white supremacy, heteropatriarchy, and settler colonialism. If, as Audra Simpson suggests, settler colonialism depends upon "disappearance in subject, [and a] *not seeing* that is so profound that mutuality cannot be achieved" (23), the relational struggles of Asian Canadian coalition building may be read as persistent attempts to work against subjective disappearance, ongoing efforts to see through to mutuality—including the tensions, failures and ambivalent missteps, the emotional investments, and the knowledges held within these collective experiences and affects.

Sara Ahmed's writing on love and politics, and more generally throughout her book *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*, has influenced, propelled and at points challenged my own thinking on Asian Canadian love and solidarity. In a chapter that interrogates and traces how contemporary hate groups have taken to mobilizing "in the name of love," Ahmed takes a skeptical position on mobilizing love for politics (123). She demonstrates how affects of love produce political attachments to the nation-state, and she provides a nuanced and skewering critique of multicultural love which she argues functions through logics of perverse idealization. Ahmed writes:

The idea of a world where we all love each other, a world of lovers, is a humanist fantasy that informs much of the multicultural discourses of love, which I have formulated as the hope: *If only we got closer we would be as one*. The multicultural fantasy works as a form of conditional love, in which the conditions of love work to associate 'others' with the failure to return the national ideal. (139)

That multiculturalism seduces with hefty promises of an idealized national body unified by difference while projecting its failures back into the hands of minoritized bodies is an argument familiar enough to Asian Canadian studies. I feel Ahmed's caution here keenly, particularly when she writes, "I would challenge any assumption that love can provide the foundation for political action, or is a sign of good politics" (141). But before we err on the side of dismissing love as a basis for politics or solidarity, I want to push the point by continuing to dialogue with Ahmed's work on "emotion as a form of cultural politics or world making" (12).

Ahmed directs her argument in *The Cultural Politics of Emotion* at "a model of social structure that neglects emotional intensities, which allow such structures to be reified as forms of being" (12). Thus, from my reading, it is not that Ahmed disavows love as such, but rather that she focuses her specific critique on how particular affects of love have become attached to the nation, or to ideologies of multiculturalism. If her project is to "track how emotions

circulate between bodies, examining how they ‘stick’ as well as move,” the issue she takes with love has to do with a specific coalescing of feelings—or “intensities” of feeling—around the idea of love that then structure ways of being, relating, acting, and identifying (4; 12). Thus it is not strictly emotions that Ahmed takes to task, but rather what she calls the “objects of emotion,” or the social structures that are hardened into being as they become “saturated with affect,” even as they remain “sites of personal and social tension” (11). Ahmed’s work on emotions, social structure, and what she calls world making has been helpful for me in thinking through Asian Canadian settler colonialism as an object of emotion that is also a site of personal and social tension. Digging into the affects of Asian Canadian studies, I argue, may help us to identify not only where we are stuck, but also how—and in what directions—we need to get moving. As Ahmed writes, “Emotions may be crucial to showing us why transformations are so difficult (we remain invested in what we critique), but also how they are possible (our investments move as we move)” (172).

One of reasons I am stuck on love is because I would like to recover Asian Canadian love from investments sunk into the multicultural settler colonial nation, an object of our affections that has persistently used emotion against us. As Ahmed writes, “emotions can attach us to the very conditions of our subordination” (12). Asian Canadian marginalization or racialization (as generally is the case for “othered” bodies, according to Ahmed) “takes place through the attribution of feelings to others, or by transforming others into objects of feeling” (18). An example that comes immediately to mind is the stereotypical notion of Asian inscrutability, baggage carried by the Asian racialized body through a long duration of yellow peril iterations. Fear of national contamination cathects the Asian body with cryptic interiority.¹⁵ A longer discussion of Asian gendered racialization might include both hypersexualized and asexual racial stereotypes, ranging from dragon lady, to China doll, to depraved eunuch, to asexual nerd, targeted precisely to wound and infinitely bisect Asian eros. Moreover, persistent representations of Asians as aliens or as the machines of capitalism have also not only emphasized Asian unassimilability in the nation, but also stripped Asian bodies of the capacity for feeling altogether. As Eleanor Ty explains, Asian North American racialialization

15. Colleen Lye’s work on Asian American racialization and representation has influenced my thinking here, particularly her discussion of visibility. Lye writes, “We easily recognize the presence of race in visual media because of its identification with a set of phenotypical traits and a relative absence of interiority”; and “the visibility of Asiatic racial form has a distinctive character insofar as the sense of its deceitfulness or mystery always points to the presence of something not shown. To put it another way, we recognize the Asiatic as a figure for the unrepresentable” (*America’s Asia* 7).

at once fetishizes physical attributes of racial difference, rendering these markers hypervisible, while also confining Asian subjects to invisible political and social spaces (*Politics of the Visible* 4). The focus on the Asian body as a primary site of estrangement reinforces multicultural biopolitics of control and carcerality that at once project feelings to bodies and evacuate those bodies of feeling.

It is beyond the scope of this project to provide a thorough analysis of Asian racialization as a product and vector of settler colonial cathexis. What I am interested in is the process by which different intensities of emotion function (and are nested) within Asian Canadian discourses, cultural politics, and solidarities—and more to the point, to consider how giving thickness to Asian Canadian love may hold some potential for tuning and moving our investments away from settler colonial complicity and towards decolonial transformation. I turn here to Christine Kim's discussion of Asian Canadian minor publics, where she offers the notion of publics to theorize "how collectives are defined, felt, and mobilized . . . [and to argue] that feeling matters and, moreover that feeling is core to the construction of minor publics" (5). Denials of feeling, unwillingness to acknowledge feeling, insistence on the unintelligibility of feeling, are all tied to processes of othering, tied as well to holding others captive from the reaches of intimacy and affection. Kim provides support for this through her analysis of "The current resistance to acknowledging that racial affect operates as a peculiar blind spot within the Canadian multicultural imaginary" (5).¹⁶ Recent work in Asian Canadian literary studies that attends to affect, trauma, and racial melancholia seeks to address this gap on Asian Canadian racial affects.¹⁷ Nevertheless, as Kim astutely counters, Asian Canadian publics do not necessarily address themselves first and foremost to, or within, Canadian multiculturalism.¹⁸ Rather, Kim posits that Asian Canadian publics "emerge out of a desire for social intimacy . . . and are also produced by a desire for collective

16. The continual muting of racial discourses in Canada heightens denial of racial affects, perhaps exceedingly so for Asian Canadians. As Yoneyama observes from her position as an Asian Americanist practicing in Canada, "It seems to me that Canada's political reality—in which state-sanctioned multicultural and humanitarian nationalisms are supplemented by the ethno-nationalisms of different diasporic and migrant populations—has made it especially difficult for many of my students to articulate a sustained critique from the position of 'Asian Canadians.'" (197)

17. For instance, see Vinh Nguyen's "Refugee Gratitude"; Y-Dang Troeung's *Forgetting Loss* in Madeleine Thien's *Certainty*; and Lucia Lorenzi's "Shikata Ga Nai."

18. Kim writes "I see the writers and artists examined in *The Minor Intimacies of Race* as searching largely for publics willing to engage with diasporic memories, global migrations, and transnational racial identifications not often recognized by a national multicultural imaginary, and consequently understand critiques of a particular Canadian liberal imaginary as secondary rather than primary goals" (17).

belonging and emotional recognition" (6).

A second reason I am stuck on love is to argue that critical struggles with love may constitute bases for organizing and acting in ethical solidarity. As I have been suggesting, emotional attunement, in contrast to emotional denial, is crucial to shifting the grounds for solidarity, for imagining and creating new grounds for transformative praxis. What's more, setting emotional grounds for critique, theory, and action are, I contend, equally important for situating an ethical basis for solidarity. Deep roots and precedents for this may be found in queer, Asian Canadian, and Indigenous feminist work and struggles. Turning back to Ahmed's chapter on love, I urge reading into what she models as *a critical struggle with love*, rather than taking her words as a flat out *critique of love*. After all, she writes:

it is our relation to particular others that gives life meaning and direction, and can give us the feeling of there being somebody and something to live for. A politics of love is necessary in the sense that how one loves matters; it has effects on the texture of everyday life and on the intimate 'witness' of social relations.
(139-40)

Revealing the trajectory of her own intellectual and emotional shifts as a feminist, Ahmed notes that, "Such emotional journeys are bound up with politicisation, in a way that reanimates the relation between the subject and the collective" (171). I want to pick up on the energy of animation that Ahmed writes about here because animation signals life and creative force needed to power the work of decolonial solidarity—a project and praxis of ethical (that is to say, caring and collective) *witness in world-making*.

LOVE, WORLD-MAKING, AND AFFECTIONATE SOLIDARITY

Solidarity depends upon an animation that comes from relationship and the wonders of intimacy.¹⁹ Ahmed articulates her "relationship to feminism" in terms of wonder, a feeling she describes in terms of the "creative, something that

19. Engaging with Ahmed's work, I would like to exercise care to maintain the integrity in distinctions she makes between love and feminist wonder. Wonder, Ahmed defines as "an encounter with an object that one does not recognise; or wonder works to transform the ordinary, which is already recognised, into the extraordinary. As such, wonder expands our field of vision and touch. Wonder is the pre-condition of the exposure of the subject to the world: we wonder when we are moved by that which we face" (180). I appreciate the attention she gives in her argument to not overproject or assume her own emotions as shared feelings and thus her "resistance to [the notion of] speaking *in the name of love*" (141). At the same time, throughout *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*, I read Ahmed as grappling with the wonders of intimacy and eros, an exercise I take up in kind.

responds to the world with joy and care, as well as with an attention to details that are surprising” (179). Lily Yuriko, a Japanese Canadian elder and lesbian anti-racist activist, describes with joyful, caring detail a moment in the 1980s when she “met two Japanese-Canadian lesbians” at an Unlearning Racism workshop:

I already knew them both in the Japanese-Canadian community. I knew them from the Powell Street Festival, which is an annual Japanese-Canadian festival that happens the first weekend of August in Vancouver and has been going on for almost thirty years. So, I was elated when I met them. And so were they when they met me, because they didn’t know there was somebody in the community who was an older Japanese-Canadian lesbian. And we became friends after that and are still the best of friends to this day. (31)

Here, Yuriko describes a moment of feminist wonder, inscribed in the repetition of the word *met*. In this description, “the object that appears before the subject is encountered for the first time, or *as if* for the first time . . . hence a departure from ordinary experience” (Ahmed 179). Hence, Yuriko’s elation is partly due to the thrill of extraordinary contact, or meeting “*as if* for the first time”; wonder in this case appears to be amplified by the youth of her companions and the fact there are two. Yet, what adds texture to Yuriko’s story is a sense of history, intimacy, and embodied knowledge inscribed in the repetition of the phrase *I (already) knew them* and references to the Japanese Canadian community and Powell Street Festival. Indeed, the repeated words “Japanese Canadian” and “friends” strengthen the sense of “collective belonging and emotional recognition” attaching immediate intimacy to the wonder of the encounter (Kim 6). This intimacy gives thickness to their mutual elation upon finding one another and provides the compelling basis for their enduring friendship.

Love thus combines with wonder and makes it thick with complexity in Yuriko’s telling of her life story, which tracks her experiences from being born and growing up in the “internment town” of Greenwood, BC, to coming out as a lesbian at the age of twenty-five, the complexities of being “out” as a Japanese-Canadian in the 1960s, the racism she faced within lesbian spaces, and her struggles to find and sustain social intimacies as an intersectional member participating and seeking belonging in different communities (30; 31). Throughout the piece, Yuriko acknowledges participating in different groups that contributed to her learning, as well as some painful ruptures in relationships. The groups form, dissolve, and change throughout Yuriko’s life, and she moves in and out of different collectivities as she changes as well. Her different experiences as part of these groups eventually raise her to understand and affirm the value of her own “life experience and wisdom in dealing with social and political injustices” (31). Different points of love and connection not

only affirm and nourish Yuriko's survival through her life's struggles, but also enable her to embody and claim these struggles as part of her experiential wisdom and knowledge.

Turning toward Asian Canadian feminist and queer knowledges, histories, and critiques has the potential to guide us toward decolonial futures. As Robert Diaz contends:

The political usefulness of queer/Asian/Canadian critique thus lies in its ability to acknowledge the multiple histories that make up our relationship to Canada, as a geographic site, as an ideation, and as a point of divergence. Its radical politics lies in the stubborn insistence that although these histories inevitably assert themselves in the present, they should not be the only basis for creating and willing a future that is yet to unfold before us. (193)

Asian Canadian feminist and queer histories and struggles carry specific knowledges and histories of love forward into the present and future, not necessarily for the sake of repetition, but to encourage differential iteration.²⁰ Yuriko's self-reflexive narrative of what she has learned from her life as a Japanese Canadian lesbian and her experiences of intersectional positionality may be read through the lens of what Kim calls "affective intelligence" (5). Yuriko's affective intelligence impels her through the narrative to active and purposeful agency through moments requiring social flexibility, learning, and boundary-setting across differences. Emotion, embodiment, politics, and knowledge are intimately interwoven, especially in the groups that she takes part in and that, for her, instantiate life-giving, albeit sometimes contentious, world-making activities. Yuriko's demonstrated affective intelligence also aligns with Ahmed's defense of "the emotional embodied aspects of thought and reason" (170). Knowledge, Ahmed writes, "is bound up with the skin surface where we touch and are touched by the world" (171). In this way, knowledge is produced through contact and has much to do with how we live through our feelings of contact.

The title of Yuriko's essay, "Ganbatte!", roughly translates from Japanese as "do your best" or "keep at it," denoting encouragement through struggle. Throughout the essay, Yuriko acknowledges her struggles, but relies on her attitude to keep her going, to encourage her to give back into her communities, and to seek new ones with joy and care. Following the work of Nelson Maldonado-Torres who elaborates on Fanon, I would like to suggest that Yuriko

20. Ahmed references Judith Butler's "'iterability,' the structural possibility that things will be repeated with a difference (1993)" (184); in considering the lessons learned from the Writing Thru Race conference, Lai also reflects on the potentials for "repetition with a difference" (224).

embodies a “decolonial attitude”: one of self-questioning oriented towards “love and understanding,” which involves “re-claim[ing] the subjects and peoples that one encounters in the world and who live in precarious conditions” (439).²¹ Yuriko summarizes her decolonial attitude early on in the piece: “I will never be at peace if there are women or children being violated or hungry. I can’t live with injustices in any way” (30). A decolonial attitude shares in common with acknowledgement a posture of turning towards oneself and self-questioning. Markell theorizes that acknowledgment is “self- rather than other-directed” (38). Later, Markell also addresses how acknowledgement might or ought to operate in situations of relative power and privilege: “faced with a relation of privilege and subordination, look for ways to dismantle or attenuate the privilege itself before (or while also) working to include a determinate group of previously excluded people under its protection. Sometimes less may be more” (181). Admittedly, acknowledgement is more modest (“less is more”) in its reach than a decolonial attitude; and indeed, this reticence to assume an ability to fix or solve (or “include,” for that matter) that I associate with acknowledgement is, I suggest, a healthy one. Acknowledgment, I would like to underline, does not reach as far as decolonial attitude to “reclaim.” Instead, as a measure of solidarity, it stands with and beside, asking *who am I to be here? Who and what came before? What (histories and knowledges of) loves hold us here?*

Dian Million identifies and theorizes the pivotal role of First Nations women’s first-person and experiential narratives in initiating the social and political changes that would lead to the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, Canada’s eventual confrontation of and later official apology for its legacy of residential schools, and Truth and Reconciliation Commission. As Million argues, in telling their stories and giving testimonies

Indigenous women participated in creating new language for communities to address the real multilayered facets of their histories and concerns by insisting on the inclusion of our lived experience, rich with emotional knowledges, of what pain and grief and hope meant or mean now in our pasts and futures (“An Indigenous Feminist Approach” 54).

Million calls this “felt theory,” an evocative and powerful contribution to Indigenous feminisms. Million writes, “We need models for what can be achieved by felt action, actions informed by experience and analysis, a *felt theory*” (emphasis in original, “Felt Theory 268). Felt theory, in other terms, may be considered a kind of affective intelligence. Echoing features of what I describe

21. With thanks to Yomaira Figueroa who turned me toward Maldonado-Torres’s essay on “decolonial attitude.” Figueroa herself writes about a decolonial attitude in “Faithful Witnessing as Practice.”

earlier as Yuriko's affective intelligence, felt theory is experiential and embodied knowledge interwoven by affect and contact. But I want to be careful not to collapse into equivalences. What makes felt theory distinctive, as Million makes clear, is "the emotional content of this felt knowledge: colonialism as it is *felt* by those whose experience it is" (emphasis in original, "Felt Theory" 272). By specifying the particularities of felt theory's "emotional content," Million couples knowledge intimately with time and place—with specific felt histories, or what she calls "subjective history" ("An Indigenous Feminist Approach" 72). She writes, "Those whose subjective history this is must speak it, since its emotional resonance still lives through them; because *we are who we are* because of this history that continuously haunts our storied bodies and lands" ("An Indigenous Feminist Approach" 72).

Acknowledging the particularities that define felt theory as an Indigenous theory that comes from Indigenous histories, how might Asian Canadian studies interact with felt theory? How might we cautiously approach Million's felt theory as an invitation to solidarity without colonizing and appropriating it? We may turn to moments in the history of Asian Canadian coalitional organizing and our own experiential knowledges to find tools. In *Slanting I*, Lai offers Asian Canadian studies a document of experience as well as theory. Lai writes in hindsight about the concentrated efforts of Asian Canadian cultural organizing in the 1980s and 1990s: "To my mind, a great source of the burnout and disappearance underground of many of those cultural workers was a direct consequence of the hijacking of the discourse of race in the public arena. The discourse had become (once again) about the assertion and production of whiteness" (*Slanting I* 215). One key lesson is to avoid taking over the conversation in the work of allyship; another key lesson is to respond when called in for support to counter public conversations that persistently undermine creative struggles to organize. In other words, showing up for solidarity means taking all precautions to ensure that our presences as allies do not exhaust the people we intend to support by making their work about us.

Acknowledgement and reciprocity enter to guide our approach. As I previously state in the introduction to this project, dispossessing ourselves of the *need to know* and instead tuning our attention to what learning might be possible once we acknowledge we are in *unfamiliar territory* are just the very first steps towards solidarity and decolonization. Entering into solidarity with acknowledgement in the foreground enables us to work from what we know (that is, our own embodied and experiential knowledges of struggle and cultural politics), whilst remaining attuned to the limits or excesses of our knowledge and nevertheless encouraging us to act in relationship. In other words, acknowledgement urges us to seek and test for emotional recognition without

guarantees that we will be met with answers. Acknowledgement holds us in wonder, even as it steps us forward with intimacy, and it urges us to inhabit this place of vulnerability in the face of potential conflict, rejection, or error. As Markell writes, “acknowledgement involves coming to terms with, rather than vainly attempting to overcome, the risk of conflict, hostility, misunderstanding, opacity, and alienation that characterizes life among others” (38).

Thus, with acknowledgement, I can read for resonances across Million’s articulation of felt theory and Yuriko’s narrative of embodied experiential knowledge whilst acknowledging the limitations of those resonances. For instance, I observe that both Yuriko and Million discuss the problems of patriarchy within Japanese Canadian and First Nations communities, but I also acknowledge the specific and differential histories and conditions of patriarchy that they each write about. Yuriko and Million also both contest white feminism for failing to account for racism and colonialism, but their arguments are each situated from within their own experiences and the collective experiences and loci of their specific communities. Each write about negotiating feminist values with other pressing political needs. Yuriko, for instance, expresses frustration at white feminists who do not understand or hear the intersecting need for anti-racist work within feminism: “We needed to combat racism, so I couldn’t afford to exclude men” (32). Million, on the other hand, writes about the delicate and complex balance of foregrounding feminism within Indigenous struggles for self-determination:

Native women in Canada often distanced themselves from white feminism, instead choosing strategies and language that located them within the heart of their own experiences. They walked a tightrope between their need to organize on intimate issues and the necessity to argue for self-determination for their communities. (“Felt Theory” 269)

In articulating embodied and experiential knowledges, both Yuriko and Million emphasize the ways that knowledges and histories are constitutive of the people who experience them. Yuriko explains, “It is not possible for me, as a woman of colour, who is a member of a small minority group in Canada, to separate myself from my ‘roots’ which is the essence of who I am and how I am seen in this world” (32). Yuriko’s “roots” in some ways parallel Million’s notion of subjective histories that are haunted by emotional resonances felt in the people who inherit these histories: “because *we are who we are* because of this history” (Million “An Indigenous Feminist Approach” 72).

My point in bringing these aspects of affective intelligence and felt theory together into conversation is not to argue that these concepts are interchangeable. Rather, it is to bring them into contact to test for wonder and lay a few bricks for the building of intimacy. It is to acknowledge and find emotional resonance in

the directions of bricks already laid in Million's writing, when, for instance, she states that she is:

working toward a more expansive idea of community that I see as an Indigenous feminist one articulated and emerging from struggle where in love and honor we can hold in light open embrace difference and *an expansive number of alliances* with others whose goal is for generative life and not death. (my emphasis 27)

Million's expression of "an expansive number of alliances" is a generous opening for potential solidarities. As I contend, love provides the force of animation or life-giving to feed an ethical solidarity aligned with Million's "felt theory." If the criterion for alliance is a willingness and shared goal to work towards "generative life," then perhaps there is room for Asian Canadian solidarity with Indigenous futures if we can acknowledge and reciprocate with love.

Returning to Lorde's discussion of the erotic, I see a significant point about acknowledging the risks of difference, with an openness to understanding difference and not letting difference get in the way of sharing. Lorde writes:

The erotic functions for me in several ways, and the first is in providing the power which comes from sharing deeply any pursuit with another person. The sharing of joy, whether physical, emotional, psychic, or intellectual, forms a bridge between the sharers which can be the basis for understanding much of what is not shared between them, and lessens the threat of their difference. (56)

Solidarity potentially increases the power and force of movement—and movement, as Ahmed explains, is needed for transformation. Ahmed describes an "affectionate solidarity" that may be what is needed to accomplish "the work that is done to create a different world" (141). Yet we must also accept that solidarity is an imperfect formation, and for that matter, so is love. Ahmed writes:

If love does not shape our political visions, it does not mean we should not love the visions we have. In fact, we must love the visions we have, if there is any point to having them. We must be invested in them, whilst open to ways in which they fail to be translated into objects that can secure our ground in the world. We need to be invested in the images of a different kind of world and act upon those investments in how we love our loves, and how we live our lives, at the same time as we give ourselves up and over to the possibility that we might get it wrong, or that the world that we are in might change its shape. (141)

Love, after all, must be differentiated from control. While there may be urges within attachment to possess or contain our objects of love, a decolonial love for those of us inhabiting the spaces of solidarity may not be about reclaiming so much as it is about risking, sharing, and surrendering. To close this chapter, I search the horizon for patterns of bricks laid in the world-making efforts of Indigenous and Asian Canadian solidarity. In my second chapter, I take a closer

look at Asian Canadian studies' possessive investments.

IMAGES OF A DIFFERENT KIND OF WORLD

To conclude this chapter, I offer a brief and partial summary of some themes and approaches of recent work on Indigenous and Asian Canadian relationalities as a living document of experiences and directions for future work.

CHINESE CANADIAN HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF BC

Henry Yu advances an analytic of "Pacific Canada" to study interwoven histories of colonialism, migration, settlement, and displacement connecting Asia across the Pacific to the Americas. Yu writes:

Pacific Canada calls not for a focus on the settler history of Asian Canadians, an 'addition' of them to pre-existing histories of colonization and settlement by Europeans; instead it addresses the role of trans-Pacific migration in multiple directions throughout the Pacific region, and places the long history of racism and exploitation of Asian labor within the context of expropriation and displacement of Native peoples by European colonialism across the Americas and the Pacific Islands. (xix)

The concept of Pacific Canada has opened up space for historical documentation and discussion of what Mawani has called "colonial proximities," or the "proximities and crossracial intimacies that colonial milieus encouraged" (4). The Chinese Canadian Historical Society of BC (CCHSBC) has supported community-based historical documentation and public engagement projects on related themes. For instance, CCHSBC published the anthology *Eating Stories: A Chinese Canadian and Aboriginal Potluck*, edited by Brandy Lien Worrall and Margaret Gallagher. It also produced the documentary *Cedar and Bamboo*, a short film sharing the stories of four people with mixed Chinese and Aboriginal heritage, co-directed by Diana Leung and Kamala Todd.

CROSS-RACIAL INTIMACIES AND MIXED-RACE FAMILIES

A related theme or direction of inquiry has produced work on mixed-raced families. A scholarly historical example can be found in the work of Jean Barman, who has written about the historical situation of families produced out of relationships between Chinese men and Indigenous women living primarily outside of urban centres in the nineteenth century (see "Beyond Chinatown"). Public historian Lily Chow has long been dedicated to the project of

documenting the history of Chinese labourers and life in early Chinese settlements in BC. Some of Chow's work that explores Chinese Canadian and Indigenous relations includes *Sojourners in the North, Chasing Their Dreams, Blood and Sweat Over the Railway Tracks*. Chow presented some of the specific connections at the Chinese Through the Americas conference at UBC in May 2012 on the topic of "The Forgotten Ties: Relationships Between First Nations People and Early Chinese Immigrants in British Columbia." At the same conference, Senator Lillian Dyck spoke about her own life experiences coming from a mixed-raced family, with her father being Chinese and her mother hailing from the Gordon First Nation; see Poy et. al. "Canadian Law, Intermarriage, and Ethnic Relations for Chinese Immigrants and Aboriginal Canadians." A play based on Dyck's life, titled *Cafe Daughter*, was developed and mounted the Gwaandak Theatre in the Yukon, and toured Canada in 2013 (see Williams). Some brief historical notes on "Asian and Native Intermarriage in the US" have been documented on the *ColorQ* website.

The full-length documentary *All Our Father's Relations*, directed by Alejandro Yoshizawa and produced by Yoshizawa and Sarah Ling, focuses on the story of the Grant family, whose father was Chinese and mother was Musqueam. The film contains interviews with siblings Helen Callbreath, Gordon Grant, Larry Grant, and Howard E. Grant, who are elders from the Musqueam Nation with Chinese ancestry. The siblings discuss growing up on the Musqueam reserve and in Chinatown and the film chronicles several of the Grant family members taking a trip to Guangdong, China to visit their father's ancestral village.

Malissa Phung's dissertation, *Reaching Gold Mountain*, looks at Chinese Canadian labour narratives in literature and film that explore Asian/Indigenous relations in Canada.

PUBLIC STORYTELLING AND RELATIONSHIP BUILDING INITIATIVES

The City of Vancouver has engaged in some public storytelling initiatives that highlight Indigenous and settler relations. These include the *Dialogues Project*, an initiative to bring First Nations, urban Aboriginal, and immigrant populations in Vancouver into circles with the goal to learn from each other, bridge understanding, and build stronger relationships (see Suleman and Zuluaga); and *Vancouver Storyscapes*, a public film project to document stories about Aboriginal people's relationships with other marginalized groups in Vancouver. Cree-Metis filmmaker Kamala Todd, who directed *Cedar and Bamboo* and was the Aboriginal Social Planner for the City of Vancouver from 2000-2006 was involved in both of these projects (see Todd).

A grassroots, non-profit group called Canadians for Reconciliation, organized by Bill Chu, organized a reconciliation dinner in 2004 for “First Nations peoples, Chinese Canadians, and many others.” The group has also initiated campaigns to mobilize and speak out on issues relevant to Chinese Canadian and First Nations histories (see “Welcome to Canadians for Reconciliation”).

ASIAN CANADIAN ARTS AND CULTURE

Ricepaper Magazine published a special issue on Aboriginal and Asian Canadian writers, edited by Joanne Arnott in 2012 in conjunction with the Aboriginal Writers Collective West Coast (see Arnott). *Ricepaper* has also published profiles on Jessica Yee, an Indigenous feminist sexual health advocate and educator of mixed First Nations and Indigenous Taiwanese ancestry and Dorothy Christian, who was raised in the Okanagan-Shuswap community and had a Chinese father (see Yee “Respecting Your History”; Christian, “Articulating a Silence”). Christian’s meditation on her mixed ancestry that chronicles many of the gaps in her family’s history and painful silences, offers an uneasy perspective of representing Indigenous and Asian intimacies.

More recent scholarly work has probed into Asian Canadian and Indigenous creative cultural collaborations, particularly visual arts and performance projects. See, for instance, Lai’s discussion of David Kang’s work in “Epistemologies of Respect.” Another example of cultural collaboration and sharing is the 1991 Earth Spirit Festival held in Toronto. As Collins writes, the event was a three day summer festival where “Innu, North American Indians, and Japanese Canadians gathered in the city’s Harbourfront to participate in a cultural exchange” (26). Asian and Native American arts and cultural collaborations have also taken place. For instance, the Wing Luke Museum of the Asian Pacific American Experience put on the exhibit “Cultural Confluence: Urban People of Native American and Asian Heritages,” featuring the work of mixed-raced Asian/Indigenous artists such as Louie Gong and Lawney Reyes, and exhibits contextualizing historical confluences between Asian and Native communities in the Pacific Northwest.²² Asian American artist Maya Lin has been working on a decade long public arts project in collaboration with a number of Native American tribes along the Columbia River gorge called the Confluence Project.²³

22. See Jerry Large, “The Historic Story of Our Mixing.”

23. See “What is Confluence?”

CHAPTER 2

DISPOSSESSING SKY LEE'S *DISAPPEARING MOON CAFÉ*

This chapter focuses on a novel that has not only been acclaimed as one of the founding texts of Chinese Canadian literature but has also been widely recognized for its portrayal of Indigenous and Asian Canadian relationships: SKY Lee's *Disappearing Moon Café*. Tracing its critical reception, I briefly consider *Disappearing Moon Café*'s intervention in Canadian literature as well as its enduring importance within Asian Canadian literary studies. Turning to the novel's commentary on writing and history alongside an analysis of the relationship between Wong Gwei Chang and Kelora Chen that has been the subject of more recent critical interest, I offer a close reading of Kelora's characterization within the novel and her function as a minor character who incites a great deal of the narrative action and conflict. Drawing on the work of Sau-ling Wong and Danika Medak-Saltzman, I argue for reading Kelora less as a symbol for Indigenous haunting in the novel and more as a "racial shadow" that reveals the "specters of colonialism" (Wong *Reading Asian American Literature*, 17; Medak-Saltzman "Empire's Haunting Logics" 17). *Disappearing Moon Café* is heralded for its fictional mapping of what Renisa Mawani has called "cross-racial intimacies" and "colonial proximities" (4), even while the novel is driven by a searing critique of heteropatriarchal love and intimate violence. In *Disappearing Moon Café*, Lee maps complex intergenerational traumas within settler colonialism through multiple failures of acknowledgement and reciprocity. The source of intergenerational trauma within the family is its "possessive investment" in settler colonial heteropatriarchy and gendered, racial capitalism

(Lipsitz vii). By unraveling and illuminating these investments, I urge caution in articulating Asian Canadian commitments to solidarity with decolonization and Indigenous resurgence, and I offer dispossession as a practice to set the grounds for solidarity. In this chapter, I expand upon my proposition that Asian Canadian desires for reconciliation and to position ourselves as “model allies” drive us too eagerly towards settling and claiming solidarities that in fact need continual and robust grounding. Although Lee leaves open the possibility for redemptive queer Asian Canadian love and family through the gesture of Kae’s “settler pack up” (Mack 287) and diasporic return to Hermia in Hong Kong, I argue that the novel ultimately resists reconciliation, leaving a door open for living futures of solidarity.

READING A POLITICS OF ACKNOWLEDGEMENT IN *DISAPPEARING MOON CAFÉ*

Published in 1990, Lee’s *Disappearing Moon Café* has garnered both critical attention and popular acclaim, while also establishing itself as a founding text of Chinese Canadian literature. For instance, in *Beyond Silence*, Lien Chao notes that *Disappearing Moon Café* was publicly “hailed as the first novel to deal with the experience of Chinese immigrants in Canada” (Rommel qtd. in Chao 93). Lee’s “ground breaking” novel established her as “one of the pioneers in Chinese Canadian writing,” a reputation that, despite the author’s reclusiveness, endures to the present (Ng 164).¹ Writing in the late 1990s about *Disappearing Moon Café*’s literary reception, Maria Ng remarks on “the attention it receives from both the academic community and the mainstream reading public,” specifically noting the presence of the novel “in university syllabi” (164). Much of the scholarly work on *Disappearing Moon Café* that followed Ng’s article in the 2000s focuses on three themes: first, the novel’s commentary on miscegenation, particularly through the interweaving of the historical Janet Smith murder case;² second, analyses of Chinese Canadian history, identity, and racialized space, particularly through representations of Vancouver’s Chinatown;³ and third, feminist literary analyses of the novel contextualizing it as an example of Canadian women’s

1. In a 2011 article for *Toronto Life* magazine detailing the plagiarism lawsuit filed against Ling Zhang for the book *Gold Mountain Blues*, journalist Leah McLaren names SKY Lee and the other complainants, “four of this country’s most established Chinese-Canadian writers.”

2. See Tanis MacDonald, “Dead Girl-Bag”; and Alison Calder, “Paper Families and Blonde Demonesses.”

3. See Ng, “Representing Chinatown”; and Daniel Martin, “Ghostly Foundations.”

writing that both critiques patriarchy and disrupts form.⁴ *Disappearing Moon Café* has been the subject of numerous theses and dissertations.⁵ The novel has also received critical attention outside of North America from scholars of Asian North American literature based in Asia.⁶ As Lily Cho describes, recalling writing an undergraduate paper on the novel, “It was the first time in my life as a student where I was given the chance to think and write about things that felt so close to me, and that I cared about so much” (“At Home” 232).⁷ Cho’s experience captures something about *Disappearing Moon Café’s* affective resonance which contributes to the novel’s special—one might say *beloved*—place at the heart of Asian Canadian literary studies.

More recent work on the novel has focused on its depiction of First Nations and Chinese relations in nineteenth-century British Columbia. *Disappearing Moon Café’s* depiction of ambiguous paternity and failed genealogy demonstrates the violent effects of settler colonial heteropatriarchy and gendered, racial capitalism on women’s identities. Scholars point to the significance of the romantic relationship that opens the novel between the paternal head of the family, Wong Gwei Chang and a mixed-raced Indigenous woman, Kelora Chen. Kelora’s presence in the Prologue and Epilogue bookends *Disappearing Moon Café*, anchoring and haunting the family saga. Recent attention to this narrative detail has sparked a resurgence of critical interest in *Disappearing*

4. See Neta Gordon, “Charted Territory”; Eva Darias-Beautell *Graphies and Grafts*; and Martha Addante, “Rupturing the Patriarchal Family.”

5. See Tara Lee, “The Decline of the Chinese Matriarch” and “Promising Transnational Births”; Gabrielle Helms, “Dialogism, Cultural Narratology, and Contemporary Canadian Novels in English”; Amanda Mullen, “Mythic Migrations”; Rita Wong, “Provisional Mobilities”; Qingqing Zhao, “A Context(s)-Intertext(s) Model”; Jennifer Denomy, “Secrets, Silence, and Family Narrative”; Laura Mark Sauer, “Writing ‘Kinography’”;

6. See Bennett Yu-Hsiang Fu, “Dystopic Here, Utopic There”; and Miryung Kim, “A Silenced Voice.”

7. *Disappearing Moon Café* is personally significant to me in a similar way that it was to Cho. This dissertation would not have happened if I had not read *Disappearing Moon Café* in an undergraduate English class in 1998. I grew up in Vancouver’s Chinatown, and my own grandfathers and uncles were sojourners, labourers, and business owners. The characters spoke in a way that was familiar to me, reflecting ways we used language at home. The novel gave me a fictional window to imagine parts of my family’s history that were not spoken about openly, and it was the first time I read something in university where something so close to my family’s background was reflected back at me. As I read and re-read the novel, it was my curiosity to learn more about Kelora’s character that moved me from a burgeoning interest in Asian Canadian literature to propose a doctoral research project on Indigenous and Asian Canadian representations in literature. It was stumbling against *not knowing* and not even having the language to begin asking about First Nations histories in Canada that led me to begin thinking about solidarity praxes.

Moon Café. Scholars posit that Gwei Chang and Kelora's relationship suggests significant decolonial possibilities. For example, Marie Lo argues that Indigenous figures in Asian Canadian literature "situate Asian Canadian racial formation within the ongoing decolonizing struggles of First Nations peoples and demonstrate the necessity of connecting Asian Canadian anti-racism to indigenous decolonization struggles" ("Model Minorities" 108). Gwei Chang and Kelora's relationship has the potential to be read as a paradigm of cross-racial alliance-building that resists the forces of what Henry Yu has called "white settler nationalism" (xvi). As Rita Wong notes, Gwei Chang and Kelora's love story allegorizes a history of "relationships between First Nations people and Chinese people, dating back at least to 1788" and facilitates Gwei Chang's incorporation into a community whose "relationship to the land . . . is not codified into the property laws of the nation" ("DecolonizAsian" 162). Larissa Lai argues that *Disappearing Moon Café* "acknowledge[s] past injustice and attempt[s] to take responsibility for that injustice" ("Epistemologies of Respect" 102). Writing in dialogue with Wong's analysis, Lai suggests reading the novel as a "gesture of respect" and a "gesture of solidarity that recognizes an Asian/Indigenous relationship that includes desire and emotional connection, as well as (differential) subjugation to the same colonial and economic forces and (differential) connection to the land" ("Epistemologies of Respect" 103). Building off of Lai's framework of "epistemologies of respect," Malissa Phung writes that "the Chinese and Indigenous characters embody a framework for acknowledging and honouring Asian-Indigenous relations and historical indebtedness more broadly in the contemporary moment, a decolonial framework that has become a prominent mode of critique in Asian Canadian studies over the past decade" ("Asian-Indigenous Relationalities" 57).

Kelora's ambivalent and spectral presence in the novel symbolizes violent erasures of female identity perpetrated through the regulation of sex, love and marriage in legislation enacting gendered racialization and settler colonialism, such as miscegenation laws and the Indian Act. The voices of dead and dispossessed women haunting the peripheries of the novel may be partially resuscitated by tracing their textual remains in the laws and norms that push them to the edges of existence. As Morill et. al. write, "dispossession works through violence and precarity to continually sort those who are permitted to take place and those who make take their proper place of 'non-being'" (13). But Kelora's characterization also raises significant questions. Her material absence from the novel emphasizes, and to a certain extent performs, settler colonial erasure by positioning her as a "vanishing Indian." Kelora's representation is in part vexing because it is largely mediated through Gwei Chang's gaze. While it is tempting to read Kelora as a symbol of Indigeneity or as a figure of

Chinese/Indigenous recognition, I posit reading Kelora through Danika Medak-Saltzman's concept of a "specter of colonialism" ("Empire's Haunted Logics" 17). As a specter of colonialism, Kelora represents the need for a politics of acknowledgement and turns attention towards the Wong family's failures of reciprocity.

As Markell explains, a politics of recognition proceeds from a supposition that "injustice [is] the misrecognition of identity" (5). To this end, recognition proposes to ameliorate unequal relations of power by affirming the identity of (subordinated) others. Reading Gwei Chang and Kelora's relationship as an instance of mutual recognition does perhaps enable Asian Canadians to affirm histories of colonial proximity to Indigenous peoples and from there to potentially imagine solidarities in the past and present. At the same time, as Markell notes, "many of the relationships established and maintained through recognition are unjust, often severely so" (1). Markell goes on to state that "In some cases, even apparently successful exchanges of recognition may reinforce existing injustices, or help to create new ones" (5). In order to arrive at better conditions for solidarity with contemporary struggles for Indigenous sovereignty and resurgence, I propose that Asian Canadian studies approach Kelora not through a deterministic affirmation of her Indigeniety, but instead as an ambivalently racialized figure that turns us back towards acknowledgement of Asian Canadian settler colonial complicity—in other words, Kelora as a figure representing Asian Canadian *partiality*; Kelora as a symbol for the *limits* of Asian Canadian relationality with Indigeniety; Kelora as representing the reaches of solidarity towards what we do not know and how we might act anyway. As Judith Butler writes, "Fictional narration in general requires no referent to work as a narrative, and we might say that the irrecoverability and foreclosure of the referent is the very condition of possibility for an account of myself, if that account is to take narrative form" (37).

Doing so shifts the direction of inquiry back to Asian Canadian studies' own investments in advancing solidarity and invites closer examination of Asian Canada's internal solidarities and diverse politics and socio-political constitution.⁸ Historian Masumi Izumi observes:

In the field of Canadian literature, connections have been made between Asian, Asian Canadian, and Indigenous experiences . . . While sympathetic relationalities can be more easily drawn in literary texts, analyses in empirical academic fields such as history and ethnic studies might reveal conflicting

8. Laura Kwak's work on Asian Canadian conservatism contributes significantly to establishing the complexity of the Asian Canadian racial body. See "Race, Apology, and the Conservative Ethnic Media Strategy."

interests among minorities and Indigenous communities. (196)

Izumi's impression that literary representations of Asian and Indigenous relationalities are relatively sympathetic, while other disciplinary considerations might be more critical gives me pause, particularly in the case of *Disappearing Moon Café*, where so much conflict and trauma results from Gwei Chang's failure to fulfill his commitments of love and solidarity towards Kelora. Moreover, a closer reading of Kelora's characterization does not render her so much sympathetic as essentialized and stereotyped. In *Race and Resistance*, Viet Thanh Nguyen critiques Asian American studies' "ideological rigidity" that, he argues, causes a "critical misreading of [Asian American literary] texts that . . . becomes emblematic of the more significant misreading that Asian American intellectuals are engaged in when it comes to Asian America as a whole" (5, 6). In short, Nguyen cautions against reading Asian American literature and Asian American subjects as necessarily resistant or accommodating, instead focusing on the "flexible strategies often chosen by authors and characters to navigate their political and ethical situations" (4). In the same way, I urge a reading of *Disappearing Moon Café* that takes into account SKY Lee's characterization of Kelora as not necessarily symbolizing indigeneity and decolonial solidarity; instead, I argue that Kelora's *flexibility* allows her to pivot the novel towards Asian Canadian acknowledgement and to focalize the possibilities, risks, burdens, and failures of solidarity—indeed, of intimacy and relationship in a more basic sense. Markell writes:

Following up on the thought that the source of relations of subordination lies not in the failure to recognize the identity of the other, but in the failure to acknowledge one's own basic situation and circumstances, I call this alternative a politics of *acknowledgement* rather than a politics of recognition . . . It demands that each of us bear our share of the burden and risk involved in the uncertain, open-ended, sometimes maddeningly and sometimes joyously surprising activity of living and interacting with other people. (emphasis in original 7)

If acknowledgement is a better ground for solidarity than recognition, then what is required is not identification with Kelora's indigeneity, but rather a more rigorous consideration of the Wong family's "basic situation and circumstances." Kelora represents the Wong family's failures of acknowledgement, or their tenacious and violent denials. The Wong family's general tendency in the novel to avoid or deny their share of the "burden and risk" involved in "interacting with others" causes cycles of intimate violence and trauma. These cycles of intimate violence within the family are related to structural violences that function through similar logics of avoidance and denial. Like others before me, I read Lee's novel as a gesture towards solidarity, but I underline that *Disappearing Moon Café* leaves the promise of solidarity with the readers to fulfill. By pushing

Asian Canadian studies towards acknowledgment and revealing the traumatic effects of denial, Lee urges Asian Canadians to (to paraphrase Bulter) *give an account of ourselves*. Far from portraying solidarity as a given, *Disappearing Moon Café* provokes an examination of Chinese Canadian history that reveals that we have a lot to learn about solidarity.

KNOT AFTER KNOT AFTER KNOT: ON UNRAVELING GRIEF

Disappearing Moon Café opens with a Prologue set in the late-nineteenth century, where the man who will eventually age into the role of family patriarch, Wong Gwei Chang, meets a young woman who appears in front of him out of the woods of southern British Columbia. Gwei Chang appears as the first of many voices in this multi-generational history of the Chinese Canadian Wong family. He may be the family's originary sojourner figure, but the story of Gwei Chang's youthful journey into the coastal interior of the province to recover the bones of deceased Chinese labourers situates the fictional family saga within a larger historical narrative of Chinese migration to and labour in Canada. Within the story, a heteroglossic combination of voices, of the living and the dead, of official discourse and gossip, of collectivities and individuals, not only points to a suppressed history of race relations that shaped the region, but also articulates a socio-political critique related to racial restriction, colonial land policy and patriarchal laws and norms.

Benedict Anderson argues that the social world created in a novel is a "precise analogue of the idea of the nation" (26). A novel's imaginary narrative provides coherence for diffusely connected characters whose lives and stories cross a fictionally bound time/space, and analogously, in a nation, subjects position themselves and connect with others through their location within the narrative of a shared history (Anderson 26).⁹ In this way, *Disappearing Moon Café* confronts national and historical discourses that deny Indigenous and Asian presence by asserting agency over narrative and repositioning Indigenous and Asian presence as actively constitutive of the nation's story. At the same time,

9. In a similar fashion, Michael Holquist observes that histories and novels are comparable in that they concern themselves with locating details and relationships in time and space to show "their simultaneity as well as their continuity." At the same time, Holquist elaborates on the differences in form and literary convention between histories and novels, noting that while the writing of history is, for the most part, guided by the dictum "*wie es eigentlich gewesen ist*" (show what actually happened), novels intentionally "dramatiz[e] the gaps that always exist between what is told and the telling of it, constantly experimenting with social, discursive, and narrative asymmetries" (xxviii). See Michael Holquist, Introduction to *The Dialogic Imagination*.

Disappearing Moon Café also points to the excesses of nationhood as the narrative persistently refuses containment within the form of novel. The Prologue and Epilogue, for instance, gesture to past and future matters in excess of the narrative. As well, the family tree included in the front matter of *Disappearing Moon Café* alludes to the complexity of relationships that requires extra-textual mapping in order to clarify. Furthermore, the family tree maps concealed and secret relationships as well as ellipses in familial relations that point in directions that the narrative refuses to resolve. In other words, family trees reveal the limits of genealogy as much as they construct genealogies.

Disappearing Moon Café not only illuminates the consequences of dominant ideologies and policies historically directed towards Chinese Canadians, but also comments upon the complicity of Chinese Canadians in perpetuating settler colonial violence. Anderson suggests that contemporary nationalism is intimately tied to technologies of writing because technologies of writing enable people to imagine themselves as tied to simultaneous time and space with others: “print-capitalism . . . made it possible for rapidly growing numbers of people to think about themselves, and to relate themselves to others, in profoundly new ways” (36). *Disappearing Moon Café* positions itself in tenuous relation to nationalism and history, both critiquing the monolithic master narrative of Canadian history that marginalizes the experiences and perspectives of Chinese Canadians, and, at the same time, wrestling with its own ability to write the whole story. The novel grapples with its own inadequacy to comprehensively gather and contain all its fictional and non-fictional details within its finite textual borders. It is structured in a series of fragmentary episodes and scenes, collected into seven chapters and bookended by a Prologue and an Epilogue. Sections are marked off by dates and names, roughly signifying shifts in time and point-of-view. However, stories and digressions within chapters often complicate the narrative perspective. Although the novel consists of fragments that move forward and backward in time, jumping from place to place, and perspective to perspective, the contemporary feminist narrator, Kae Ying Woo, provides an anchoring perspective. Kae, whose secret ambition is to be a writer, functions as one of several historians in the family. Characters in each generation of *Disappearing Moon Café*'s Wong family engage in processes of discovering, recovering and writing history.

Kae's preoccupation with writing is driven by her desire to reconcile what she is taught are the “facts” about her family with what she will eventually uncover and present as the messy and traumatic truths of her family's story. At the beginning of the first chapter, Kae narrates, “I've been brought up to believe in kinship, or those with whom we share” (Lee *Disappearing Moon Café* 19). Ironically, Kae's family is haunted by broken kinship because of the failures of

reciprocity, or the propensity to hoard (information, resources, and capital) instead of to share. The facts of Kae's family, transmitted through oral history, achieve a near-sacred status during her subsequent catechismic recitation of the family tree: "All my life, I have been faithfully told, and I have also respectfully remembered. My maternal grandmother, for whom the Chinese term is Poh Poh, had one son and two daughters. Her son, my uncle, whom I must address as A Queu, married a girl from Jung Saan district, whom I must call A Queu Mu," and so on (19). The names, places of origin and relationships are easy enough to lay out at the beginning, but Kae's catechism begins to unravel as she ventures deeper toward her "mother's side of the family" to include "Poh Poh's sister's oldest son, or Ai Bew Sook (which doesn't have an equivalent in English)" and collapses entirely when she reaches her "maternal grandfather, or Gong Gong" (20). It turns out that Kae's has two possible grandfathers on her mother's side, which is both a biological problem—a person's mother cannot have two biological fathers—and a genealogical problem—Kae's "real" biological grandfather was not married to her maternal grandmother, thus sullyng the "legitimacy" of her family lineage. If Kae is able to apologetically brush past the complication of Ai Bew Sook as a problem of translation, a break of language or perhaps of culture, she cannot override the more serious ontological rupture posed by the problem of her two maternal grandfathers. Her historical reality stratifies at this point of dual "origin" and never fully recovers its hold over the truth.

Kae's genealogical history, her epistemological foundation, what she's been brought up to believe in, comes to a stuttering halt at this point, and she must go back into the past and begin again. Kae is urged to resolve the problem of her two grandfathers by her uncle, Morgan Wong, with whom she has an affair. The son of Kae's biological grandfather, Wong Ting An, and an unnamed French Canadian woman, Morgan is unable to reconcile his own mixed-raced identity and is haunted by his marginalization from the putatively "pure" branches of the Wong family. Incest vexes Morgan and Kae's relationship, rendering theirs an impossible intimacy. Impossible intimacies refer to taboo relations, lost domestic histories and irreconcilable ties. Morgan is Kae's uncle; he and Kae's mother are half-siblings who share the same father. What's more, Morgan and Kae's relationship mirrors an earlier and more disastrous incestuous relationship between Morgan and his other half-sister (Kae's aunt, her mother's younger sister), Suzanne Bo Syang Wong. The incest results from a series of lies constructed to keep the family line "pure." The incestuous intimate relationships in the novel also figuratively critique a representation of Chinese Canadian history that folds back into its own nationalistic essentialism. Morgan and Kae run into additional problems because of their myopic emphasis on the family's

roots in Vancouver's Chinatown. Thus, their problems with history, like their problems with each other, lie in a symbolic incest.

Disappearing Moon Café is, indeed, saturated with this incest. Kae hopes to leave it behind her by leaving the country at the end of the novel. Her narration ends abruptly at this decision. Kae's departure for Hong Kong and subsequent abandoning of the genealogical project points toward the irreconcilability of history. In effect, her history has multiple beginnings and no ending. Kae's story gives voice to certain of the family's ghosts, but leaves behind others to be reckoned with. This reckoning would require looking outside of Chinatown and seeking historical connections elsewhere. Lo points out that "It could be argued that the vision offered in *Disappearing Moon Café* is one that presents the interconnection of migrant experiences and Aboriginal experience. Forgetting that mutuality, as the Wong family does, is to inhabit a partial history that in the end proves the unsustainability of the family" (109). Locating the interconnectedness of migrant and Indigenous experiences in the novel within a broader history of global and racialized capital, as well as the effects of Chinese transmigration across the Pacific on families, adds yet more layers to this partial history.¹⁰

Kae's stuttering entry into the story of her family's troubles parallels that

10. Madeline Hsu considers the phenomenon of concentrated transmigration from the southern Chinese county of Taishan to the United States from the mid-nineteenth to early-twentieth centuries in *Dreaming of Gold, Dreaming of Home*. Hsu frames her research by asking what kinds of local and national exigencies motivated Taishanese transmigration through the nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries, and what global economic circuits brought such a concentrated number of Taishanese transmigrants to the US. Dramatic outmigration of Taishanese males affected basic ways of life such as family organization and orientations towards work. Emigration produced a gender imbalance in villages, resulting in a Taishanese society dominated by women who served as "de facto household heads" (Hsu 116). Additionally, Taishanese families came to rely on overseas remittances to raise and sustain their living standards, creating a situation of quasi-dependency on foreign income. Foreign monies resulted in material transformations to Taishanese economy and society. The families of sojourners used remittance monies to buy land, erect new houses and build infrastructure. Hsu demonstrates that Taishanese society and culture became hybridized by the encounter with returning transmigrants. Hsu's analysis reveals that economic outmigration of Taishanese had profound impacts on communal identity. She writes, "[i]t seems that Taishanese identity is predicated on absence, that Taishanese consider their most distinguishing characteristic to be the large number of people who have left Taiwan" (16). Hsu's work emphasizes a theme of aspiration; she suggests that aspirations for a better life for their families motivated Taishanese to seek work away from home, and, concomitantly, the suppression of aspiration that Taishanese transmigrants faced when they reached the US reinforced their ties to home and caused them to focus their aspirations toward Taishan, the place where they believed their dreams could come to fruition once they had accrued enough resources from working overseas.

of her great-grandfather, Wong Gwei Chang, as he sets off on his historical mission in the novel's Prologue, set in British Columbia's coastal interior in 1892. In yet another beginning to the story (one that precedes the "official" first chapter of the novel), Gwei Chang sets off to seek out, collect and return the bones of Chinese workers who had died during the construction of the Canadian Pacific Railroad (CPR). Gwei Chang's bone hunting expedition metaphorically suggests the work of history: making bodies out of bones. The events of 1892 haunt Gwei Chang for the rest of his life. However, the spirits of dead railway workers are not the only ghosts haunting Gwei Chang. Gwei Chang's reflections in the Prologue and Epilogue reveal that he is haunted both by his economic success in Chinatown and by his forsaken first marriage to Kelora.

Colonial presence in British Columbia and imperialist demands for labour bring whites, First Nations and Chinese into contact in British Columbia's early history. In *Colonial Proximities*, Renisa Mawani considers these complex and interwoven political and legal contexts, arguing for:

a wider analytic and historical approach, one that characterizes the colonial contact zone as a space of racial intermixture—a place where Europeans, aboriginal peoples, and racial migrants came into frequent contact, a conceptual and material geography where racial categories and racisms were both produced and productive of locally configured and globally inflected modalities of colonial power. (5)

In response to work that treats the histories of "aboriginal-European contact and . . . Pacific migrations to British Columbia and elsewhere in Canada" separately, Mawani takes an approach that illuminates the simultaneous and politically interlocking nature of these histories (5). Likewise, *Disappearing Moon Café* novel brings into relief the multiple, overlapping and hybrid race-relations that necessarily exist during moments of colonial contact, but it highlights this history's irresolvability. Drawing in this history, the novel posits yet another insufficient beginning to the story of *Disappearing Moon Café*, one that goes back to the late 1850s and the beginnings of both white and Chinese settlement in the area now known as British Columbia, to the time when Kelora's father, Chen Gwok Fai came upon a white man, his cabin and his Native wife.

The description of Chen and Kelora's home in the early portion of the novel is significant to locating the novel spatially, temporally and politically. The novel makes reference to Kelora's Shi'atko family clan in "the village at the mouth of two rivers," which, presumably are the Thompson and Fraser Rivers. Lee thanks the Lytton Indian Band in her acknowledgements, and we may posit the setting of the house to be somewhere in the area of the traditional territories of the Nlha7káp̓mx (Interior Salish) peoples of the Fraser, Thompson and Nicola river valleys. Significant events in British Columbia's colonial history cross the

novel around the time of Kelora's birth. The 1858 Fraser River gold rush brings white settlement into the Fraser Basin, and an echo of Chinese migration floods the region mostly from the United States also chasing the gold rush. British Columbia is formally declared a British colony shortly after the gold rush in 1866 and joins the Canadian Confederation in 1871, which brings the political promise of a transcontinental railway, built from 1881-1885. Railway construction, in turn, brings more Chinese labor and settlement into the region. Meanwhile, in 1851, the nascent Canadian government legislates the Indian Act, and, in the 1860s, British colonials arrive in the same coastal interior locations around the gold rush to survey and map out lands for reserves. Even while British colonists exerted considerable power in mapping out territories, local First Nations were politically proactive and aware of the negotiations affecting their communities. Thus, as Cole Harris notes, "it is . . . clear that the Nlah7kapmx were trying to find some decision-making space of their own within an increasingly enveloping colonial regime" (155). Harris continues to explain that, "Particularly over the previous twenty years [of the Gold Rush], Native cultures and economies in the southern interior had been massively assaulted as new technologies of power—cultural as much as they were economic or military—settled around them" (155-6).

The family tree in *Disappearing Moon Café* indicates that Kelora is the only daughter of Shi'atko and Chen Gwok Fai. But, as Lo points out, different scholars have different opinions on Kelora's ancestry. Rita Wong, identifies Kelora as a "half-Native, half-Chinese woman of the Shi'atko clan" ("Decolonization," 161); Donald Goellnick refers to Kelora as a "Native Chinese" woman ("Of Bones and Suicide," 314), while Mary Condé describes her as "a woman both Chinese and Native Canadian" (186). On the other hand, Neta Gordon notes that "Kelora's actual father is 'a white man [who was] dying of a festering gunshot wound' when Chen first arrived at the cabin" (173). Kelora's ambiguous paternity points to the irresolvability of this history of race, colonialism, and contact. During their initial encounter in the woods, Kelora tells Gwei Chang that "My father is a chinaman, like you" (3). Later, she leads Gwei Chang back to the cabin she shares with her father, Chen Gwok Fai. Chan tells Gwei Chang:

I got this cabin from a white man . . . I climbed up here and found a white man dying of a festering gunshot wound, with his head in an indian woman's lap . . . So, as he died, I just stayed and took over where he left off, you see. I took care of his woman like a wife and his cabin like a home. She had a daughter. Kelora—indian name. I taught her to speak chinese. (7)

Chen admits to fluidly inheriting the white man's cabin, wife and livelihood, in a sense, admitting his inheritance of the white man's colonial legacy. He seemingly does this without complication, all the while, "grinning foolishly" at Gwei Chang

while he narrates the past events (7). Indeed, it is foolish or at the very least oversimplistic and naïve to think that such events happened without violence or rupture. Chen's glib recollection of the nameless "white man dying of a festering gunshot wound," far from being a passing comment, is an understatement that draws attention to elisions of colonial violence.

If Chen had participated in the gold rush, it is likely that he inherited cabin and wife from the white man, making Kelora, born in 1875, his daughter. If Chen arrived later, in time to build the railroad but not significantly before, then Kelora could well be the white man's daughter. While Kelora's paternity is potentially ambiguous, her maternal lineage is not a point of dispute. She is the daughter of Shi'atko, which may either be read as the name of her mother or the generalized name of her clan. Kelora's family is not identified by tribe or nation, only by clan. Kelora's Native identity, inherited through her mother, is confirmed by Chen, who says, "She had a daughter. Kelora—indian name" (7). Kelora belongs with Shi'atko in name and lineage. She is the daughter of her clan and mother, all securely connected within the name Shi'atko. On the other hand, Chen, known by the surrounding people as "Father of Little Kelora," derives his identity from Kelora (7). While the family tree contains some information, the narrative demonstrates how it oversimplifies relationships and obscures the importance of both matrilineal relationships and non-blood kinship by privileging biological patrimony.

Danika Medak Saltzman provides a succinct critique of Anderson's "imagined communities":

Anderson's privileging of the printed word, over other equally significant and reliable manners of documentation—an assertion that insists that the presence of certain products of the (Western) industrial revolution were vital precursors of the development of imagined communities and the concept of nation—is deeply problematic. (25)

As the novel struggles to contain the coherency of its own narrative and to verify the reliability of its sources and documents, it too reveals the deeply problematic nature of writing as a basis for history and imagined community. *Disappearing Moon Café* thus posits a relationship between writing and history that propels toward narrative openings rather than closures. A politics of acknowledgement may be read in these narrative openings as favouring knowledge gaps and acting at the limits of knowledge, rather than working from the bounds of what can be definitively captured in words. Moreover, *Disappearing Moon Café* is haunted by Chinese Canada's irreconcilability to its own hybrid, multi-racial history, which the novel gestures toward in the character Kelora. The significant silences surrounding Kelora's ancestry and origins are productive and necessary ambiguities. Kelora functions as a ghost, one that troubles and loosens the

compulsion for narrative closure. Kelora's absence in the story and her untimely death are instrumental to a narrative that continually points the Wong family back towards itself, to face its own violent denials, traumatic past, and its failures of accountability. As I discuss in the next section, although Kelora's spectral presence in the novel may read as problematic in that it denies her the fullness of her life as an Indigenous woman, her indigeneity is actually outside of our concerns. Instead, reckoning with our unsatisfied desire to know, capture, and attach ourselves to her indigeneity is a loss required for Asian Canadian solidarity. As Butler writes, "But this death, if it is a death, is only the death of a certain kind of subject, one that was never possible to begin with, the death of a fantasy of impossible mastery, and so a loss of what one never had. In other words, it is *a necessary grief*" (65).

REFIGURING KELORA: FROM INDIGENOUS GHOST, TO RACIAL SHADOW, TO SPECTER OF COLONIALISM

In this section, I provide a close reading of the character Kelora Chen. While Kelora has primarily been interpreted to symbolize indigeneity in *Disappearing Moon Café*, I would like instead to emphasize the flexibility and indeterminacy of her characterization and ghostly presence in the novel. In an effort to avoid collapsing her figurative indigeneity with spectrality, I instead propose reading her character through what Medak-Saltzman theorizes as the "specters of colonialism" ("Empire's Haunted Logics" 17). As Medak-Saltzman explains:

the logics of empire that haunt settler colonial societies are vestiges of the goals and spirit of colonialism that haunt in order to maintain the foundational narratives of Indigenous absence/inconsequence to justify settler colonial presence on Indigenous lands and manage to absolve guilty consciences in the process. ("Empire's Haunted Logics 17)

As a minor character in the novel, Kelora functions *effectively* rather than *affectively*. While she is the source of much narrative conflict and action, her character lacks interiority and affective presence. Instead, readers' encounters with Kelora are mediated through the gaze of other characters, primarily, her lover Gwei Chang. This failure within the narrative to affectively reach and touch Kelora—and thus to access her humanness—replays itself across the generations. The family's ignorance and denial of Kelora's existence and of their relationship with Indigeneity is a specter of colonialism. This specter of colonialism replays itself through intimate violences and intergenerational

traumas wrought across their familial relations and that reverberate with the violences of empire and settler colonialism that haunt the family across history, time, and place into the present.

Kelora is a minor character in *Disappearing Moon Café*. There are different ways of conceiving of minor characters, and the criteria for defining minor characters are far from standard across different types of narrative. For example, minor characters may have a minor role in the action, or they may exert significant force over the narrative even though they hardly appear within the pages of the story. The latter is true for Kelora, whose secret existence is crucial to the central conflict of the plot that leads to incest, and whose ever-present absence spectrally haunts the novel. Even though Kelora is technically “inactive” for most of the novel, her character instigates significant amounts of narrative action. Even while many of the characters represented in the Wong family tree may not be aware of her existence, Kelora’s spectral presence exerts a significant amount of productive (and reproductive) force in her role as repressed matriarch. Other analyses of minor characters suggest that their role may be to represent an essentialist figure. For example, Paul Pickrel argues against E.M. Forster’s terminology of round and flat characters, and instead suggests a terminology of “essential” and “existential” (181). Kelora’s characterization relies on a specter of colonialism that essentializes and renders her visible in the narrative primarily through stereotypes of Native otherness.

Emerging out of the wilderness to first save and then be sacrificed by her Chinese lover, the beautiful mixed-raced Kelora of the Shi’atko clan in many ways reinforces the “vanishing Indian” myth and the stereotype of a “Native squaw.” Throughout *Disappearing Moon Café*, a novel that is otherwise relatively polyphonous, Kelora rarely speaks for herself. Though she is present in both the Prologue and Epilogue, she is otherwise absent, except for a line in the middle of the novel that comments that she died of a fever when her son was two years old. When she does appear, we meet her through Gwei Chang’s gaze, reminiscences, and recollections of her dialogue. Thus, not only is Kelora a minor character, but the reader’s experience of her is always mediated through the protagonist Gwei Chang’s observations and point of view. In the novel, Gwei Chang’s first impression of Kelora associates her with the exoticised and othering image of the primitive, natural Native. She appears to him as if an apparition, indistinguishable from the “rustling leaves and whistling animals” that capture and terrorize his imagination as he wanders lost in the forest (Lee 2). She is barely distinguishable from the forest when she first emerges: “a brown face peeped out of the stems and brambles” (3). Not only does she emerge as a natural part of the forest, but Gwei Chang views her as *wildness emerging from wilderness*, evoking a common image of an untamed Native by calling her “wild

injun," "yin-chin" and "siwashee" (3).¹¹

Gwei Chang's use of "siwashee," a word associated with derogatory stereotypes of the Native as savage or animal, also recalls the violent gendered term "squaw." Thus, Gwei Chang's utterances of "wild injun," "yin-chin" and "siwashee" enunciate the specters of gendered colonial stereotype that provide him with a structuring worldview through which to process his initial perceptions of Kelora. As Marcia Crosby and others have argued, "Imaginary Indian" discourses attempt to resolve the political anxiety of ongoing colonization by denying Indigenous presence through narratives of conquest and assimilation that position Indigenous peoples and their territorial claims firmly in the past. "Imaginary Indian" stereotypes, whether sympathetic "noble savage" depictions, gendered and sexualized images of "Native princess" or "squaw," or more aggressively rendered "wild injuns" (to name just a few), typify Indigenous peoples as culturally backward, opposed to modernity, and vanishing. In this way, "imaginary Indian" stereotypes distance, discipline, and confine Indigenous peoples and cultures to colonial spectrality.

Interestingly, as Gwei Chang relaxes in his initial fear of Kelora, his impressions of her likewise soften. After she offers him food, and an invitation to meet her father, Gwei Chang's attitude changes as he begins to observe Kelora's beauty and grace. When Kelora speaks to him, he recognizes that his first impressions were based on stereotype: "It made him feel uncivilized, uncouth; the very qualities he had assigned so thoughtlessly to her, he realized, she was watching for in him" (4). Gwei Chang's perceptions of Kelora pivot here towards sympathy, and he focuses his attention on their phenotypical similarities: "It was then he recognized familiar features on her dark face. A melon-seed face, most admired in a beautiful woman. Her hairline high, inkstrokes by an artist's brush down both sides of her face . . . What was she but another human being?" (4). Over time, during which Kelora nurses Gwei Chang from exhaustion back to health, he grows to love and esteem her as a worthy partner, seeing her through the eyes of other villagers, who comment proudly on her skills and feminine prowess. Towards the end of his life, Gwei Chang reprises his feelings towards Kelora, returning to memories of their life together with longing, grief, and regret. Yet, as Renato Rosaldo has argued, one of the dissonant effects of colonialism is the phenomenon of "imperialist nostalgia," wherein "agents of colonialism long for the very forms of life they intentionally altered or

11. Gwei Chang's "siwashee" is a further pidginization of the Chinook "siwash." The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines siwash as a "derogatory" term for "an American Indian of the northern Pacific coast" and traces the etymology of "siwash" to Chinook pidginization of the French word *sauvage*.

destroyed" (69). Imperialist nostalgia, Rosaldo goes on to explain, "uses a post of 'innocent yearning' both to capture people's imaginations and to conceal its complicity with often brutal domination" (70). Gwei Chang's sympathetic and regretful remembrance of Kelora in the novel's Epilogue can be read through the framework of imperialist nostalgia to demonstrate Gwei Chang's need to defend his own innocence and to deflect responsibility for the hurt and damage he has caused in Kelora's life.

At the same time, Lee includes a scene in *Disappearing Moon Café* that insists upon Gwei Chang's culpability. In the novel's Epilogue, Gwei Chang recalls the last summer he spent with Kelora. In a moment of defensive desperation, he turns away from her humanness and makes an animal of her in his imagination. Gwei Chang remembers it as:

The happiest, most elaborate harvest he'd ever been to . . . It made him feel good to learn the indian ways, as it made him think he would never starve like a chinaman again. But Kelora told him that even with this abundance, her people faced famine later in the winter . . . Then a strange thing happened to him . . . He stood over her on purpose so that he could pour his bitterness onto her . . . He could see how famine was the one link that Kelora and he had in common, but for that instant, it made him recoil from her as if he had touched a beggar's squalid sore . . . In the next instant, he looked at Kelora and saw an animal. (234)

In this case, as in their initial meeting, Gwei Chang's application of stereotype is rooted in instincts of fear and panic. His reaction is triggered when Kelora casually mentions the possibility of famine, in spite of a decent salmon harvest. Recalling a deep pain of hunger that he associates with the hunger of all destitute Chinese labourers, Gwei Chang suddenly turns on Kelora and makes the decision to abandon her for the pressures of another life. He loves her, and even for a moment recognizes the sameness between them, but his fear of hunger intervenes to put a wall between them. To survive, he puts difference between them, relying on the image of her as an animal to justify his decision to leave her.

In some ways, Kelora functions as what Sau-ling Wong has called a "racial shadow," or an abject doppelganger onto which protagonists project their own racial insecurities (*Reading Asian American Literature*, 79-82). Gwei Chang's emphasis on Kelora's Native otherness in moments of fear and distress, and his tendency to view her favourably through a lens of familiarity and even lust in moments of sympathy, supports this interpretation. Wong identifies racial doubles that mirror protagonists' own ethnic backgrounds; these doubles, she argues, shadow and support central characters' developing racialized consciousnesses and reveal critiques against the dominance of whiteness. As Wong argues, Asian Americans and other people of colour often "internaliz[e] white judgement" as a survival tactic and utilize "projection" as a psychological

strategy to “[keep] at bay the threatening knowledge of self-hatred” (*Reading Asian American Literature* 77-78). Interestingly, in *Disappearing Moon Café*, Kelora’s racial otherness overshadows her racial doubleness. Wong suggests that racial shadows can be identified, to a certain degree, by measuring the intensity of emotion directed towards the other (or double) character and judging whether or not it is “disproportionate by everyday standards” (emphasis in original, *Reading Asian American Literature* 84). As Wong goes on to explain, “Since repression and projection are unconscious defenses, the protagonist’s reactions, be they extremely negative (repulsion, fear, violence, and so on) or extremely positive (fascination, love, indulgence, and so on) are not amenable to rational analysis and control” (*Reading Asian American Literature* 84). Gwei Chang and Kelora’s relationship is defined by an intense love that is marked by Gwei Chang’s mixed feelings of acute fear and desire, feelings heightened by the harsh circumstances of survival under racial capitalism and the threat of death. The rupture of this relationship produces abject and uncanny trauma that reverberates through the family line.

If we read Kelora as Gwei Chang and the Wong family’s racial shadow, we can more easily move towards viewing her spectrality as not essentially Indigenous, but rather a specter of colonialism. As Medak-Saltzman explains,

the ghosts that emerge from and haunt settler colonial contexts radiate from their roots in the moral, intellectual, and legal logics developed to legitimate, as necessity, the great violence of empire. Settler colonial societies are haunted by the need to keep these unpalatable truths and their human consequences hidden. (“Empire’s Haunted Logics” 16)

The multiple webs of secrets made more dense and complex in each generation of the Wong family arise as each individual spins out of control from a defensive need to protect him or herself from vulnerabilities caused by gendered, racial capitalism and heteropatriarchy. Yet, even as the family proceeds to accrue greater and greater degrees of wealth and privilege, their feelings of vulnerability do not abate, and in fact, grow more intense. It is, thus, not simply poverty the Wongs are fleeing, but instead, the pressures of precarity that money cannot alleviate and the collateral guilt over the damages wrought from perpetrating settler colonial violence. In the final section of this chapter, I will consider how the Wong family’s possessive investments in racialized capital and settler colonialism may be read as a warning for Asian Canadian studies.

POSSESSIVE INVESTMENTS IN *DISAPPEARING MOON CAFÉ*

I once thought it was funny that I could take my revenge on the old bitch and her turtle son. Another man's children to inherit their precious Wong name, all their money and power. I forgot that they were my children! I forgot that I didn't need to align them with male authority, as if they would be lesser human beings without it.

*Women, whose beauty and truth were bartered away, could only be mirrored, hand-held by husbands and men; they don't even like to think that they can claim their children to be totally their own. I was given the rare opportunity to claim them for myself, but I sold them, each and every one, for property and respectability. I tainted their innocence with fraud. Even more contemptible, in order to do that, I had to corrupt the one chance at true love I ever had. (Fong Mei, *Disappearing Moon Cafe* 189)*

A section near the end of *Disappearing Moon Café's* penultimate chapter is titled "Feeding the Dead." In it, Kae gathers together the knowledge keepers in the family who hold secrets about her Aunt Suzanne's suicide: Suzie herself; Kae's mom and Suzie's sister, Beatrice; Kae's nanny and Beatrice's lifelong friend, Chi; Suzie's half-brother and incestuous lover, Morgan; Beatrice and Suzie's mother, Fong Mei; and the Gwei Chang's wife, Mui Lan. As Kae's narrative spirals out of control and the family secrets begin to perilously unravel, Kae begins to ask dramatic and hyperbolic questions in a stream-of-consciousness, addressing her audience with excited sarcasm: "Let's take an opinion poll: the many and varied ways to destroy love! Oh, come on! We should all be very good at it. It'd be fun!" The first answer goes to Suzie, who simply states, "Money" (185).

Mother of the dead girl, and a ghost herself, Fong Mei gets the last word in the scrum. Her reflections are disembodied, retrospective. By this point in the novel, she has been dead for twenty years and comes back to caution her future generations. Adding on to Suzie's answer, Fong Mei blames "money and power," for destroying love and ultimately destroying the family. But with the wisdom of greater self-reflexivity, and with the guilt of more intense culpability, Fong Mei widens the frame of her answer to include the structural violences of patriarchy and capital. Fong Mei's soliloquy calls out a system of patrilineal inheritance of identity and capital that turns people into property as the cause of the family's anguished messes. She also identifies her own role, investments, and mistakes in perpetuating these problematic cycles of possession.

George Lipsitz's concept of "possessive investments in whiteness" explains socio-economic and political structures that are "responsible for the racialized hierarchies of our society" (vii). Lipsitz's argument is specifically situated in the United States and addresses itself primarily to a black/white racial

binary, but the notion of possessive investment is nonetheless useful. As Lipsitz notes, “*investment* denotes time [and energy] spent on a given end” and “*possessive* . . . connect[s] attitudes to interests” (vii-viii). Lipsitz is careful to avoid conflating possessive investments in whiteness with white essentialism. In other words, there is nothing essentially white about logics of possessiveness. However, possessive investments in whiteness, as Lipsitz explains, describe a “system for protecting the privileges of whites” that buttresses and sustains white supremacy (viii). Aileen Morten-Robinson builds upon Lipsitz’s concept with great nuance in her work on white possessiveness that makes a key intervention by tying it not only to racial hierarchy, but also to settler colonialism and patriarchy. As Morten Robinson writes,

For Indigenous people, white possession is not unmarked, unnamed, or invisible; it is hypervisible. . . . This is territory that has been marked by and through violence and race. Racism is thus inextricably tied to the theft and appropriation of Indigenous lands in the first world . . . The dehumanizing impulses of colonization are successfully acted upon because racisms in these countries are predicated on the logic of possession. (xiii)

Morton Robinson continues to state that “Patriarchal whiteness invests in property rights and is possessive and protective about asset accumulation and ownership” (67). Fong Mei’s lament over her own failures to break the cycle of possessive investment does not mention race or settler colonialism. Instead, she is most affected by and insularly focused on her own experience of patriarchal possessiveness within the Chinese Canadian Wong family. But if the novel’s preoccupation with incest tells us anything, it is to widen the scope of our analysis. Inserted into the context of racialized Canada, the patriarchal possessiveness Fong Mei laments and participates in is, in this case, one that is imbricated with white settler colonial possessive investment.

As Fong Mei progresses in the novel, she gains her power over her mother-in-law Mui Lan by eventually producing children through her illicit affair with Gwei Chang and Kelora’s son, Wong Ting An. But her children-as-property are not her only capital; Fong Mei reinforces her power through her business acumen and by contributing her time and effort to the prosperity of the Wong family’s businesses. She thus invests deeply in the family’s logics of possessiveness. The title of the novel, *Disappearing Moon Café*, refers to the restaurant at the heart of the family’s economic enterprises, and is the crown jewel signifying their success. Fong Mei herself eventually becomes independently wealthy through a career in real estate, but by the end of the novel she is a bitter and broken woman, trapped in a loveless marriage, with one daughter practically disowned and another dead, and all her dirty secrets revealed. The family’s intricate business alliances keep them yoked, even as the

secrets and lies protecting the family business destroy other tender ties, creating impossible intimacies. The Wong family's riches over time allow them the financial as well as cultural capital to move out of Chinatown and into Vancouver's tony west side. While possessive logics of capital accumulation to some degree solve their material struggles for survival, their increased wealth does not improve other conditions in their lives. This is made clear by Beatrice's story. As Lee writes: "[T]here's an expression that pertains to Beatrice: You can take the girl out of Chinatown, but you can't take Chinatown out of the girl" (164). The novel goes on to explain that:

Friends growing up in Chinatown were allies, necessary for survival; for those times they ventured out of 'their place,' and came back fractured. They nursed each other, offered each other protection; their comminuted humiliation not easily forgotten; their bonds against it sinewy and strong. (164-165)

Racism keeps the family and community insular and in need of mutual protection. Yet it also causes them to forsake other connections and limits their options when it comes to seeing the possibility of forming other alliances or nurturing intimacy. Investments in possessive logics result in the hoarding of information, resources, and capital and operate through mechanisms of control, fear, and violent domination.

As Kae works to unknot the affective tangles of family trauma that hold her back in her own life, she also begins to reckon with the ways that the family's possessive investments have trapped and controlled the women in previous generations. The birth of her baby Henry catalyzes Kae's need to resolve her own problems as well as those that plague the family tree. Left alone with her baby for the first time, Kae panics at her own inability to care for him. She arrives at the stark realization that she is a "coward" who has masked her fear "with ambition and diligence" (122). Kae's career path as "an investment research analyst" ironically reveals how little she time and effort she has put towards analyzing her own life's investments (122). She easily identifies the qualities that have supported her rise up the professional ladder: "Be the token, pregnant, ethnic woman; act cool, powdered, inhuman. I never lost my perspective in the business world. It was as two-dimensional as a computer print-out" (123). But she is vexed to connect her successful professional achievement and performance as an investment banker with her "private life" of troubled corporeal and emotional investments (123). Kae explains, "At home, I must work at unraveling knots—knots in my hair, knots in my stomach. Knots of guilt; knots of indecision" (123). It takes her time, and the effort of listening more closely to the stories of the women in her life, before she realizes that her job, as the "fourth generation" is to make something of the trauma, to enact "resolution," and heal

the story (210).

To get to this place, Kae must uncover and recover love across the generations of women in her family—a project made more challenging because of how deeply her foremothers have invested in the possessive logics of patrilineality and patrimony. As Lee depicts in *Disappearing Moon Café*, women's conditioning to accept and carry out the demands of patrimony leads to mutual entrapment and the perpetuation of abuse. Thus, Kae reflects on her grandmothers' anger towards one another as projections of anger they hold towards themselves and the conditions that seemingly entrap them:

How we turn on ourselves, squabbling desperately among ourselves about our common debasement? . . . And how willingly we fuel the white fire with which to scar other women. What choices did she have? Like so many hordes of women, didn't my grandmother consent to give away her own destiny? Who but women would do that? (63)

In re-examining her family's suppressed memories, Kae finally begins to make sense of the pattern of violence across relationships and across the generations, and thus comes to understand what has damaged the women in her family and their relationships—and what binds them back together. This knowledge comes to Kae not intellectually, but emotionally and physically: “An ache from the depths of my womb pulses through my body as I think back. Sadness washes over me from a deep, dark, secret pool” (63).

In bringing her grandmothers' abuses and destructive actions to light, Kae confronts the fragments of her family's pain and shame that they have long used as weapons among themselves. This is, for Kae too, a wrought and painful process of examining her own self-destructiveness. Yet, rather than turning on her ancestors and herself, Kae is able to find compassion for them and eventually a measure of self-compassion. As she reflects on the stories of her ancestors, Kae comes to view everyone with a greater softness and to see the vulnerability driving their actions. Kae's lover Hermia nudges Kae towards an understanding of the family trauma that looks to the wounds and losses of diaspora for a cause: “Perhaps, as Hermia suggested, they were ungrounded women, living with displaced chinamen, and everyone trapped by circumstances” (145). Drawing attention to the family's ungroundedness, Hermia's suggestion carries the backhanded hope that finding and building new attachments to different grounded normativities could perhaps be an answer for more ethical relationships. Kae, on the other hand, turns back to love and eros:

I prefer to romanticize them as a lineage of women with passion and fierceness in their veins. In each of their woman-hating worlds, each did what she could. If there is a simple truth beneath their survival stories, then it must be that women's lives, being what they are, are linked together. (145-146)

By turning towards her intergenerational bonds with other women in the family, Kae comes to acknowledge that it is love carried by women—persistently if imperfectly—across the generations, that holds the most force of all. As Fong Mei declares at the end of her soliloquy: “In the end, their impotent violence was nothing in the face of love” (190).

Bolstered by eros Kae eventually moves to reject the logic of possessive investments. After carrying her son and picking up the pieces of her family’s broken story, she turns down a lucrative job offer with an investment firm to move to Hong Kong to live with her lover Hermia and follow her creative dreams to become a writer. Kae’s move to dispossess herself of settler colonial subjectivity through a return to Hong Kong, which will itself face a post-colonial crisis after 1999, is an instance of “settler pack up” (Mack 287) that somewhat quickly resolves the novel with an image of hope endearingly captured in the name of Hermia’s “Healthy Woman” medical clinic in Kowloon (Lee 210). This reference to healthy women is blithely symbolic, considering how many women’s hurts contributed to Kae arriving triumphantly in this place.

In this way, Lee offers Asian Canadian studies a direction for movement away from possessive investments and towards healing and revisioning queer Asian Canadian love and family. This is a future that cannot, as Kae and Hermia’s exchange at the end of the novel illustrates, be written—*it must be lived* (216). Although this ending does not directly address the question of solidarity aligned with Indigenous sovereignty and resurgence, Lee writes explicitly in the direction of liberation, as Kae moves towards her own and other women’s freedom (210). Moreover, the novel offers us lessons in acknowledgement and reciprocity that inform Asian Canadian studies to live our solidarities with as much integrity as we would like to write them. Returning to the work of Medak-Saltzman, who addresses her argument to scholars who invoke indigeneity, but do so superficially, without serious commitment to and engagement with Indigenous lives, knowledges, realities, and concerns, I urge Asian Canadian studies to speak our commitments carefully and to examine and confront our possessive investments. Only in doing so may we unearth the specters of colonialism that haunt our field as well as our stories. I end the chapter with these words from Medak-Saltzman:

By working to dispel the power that the specters of colonialism wield, and interrogating the haunted logics of empire, we may succeed in rendering visible the multitude of ways that haunted knowledges about Indigenous peoples is embedded in archives, reinforced by educational systems, and—unless we take action—reproduced in our scholarship. (“Empire’s Haunted Logics” 30)

For Asian Canadian studies to live and enact ethical solidarities, it may be crucial to dispossess our own haunted logics and knowledges.

CHAPTER 3

A POLITICS OF MEETING: READING INTERSECTIONAL INDIGENOUS FEMINIST PRAXIS IN LEE MARACLE'S *SOJOURNERS AND SUNDogs*

In this chapter I trace acclaimed author Lee Maracle's particular commitment to feminism and her articulation of Indigenous feminist praxis through close readings of meetings in her novel and short story collection *Sojourners and Sundogs*. Maracle's feminist theorizing and storytelling are noteworthy for at least two reasons. First, as an Indigenous feminist who contests colonial hegemonies, Maracle situates her anti-imperialist, anti-racist feminist perspective transnationally, referencing examples, situations, events, ideas and discourses that cross, exceed, and resist national borders imposed by colonization. The affinities between Maracle's writing and discourses of black, Third World, women of color, and lesbian feminists, many of whom were writing and responding to the particularities of post-Civil Rights US identity politics, reveal the resonance and durability of these points of contact over time and differing contexts. Nevertheless, Maracle's cross-cultural Indigenous feminist praxis emerges out of, engages most intimately with, and intervenes most keenly in the distinct cultural, national, colonial, racial, gender, sexual, and class politics of Canada. Second, Maracle's passionate commitments to both anti-colonialism and feminism, as well as her steadfast expressions of solidarity to other racialized women, mark her not only as a leading Indigenous feminist but also as a major theorist of Indigenous intersectionality.¹ As it is, Maracle's

1. A critique of intersectionality is that it has been overly focused on the experiences of black women. Yet, as scholars argue, it is possible to "reinforce the importance of Black women's subjectivity that lies at the roots of intersectionality theory," while also expanding on

articulation of an Indigenous feminism that rallies first and foremost for love between Indigenous women and their families, communities, and all Indigenous people, while it recognizes and values differences among Indigenous women, and makes deliberate commitments to other oppressed women and women in general, is revolutionary. Yet Maracle's contribution stands out in part because feminism continues to be a "fraught" term between Indigenous women, within Indigenous communities, and for Indigenous Studies.

Meetings are a common trope across many genres of feminist writing, and have been important sites for representing the ambivalent politics of collectivity, especially for queer, Indigenous, Third World women, and women of color who have actively contested mainstream feminist assumptions about subjectivity, collectivity, and solidarity. Theorizing solidarity across multiple lines of difference² and intersectionality of differences in subject formation and

intersectionality to include other analytical axes of difference (Carbado et al.309). Also see Kathryn T. Gines, "Black Feminism and Intersectional Analysis"; and Cho et. al., "Toward a Field of Intersectionality Studies." Indeed, contrary to foreclosing identity politics, intersectionality opens up unforeseen possibilities for identification. Jennifer Chun, George Lipsitz, and Young Shin, for instance, write: "Progressive politics do not flow magically from aggrieved identities. On the contrary, it is important for progressive politics that people derive their identities from their politics rather than their politics from their identities" (qtd. in Cho et. al. 803).

It should be noted that Maracle does not explicitly employ the language of intersectionality. But her writings nevertheless demonstrate a commitment the kind of "political intersectionality" that Cho et. al. identify as critique that "reflects a dual concern for resisting the systemic forces that significantly shape the differential life chances of intersectionality's subjects and for re-shaping modes of resistance beyond allegedly universal, single-axis approaches" (800).

I argue Maracle's Indigenous feminism stands out precisely because of the ways that it performs intersectionality and especially in the ways that Maracle upholds the coalitionary potential between Indigenous women, black women, Third World women, and other women of color. Dhamoon cites the work of Indigenous intellectuals Patricia Monture and Verna Kirkness, as well as the recent scholarship of Andrea Smith, among her examples of what she calls "intersectional-type" analysis; (232, 234). By positing colonialism (and, more recently, ongoing settler colonialism) as an axis of oppression, Indigenous feminist intellectuals intervene significantly in the theorization of intersectionality.

2. The historically groundbreaking women of color anthology *This Bridge Called My Back*, edited by Gloria Anzaldúa and Cherrie Moraga, firmly articulates the desire and need for iterations of feminist solidarity that recognize (racial, class, sexual, and other) differences. The legacies of solidarity work by Indigenous women such as Lee Maracle, women of color such as those involved in *This Bridge Called My Back*, and black feminists, such as bell hooks and Audre Lorde, form the basis for ongoing scholarship on differential, decolonial, and transnational feminisms, while also informing recent directions in critical ethnic studies and comparative racialization. A by no means exhaustive list of such works might include M. Jacqui Alexander, *Pedagogies of Crossing*; Inderpal Grewal and Caren Kaplan, eds., *Scattered Hegemonies*; Grace K. Hong and Roderick A. Ferguson, eds., *Strange Affinities*; María Lugones, *Pilgrimages/Peregrinajes*; Chandra T. Mohanty, *Feminism Without Borders*; Chandra T. Mohanty, Ann Russo, and Lourdes Torres, eds.,

coalitional politics³ are among the defining and most enduring contributions of racialized feminist thinkers and activists. Meetings are sites for acknowledgement and reciprocity in which Indigenous women and women of colour negotiate identification, difference and alliance in their creative and activist practices. At the same time, meetings also unsettle solidarity politics,

Third World Women and the Politics of Feminism; and Chela Sandoval, *Methodology of the Oppressed*. Moreover, recent Indigenous studies scholars continue to posit and challenge radical coalition-building for decolonization and social justice through the lens of Indigenous feminism; see Jackie Lasky, "Indigenism, Anarchism, Feminism: An Emerging Framework for Exploring Post-Imperial Futures"; and Maile Arvin et. al. "Decolonizing Feminism: Challenging Connections Between Settler-Colonialism and Heteropatriarchy."

3. The term intersectionality, coined by critical race theorist Kimberlé Crenshaw, posits that identities are formed on "multiple grounds," such as race, gender, class, and sexuality, and that recognizing intersecting lines of subject formation is crucial to analyzing and overturning systems of oppression and domination (1245, 1242). Patricia Hill Collins, who acknowledges Crenshaw's first scholarly use of the term, adds that the knowledge derived from the lived experience of multiple oppressions has long existed in the "collective wisdom [and] specialized knowledge" of black women. Articulating the need for a black feminism that draws upon this "oppositional knowledge," Collins elaborates on intersectionality, stating that "intersecting oppressions of race, gender, and class foster [the] contradictions" that produce "internalized oppression" (11–12). In her definition, Collins emphasizes the importance of recognizing lines of difference and modes of differential power in subject formation: "Intersectionality refers to particular forms of intersecting oppressions, for example, intersections of race and gender, or of sexuality and nation. Intersectional paradigms remind us that oppression cannot be reduced to one fundamental type, and that oppressions work together in producing injustice" (18).

As a critical concept and an analytical approach, intersectionality has gained enormous traction as well as some detractors. Some critics argue that the term is outdated or imprecise, others problematize its originary focus on black women as too narrow, while still others suggest that intersectionality's application in wider contexts has depoliticized its potential for radical critique. An example of an essay critiquing intersectionality may be found in Jennifer Nash, "Re-thinking Intersectionality." For a succinct summary of alternate terminologies for intersectional analysis and an outline of critiques against intersectionality, see Rita Kaur Dhamoon, "Considerations on Mainstreaming Intersectionality." Barbara Thomlinson addresses some of the arguments leveled against intersectionality, in "To Tell the Truth and Not Get Trapped." Thomlinson's essay appears in one of the two special issues, both published in 2013, devoted to corraling some of the major directions in, commenting on the ranging applications of, and defining the contours of intersectionality research: Devon W. Carbado et. al., eds., "Intersectionality: Mapping the Movements of a Theory," special issue of *Du Bois Review*; and Sumi Cho, Kimberlé Crenshaw, and Leslie McCall, eds., "Toward a Field of Intersectionality Studies," special issue of *Signs*. While the editors of both special issues acknowledge the flexibility of intersectionality theory to adapt and transform across different interdisciplinary applications and geopolitical contexts, they join other scholars (such as Dhamoon and Thomlinson) who underscore and maintain intersectionality's significant potential for informing "insurgent" or "politicized" critique and for instigating radical coalitional politics. See Sirma Bilge, "Intersectionality Undone."

challenge participants to confront their own assumptions and bring organizers face-to-face with problematics of representation. This chapter asks, what can we learn about decolonial praxis from the history of meetings and friendship among Indigenous and Asian Canadian writers referenced in Maracle's *Sojourners and Sundogs*? I begin by unpacking the trope of "meetings" as sites for alliance building among Indigenous women and women of color writers and providing an overview of events and activities that document and demonstrate collaboration between Indigenous, queer, and women of color writers in Canada since the 1980s. Next I analyze various "meetings" in *Sojourners and Sundogs*, drawing specific attention to the value of meetings for characters' personal and political development as Indigenous feminists. Finally, I offer brief readings of friendships between Indigenous protagonists and Chinese Canadian characters in Maracle's stories, to suggest how "meeting as friends" creates a space for both Indigenous and Asian Canadian subjects to work through difference toward shared, albeit contingent, strategic goals. As Maracle's stories demonstrate, Indigenous women's experiences pose significant ethical questions about racialized subjectivity, feminist collectivity, activist practices, and the politics of alliance and collaboration that raise the stakes for ongoing social justice organizing across difference. Not only that—representations in *Sojourners and Sundogs* of Indigenous women's identification and conscious solidarity with other oppressed and minoritized peoples, especially racialized women, also suggest a broader context of social justice struggle to potentially inspire, support, and animate Indigenous feminism.

The questions Maracle raises in *Sojourners and Sundogs* are particularly prescient, and the insights she offers particularly urgent, in this critical moment for guiding the direction of Indigenous-settler relations in Canada. The Idle No More movement, initiated in November 2012 and increasing in momentum through the winter of 2012–13, sparked attention across Canada surrounding issues of Indigenous sovereignty, environmental protection, and political activism. Substantial interest, support, and participation of non-Indigenous Canadians in the Idle No More movement also stimulated dialogue around Indigenous-settler relations. As scholars, artists, and activists have noted, neither Indigenous political activism nor expressions of solidarity are new to the Canadian context.⁴ But as a recent generation of First Nations intellectuals and

4. For example, Coulthard contextualizes Idle No More within a long history of protest and direct action by Indigenous communities against ongoing colonization of Indigenous lands; see Coulthard, "#IdleNoMore in Historical Context." The anthology *Cultivating Canada*, edited by Dewar et. al. contains work by scholars, artists, and cultural activists from Indigenous and non-British or French settler backgrounds, addressing questions of Indigenous-settler relations, cultural diversity, and reconciliation.

activists have been collaborating to develop ideas around Indigenous resurgence that invite participation and support from non-Indigenous Canadians, settlers interested in working in solidarity with Indigenous peoples toward realizing these political goals also find themselves confronted by their own histories, social positions, and political struggles.⁵ As in the past, many of the racialized and Indigenous women's voices initiating these conversations have situated themselves (sometimes deliberately, sometimes grudgingly) outside the academy.⁶ Yet the content of these conversations and the continuities among them, I argue, not only deserve academic attention but also urge (if not issue a direct challenge for) scholarly participation.⁷ In this moment where radical politics are pitched toward defining, articulating, and imagining forms of decolonial liberation, the efforts of previous generations of Indigenous women and women of color intellectuals, artists, and activists to create coalitional common grounds through the intersections (and at times the clashes) of their common anti-imperialist, anti-classist, anti-racist, feminist politics carry valuable lessons. Cho et. al., citing the work of Anna Carastathis, point out that intersectionality's insurgent political intervention comes from "the idea of sifting through difference and privilege vis-à-vis the dynamics involved in moments that cross several divides . . . in the process of arriving at a political higher ground, though not one devoid of conflict" (802).

5. Some of this work has coalesced around the prophetic image of lighting the Eighth Fire, which appears in the Anishinaabe Seven Fires Prophecy. While I do not possess the social position nor authority to explain the contents of the prophecy, general information is readily available. For example, Leanne Simpson gives an overview of the prophecy in an episode of the CBC documentary *8th Fire* (Walker). The four-part series is one of several examples that leverage an Eighth Fire discourse to invoke public conversation around relations between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people. The television series sought to educate a broad viewing audience about Indigenous issues in Canada, while directly inviting non-Indigenous audience members to engage in the discussion. Other examples include: *Lighting the Eighth Fire*, ed. L. Simpson, which contains a broad selection of essays by Indigenous scholars on Indigenous sovereignty and resurgence; and "Building the 8th Fire: Deepening the Discussion about Indigenous-Non-Indigenous Relations in Canada," a panel discussion held in May 2012, hosted by a loose collective of scholars and activists around Vancouver, BC.

6. Two recent examples: Promo Tagore, ed., *In Our Voices*; and Jessica Yee, ed., *Feminism for Real*.

7. I'm reminded of Lorde's provocation that "the failure of the academic feminists to recognize difference as a crucial strength is a failure to reach beyond the first patriarchal lesson" (112).

MEETINGS AS SITES FOR RECIPROCAL ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS OF DIFFERENCE

Sojourners and Sundogs is a Press Gang Publishers' reprint of Lee Maracle's novel *Sundogs* (1992) and her short story collection *Sojourner's Truth and Other Stories* (1990). The collection joins two formerly distinct works into a single book that thematically articulates Maracle's developing vision of Indigenous feminist praxis located in an awareness of other, simultaneously occurring decolonial and liberation struggles. While it is somewhat unusual to package a novel together with short stories, the result in this case draws attention to resonances between the works. The story of Marianne's coming-to-consciousness as an Indigenous feminist in *Sundogs* illuminates and enhances themes and motifs throughout *Sojourner's Truth and Other Stories*, including the lives and experiences of Indigenous women, forms and challenges of political work, and developing and maintaining complex and multi-faceted relationships across differences and conflict. In the preface that accompanies the reprinted edition, Maracle remarks on the two works' dissimilarity in genre and writing process, noting that while composing the short story collection was a laborious process that took many years, the novel *Sundogs* came out relatively easily in a concentrated bout of writing. Maracle also comments that while short stories accord with traditional Salish storytelling methods, the novel is a recent genre with no precisely analogous Salish form (Maracle, *Sojourners* 13). While these factors appear to make *Sojourners and Sundogs* an unlikely fit, it is the inter-animation of different forms and subjects that underscores resonances and produces new insights between the two. As Maracle observes, "Binding *Sojourner's* to *Sundogs* is like putting an old grandma and her grandchild together in a photograph, and it's so fitting" (13). Maracle's analogy reinforces a core theme that recurs throughout the novel and stories: meetings between women and their results.⁸

The complicated politics of collective action and articulation across differences are often represented through images of meetings, whether these be of the kitchen table and living room variety or public meetings like the conference and town hall. The emergence of Third World and women of colour feminisms in the 1960s and 1970s can, perhaps, be summarily characterized by moments like the one described by Menominee (Mamaceqtaw) writer Chrystos in her poem "Maybe We Shouldn't Meet if There Aren't Any Third World Women Here." In the poem, Chrystos describes a sense of shared consciousness among Indigenous, Third World, and women of color feminists, and a sense of

8. Maracle explains that according to Salish tradition, stories themselves are "gender-specific," and she identifies her stories as "women-centered stories" (*Sojourners* 14).

shared alienation from middle-class white feminists, who at once fetishize difference and in the same breath willfully repress and marginalize difference (13).⁹ Chrystos directs her critique at white feminists by addressing them with the second-person pronoun “you”; at the same time, she positions the speaker of the poem in solidarity with a diverse group of Third World women using the first-person plural “we.” Reversing the gaze of white feminists and thus calling out the privilege of possessing a gaze that has the power to assign presence and absence, Chrystos confronts white feminists’ denial of difference: “You’re the ones standing three/feet away from a Black woman saying/There are no Third World women here” (emphasis in original). In the writings of Indigenous women and women of color, the supposedly safe space carved out by the women’s movement has been represented as an anxious space of hyper-invisibility or hyper-visibility. Chrystos captures the sense of shared alienation and frustration experienced by Third World women whose presence is rendered invisible by white feminists’ selective gazes; the speaker of “Maybe We Shouldn’t Meet” opens the poem by describing her own “eyes flee[ing]/to the other faces, where [her] rage desperation fear pain ricochet/a thin red scream.” In contrast, hypervisibility of difference produces equally alienating feelings of isolation and tokenism.¹⁰

Meetings therefore appear as an important literary trope for queer, Indigenous, and women of color writers to represent ambivalent emotions (including but not limited to camaraderie, shock, anger, recognition, relief, pain, fear, joy, empowerment, and shame) that arise from the day-to-day business of collaborative action. The image of the “feminist meeting space” recurs especially

9. It should be noted that the notion of an intractable, monolithic “white feminism” is itself an oversimplistic generalization in much the same way as constructs such as “Indigenous women” and “Asian Canadian women” ignore the nuanced differences among women within such categories. In this case, and throughout my dissertation, such terms and categories may be read as historically situated deployments of “strategic essentialisms.” While Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak’s “strategic essentialism” and her definition of it as “a strategic use of positivist essentialism in a scrupulously visible political interest” (205) have been much debated and discussed since the term first appeared in 1988, it remains relevant especially when considering the emergent feminist discourses discussed in this chapter that precisely struggle to work through fundamentally contradictory and irreconcilable identity politics.

10. Cherrie Moraga narrates an example, describing the experience of co-editor Gloria Anzaldúa, who, as the lone woman of color attending a woman’s retreat in 1979 on scholarship, felt that “the management and some of the staff made her feel like an outsider, the poor relative, the token woman of colour . . . all because she was not white nor had she paid the \$150 fee the retreat organizers had set for the workshop” (Moraga and Anzaldúa xxiii). The theme of visibility and invisibility can also be read in Moraga’s reflections upon her own racial and sexual passing while riding as a subway passenger, an experience uncomfortably marked by her consciousness of hidden privileges, oppressions, and solidarities (Moraga and Anzaldúa xiii–iv).

in earlier writings by Indigenous women and women of color to both contest and assert their presence within feminism.¹¹ The ambivalence that marks how Indigenous women and women of color experience feminism demonstrates that racial, gender, and other identifications do not operate in opposition or exclusion to each other. Moreover, women acting and articulating across multiple differences often face conflict with each other—and sometimes within themselves. As Gloria Anzaldúa and others argue in the groundbreaking women of color anthology *This Bridge Called My Back*, alliance building creates mixed emotions and loyalties that can further fragment and isolate the individual. In the essay “La Prieta,” Anzaldúa describes herself as “Gloria, the facilitator, Gloria the mediator,” whose multiple “allegiances” leave her asking, “Who am I?” (205). While many of the writings in the first half of *This Bridge* are directed toward articulating the barriers that women of color encounter in meetings with white feminists, many of the writings in the second half of the anthology address questions within women of color feminism of occupying multiple, intersecting positionalities and of facing each other from these divergent positions: of being lesbian and black; queer and Asian; of being mixed-raced with mixed politics; of identifying as Chicana but passing for and being identified as white; of being a racialized member of the working poor, and so on. Despite the tense and sometimes discomfiting intra- and inter-personal conflicts involved in meeting across differences, time and again, women of color writers acknowledge the power of negotiating through and across complex subjectivities.¹² Moraga, for instance, is emphatic and proud when she reflects on arriving at the hard-won relationship of “sisterhood” with Barbara Smith:

11. The image comes up repeatedly in the stories, poems, and reflective writings in *This Bridge Call My Back*, for instance. Moraga writes, “Another meeting. Again walking into a room filled with white women, a splattering of women of color around the room. The issue on the table, Racism. The dread and terror in the room lay like a thick immovable paste above all our shoulders, white and colored alike. We, Third World women in the room, thinking back to square one, again” (Moraga and Anzaldua xv); doris davenport writes, “When we attend a meeting or gathering of [white feminists], we are seen in only one of two limited ways: as being white-washed and therefore sharing all their values, priorities, and goals, etc.; or, if we (even accidentally) mention something particular to the experience of black wimmin, we are seen as threatening, hostile, and subversive to their interests” (86).

12. For example, Mirtha Quintales, a Cuban immigrant and self-identified “latina lesbian feminist,” shares an anecdote about putting together a panel on “racial and ethnic minority lesbians” with two other women. “And I feel the tension building,” she writes, observing the conflicts between her friend, a Greek feminist, and the other panelist, a black woman whose “commitments,” Quintales writes, “are understandably with Third World women, women of color, [which leaves Quintales] quite uncomfortably in the middle” (150–51). Yet, as Lorde famously writes, “Difference is that raw and powerful connection from which our personal power is forged” (112).

I earned this with Barbara. It is not a given between us—Chicana and Black—to come to see each other as sisters. This is not a given. I keep wanting to repeat over and over and over again, the pain and shock of difference, the joy of commonness, the exhilaration of meeting through incredible odds against it. (Moraga and Anzaldúa xiv)

Importantly, as Moraga suggests, the coalitionary potential sparked through such meetings is not one defined by adherence to identity politics (not a sisterhood forged from “Chicana [or] Black”) but, rather, one contingently formed at points of intersectional convergence.

Likewise, Barbara Noda describes a meeting of a group of women that is capped off with a similar sense of tempestuous victory: “Sharon’s kitchen in Watsonville was the center of a different kind of activity. . . . As the evening wound down we stormed out together—third world sisters” (138). The “stormy” energy of Third World sisterhood captured in Noda’s image accords with bell hooks’s notions of sisterhood and solidarity. hooks delineates her theory on the ethical bases for solidarity, rejecting solidarity based on “common oppression” or “victimization” in favor of sisterhood based on “shared strengths and resources” (294-5).¹³ She notes that the failure to acknowledge intersectional differences of race and class is a major barrier to feminist solidarity and argues that women need to acknowledge and confront “ideological disagreements” and divisions among themselves (312). As hooks contends, “Women do not need to eradicate difference to feel solidarity” (314) Noda underscores the point in her description of the kitchen table gathering at Sharon’s house:

We assembled in the evening: Sharon; Sharon’s zealous sister who would soon be led to Christianity; a black lesbian who lived in a cottage behind Sharon’s house who as an unforgivable romantic and who probably led a past life as an opera singer; a Chicana, self-named after a revolutionary, struggling to earn a doctorate in the University of California’s ethereal mountaintop program called “History of Consciousness”; and myself. (138)

As we see in Noda’s attempt to summarize the gathering of “third world sisters” in Sharon’s kitchen, each individual comes with her own set of descriptors, which are fluid, specific and context-heavy. Meeting these differential subjectivities in a collective that can be coherently imagined and identified as “third world sisterhood” seems uneasy and provisional. This is apparent in the way the list itself is constructed, not in parallel grammatical structure, but proceeding somewhat randomly, using a hypotactic, additive formula. This assembly of women, identified not by their similarities or even their differences,

13. In “Sisterhood: Political Solidarity Between Women,” hooks contextualizes the concept of “sisterhood” that emerges out of African American history and black feminism, while accounting for conflict, difference, and unequal power and privilege within collectivities of sisterhood.

but instead by their eccentric particularities, suggests that a tidy and uniform image of solidarity is not necessarily an attainable or desirable ideal.

Noda's evocation of the kitchen table pays homage to a prominent symbol for a generation of racialized women cultural activists and creative artists.¹⁴ The kitchen table repeatedly appears in Maracle's writing, for example, as a symbol for loving intimacy, the kind of space needed to nurture creativity. For example, in *I Am Woman*, Maracle presents an almost utopian vision of the kitchen table:

I want to look across the table in my own kitchen and see, in the brown eyes of the man who shares my life, the beauty of my own reflection. More. I want to look across my kitchen table at the women of colour who share my life and see the genius of their minds, uncluttered by white opinion. I want to sit with my grown daughters and experience the wonderment of our mutual affection. I want us to set the standard for judging our brilliance, our beauty and our passions.
(17)

Here, the intimacy of the kitchen table transforms and expands from a scene of heteronormative domesticity into an image of self-love and acceptance, which allows the author to imagine an idealized vision of women of color solidarity, and then of mutual intergenerational respect and love between Indigenous women. Maracle concludes by transforming the kitchen table into a political space, stating the aspiration for self-determination: "I want us to set the standard for judging our brilliance, our beauty and our passions." This move is not entirely surprising, given the kitchen table's potency for symbolizing self-representation, grassroots decision making, and empowerment through its association with the historically influential Kitchen Table Women of Color Press,

14. The kitchen table remains a compelling image for feminists in a more general sense. For example, a small group of feminists in Regina, SK, has been organizing under the name Kitchen Table Collective (KTC) in order "to speak to particular political issues and pursue certain initiatives." Interestingly, their first project was the 2002 Aboriginal Feminism Symposium that led to the essay collection *Making Space for Indigenous Feminism*. As *Making Space* editor and KTC member Joyce Green explains: "We didn't come together explicitly to act on racism issues, but we nevertheless did (and do) attend to racism and colonialism because that analysis, along with other elements of critical feminist theory, is central to our feminist praxis" (17 Jul 2015).

Furthermore, fellow KTC member Darlene Juschka notes that KTC's goal is "empowering all women" (17 Jul 2015). Green states: "We simply used the name to describe what we were—compañeras and friends who would meet around each other's kitchen tables, to talk about the issues that animated us and to discuss how best to address them" (26 Jun 2015) Green explains that "the focus on Indigenous feminism arose because of my particular interest—other KTC members then involved were willing to support me" and KTC members assisted throughout the conference in solidarity with Indigenous organizers and attendees. Green mentioned that the KTC has been and continues to be drawn together through bonds of "affinity" and "friendship," themes that, I argue, notably resonate in the writings of Indigenous and women of color writers (26 Jun 2015).

whose book list included *Home Girls: A Black Feminist Anthology* (Smith) and the second edition of *This Bridge Called My Back*. Founded in 1981 by Barbara Smith and a group of black women writers, Kitchen Table Press, over the course of its lifetime as a publisher, “literally transformed the conversation on racism, sexism, and homophobia” (J. Grant 1024).¹⁵ Reflecting on the development of Kitchen Table Press, Barbara Smith points out the revolutionary decision by the original group of organizers who set an intentional mandate to publish all women of color:

This was one of our bravest steps; most people of color have chosen to work in their separate groups when they do media or other projects. We were saying that as women, feminists, and lesbians of color we had experiences and work to do in common, although we also had our differences. (“A Press of Our Own”11)

Here, Smith gives a nod to Kitchen Table’s commitment to fostering intersectional coalitions between women writers of colour. Moreover, by publishing the work of women of color writers, Kitchen Table Press aimed to educate and engage the broader public in more nuanced intersectional critique. As Smith writes, “The history and everyday reality of women of color have been shaped at least as much by racism as by sexism, and racism affects all women, children, and men of color of every age, sexual orientation, and economic status” (“A Press of Our Own” 12). The name of the press, as Smith goes on to explain, was chosen not only because of the kitchen table’s resonance as a place where women congregate but also because organizers wanted to “convey the fact that we are a kitchen table, grassroots operation” (11). Throughout her brief history of the press, Smith emphasizes the motivation behind Kitchen Table as recognizing and responding to the needs of women of color to be in control of self-representation and the means of production. In Smith’s words, Kitchen Table Press proceeded from a commitment to “autonomy” for “multiply disenfranchised women of color” (34).¹⁶

Muskogee (Mvskoke) author Joy Harjo alludes to Maracle’s actual kitchen table as a place where creative acts happen. In the foreword to *Sojourners and Sundogs*. Harjo writes:

I cannot think of Lee Maracle without remembering the kitchen in her flat where we gathered some years ago after a reading by indigenous peoples at an international conference in Vancouver. There was hot coffee, warm fresh-baked

15. Grant’s essay narrates the attempt by the Women’s Center at the Union Institute to sustain the operations of Kitchen Table Press as Smith was transitioning out of her role as the main publisher. Kitchen Table Press ceased operations by the late-1990s, a sign of the impending crisis in book publishing and the troubled times facing non-mainstream presses.

16. For an analysis of the political and cultural impacts of Kitchen Table Press’s “by and for women of color” mandate, see Simone Murray, “Books of Integrity.”

bannock, a table around which we sat, a group of native writers gathered with the children and the neighbours, sharing. (9)

The image evokes a loose gathering of people in the intimacy of Maracle's kitchen which, importantly, Harjo depicts as a transnational, creative, intergenerational meeting space. Maracle's kitchen comes up again in the introduction to Joy Harjo and Gloria Bird's anthology *Reinventing the Enemy's Language*. Harjo and Bird's introduction, itself conceived to embody an intimate conversation between the editors and their collaborators and contributors with a seat for readers to listen in on the "lively discussion of native women meeting around a kitchen table," once again references a meeting of Indigenous women writers around Maracle's table: "It was here the anthology was born" (19). Harjo and Bird's anthology, which includes contributions from Indigenous women across North America focusing on Canada and the United States, signifies generative transnational collaborations between Indigenous writers of different backgrounds and cultural nationalist affiliations. As Harjo and Bird comment, the figurative kitchen table allows for this transnational crossing: "We wished the collection to be as solid as a kitchen table and imagined creating that kind of space within the pages of a book, *a place where we could speak intimately across the world to each other*" (21). Maracle, who both contributes to the anthology and is represented as a key figure in its inception, therefore features prominently within the transnational community of "Native North American" women writers interpellated by Harjo and Bird through the collection.

Significantly, Maracle comments on the intimacy so crucial to inspiring and supporting each other's creative acts, an intimacy often referenced in women's writing, characterizing it as one wrought out of loving difference, not out of taking commonality for granted. For instance, on the topic of differences amongst allies, Maracle writes, "disagreement makes the talk around our kitchen table the more interesting" ("Moving Over" 10). Maracle's reflections on difference and disagreement among feminists recall bell hooks's statement on the false opposition of difference and solidarity. "Discord," Maracle observes, is a necessary part of working in alliance, but how people work through conflicts "can be empowering or disempowering," depending on how attentive they are to their relationships and relative power and privilege" ("Moving Over" 10). In "Moving Over," Maracle situates her feminist stance as "a Native Canadian woman" within the context of an "international Women's Movement," which she argues "is a woman of color movement" (9; 11). The essay, addressed to the mostly white organizers of the Third International Feminist Book Fair held in Montreal in 1988, in part discusses an incident at the Book Fair in which Maracle notably asked Anglo-Canadian lesbian author of the best-selling book *Daughters*

of *Copperwoman*, Anne Cameron, to “move over” for Indigenous authors, and in part discusses the decision by the Congress of Black Women of Concordia University to boycott the book fair due to perceived exclusionary and racist organizing practices of the event planners (9; 11).¹⁷ Throughout the essay Maracle aligns herself and states her position in relation to Third World women and women of color in an international context, communities and groups of black, white, Native, and Asian women across Canada and the United States and individual feminist writers and allies she identifies by name. Through her discussion of their shared political commitments and in her forceful yet affectionate responses to their points of conflict, Maracle performs a deft intersectional analysis of power relations while suggesting ways of acting together in coalition.

As this example reveals, even while Maracle’s feminist praxis engages across national, racial, and sexual divides, her writings also address themselves to localized contexts, situations, and people. In other words, while Maracle’s work is much animated by discourses of transnational and international women of color activism, her stories themselves shed light on gendered colonial and racial formations particular to the cultural politics of Canada and often even more localized group politics. For example, Maracle’s story “Eunice” not only claims the space of the kitchen as a differential feminist space for fostering women’s creativity and intellect, but it also reflects the nuances of Indigenous, racialized settler, and white women writers’ relationships in Canada. Maracle alludes in her stories to the generative value of community for writers. For instance, in the opening paragraph to “Eunice,” Maracle identifies the need for a specific kind of space “for women writers, Native or otherwise, to gather together . . . [to] ignite their imaginations and help them along with their next book” (262). Returning to a familiar image, Maracle describes this ideal creative space as a “coffee house with a kitchen table atmosphere to suit women writers’ intellectual needs” (262). The kitchen, as Maracle describes here, is not just a cozy cradle of feminine nurturing and domestic labor, but it is also an energizing space of caffeine, fire, and creative women working; it is a space where the next book gets written.¹⁸

In “Eunice” Maracle depicts a meeting of women writers to plan an hour of radio programming for International Women’s Day. In the story the narrator

17. The bestselling title in Press Gang Publishers’ book list with over 200,000 copies sold, Cameron’s *Daughters of Copperwoman*, a retelling of Northwest Coast Native women’s stories, sparked controversy over cultural appropriation, though Cameron maintains that she received permission and encouragement from those who shared stories with her to publish them. See “Interview with Anne Cameron” (ABC BookWorld).

18. But neither does it preclude or discount the potential power of nurturing and domesticity.

arrives at the gathering at Eunice's house, and the group is already immersed in informal discussion: "The conversation was rolling around a familiar ache in my heart—the gnawing need for a women's and third world writers' hang out. Some place kitcheny and sober enough for us to gather around and talk about works in progress" (263). The narrator, an Indigenous writer who shares many of the same biographical and personality traits as Maracle, and who, others have argued, appears as a proxy for the author's autobiographical point of view,¹⁹ goes on to reveal an additional problem for minority writers: although these writers need and crave connection, the work required to develop and sustain productive and meaningful relationships in collectivity is exhausting. As the story progresses, the comforting image of the kitchen gets replaced with a more complex image, as a more developed picture of the relationships and interactions between the women reveals itself. When one woman asks why women writers insist on the "agony" of solitude when they can gather so much sustenance from meeting with one another, the narrator responds in her own head: "Because women are still islands" (263). Maracle's vision of feminist collectivity thus acknowledges the differences between women that isolate women from each other, yet her vision also encourages women not to treat their differences as barriers.

Throughout the meeting, the narrator notices small instances of conflict and discord. After an awkward aside in the conversation between the narrator and a former editor over a previously rejected short story, Eunice, the agoraphobic white woman who is hosting the gathering in her home, breaks the silence by abruptly asking the narrator, "You're Native Indian, aren't you?" (268). The narrator describes her gut reaction to the question, a mixture of wariness and trepidation, but as Eunice continues to speak candidly from her own position, becoming aware of having crossed an unspoken line of civility, the narrator relaxes a bit and finds herself empathizing with Eunice. Eunice, in turn, begins to function as a foil who represents the narrator's own mixed feelings over connection with other women writers, especially after one of the women asks a question that makes Eunice defensive about her agoraphobia. It becomes apparent that any issue, no matter how serious or trifling, no matter how obvious or subtle, can be a landmine, and the women present navigate the risky

19. Susie O'Brien identifies "Eunice" as an "overtly autobiographical" piece (93). The story clearly references autobiographical details, for example, references to prominent Asian Canadian writers SKY Lee and Jamila Ismail, whom Maracle mentioned by first name. Maracle's slightly opaque references to writers and cultural institutions also suggest a style of writing that draws readers' attention to their own insider/outsider positioning in relation to the text, a point that O'Brien takes up specifically with respect to white readers in her essay. Moreover, Maracle's approach to writing that draws attention to the colonial legacies embedded in Western discourse rejects strict boundaries between categories of fiction and nonfiction.

space of meeting at times cautiously and at times breezily. As misunderstandings and clarifications add up through the course of the conversation, it becomes apparent that no assumptions are safe, and the women have no option but to face each other from their own positions and walk through matters as they come up. As Susie O'Brien argues, the rough terrain of conversation between the women eventually supplants the originally stated purpose of the meeting, becoming "the significant action in the story" (94). As O'Brien explains, the meeting's official agenda "is continually compromised by the difficult task of creating an atmosphere of tolerance in which to frame their discussion. Though such an atmosphere is ultimately achieved, it is both precarious and provisional" (94). This precariousness—especially when navigating landmines of difference and conflict—is necessary for developing a rigorously politicized feminist consciousness that includes, substantially engages, and empowers participants. As hooks writes, "If women always seek to avoid confrontation, to always be 'safe,' we may never experience any revolutionary change, any transformation, individually or collectively" (313).

STAYING IN THE TENDER PLACE OF CONFLICT: MARACLE'S PERSISTENT INTERSECTIONAL CREATIVE ORGANIZING

"She [Maracle] veers straight for the most tender place of the conflict and stays there"
(Joy Harjo, Foreword to *Sojourners and Sundogs* 9)

The collectively produced radio program that is the premise for gathering in Maracle's "Eunice" is, furthermore, an example of the type of relatively ephemeral women's cultural organizing that has been historically difficult to track, but which is invaluable to acknowledge in order to proceed thoughtfully and concretely with current decolonial alliance-building practices and actions. As Rita Wong and Jo-Anne Lee explain in the introduction to a special issue of *West Coast Line* that attempts to document some key moments in the intergenerational history of minority women's activism on the West coast of Canada, because much of the work and experience of these women has remained unrecorded, it is at risk of being "lost in time" (5). Taken together, the interviews, essays, poems, reflections, and images curated by Wong and Lee in "Active Geographies: Women and Struggles on the Left Coast" document some key interventions led and animated by women from different racial, class, and cultural backgrounds whose commitments to social justice are located in notions of community deeply tied to place, history, and family. Lee and Wong note the

challenges for capturing this particular type of history: “In the throes of action, there is often little time to record our own voice, from our own memories, the little and large lessons learned” (5). These lessons, particularly the ones wrought from collaborative work between Indigenous women and their allies, are crucial at this time when scholarly work has recently been turning toward increasing engagement with Indigenous issues and perspectives, Indigenous intellectuals and activists find themselves revisiting questions surrounding Indigenous feminism, and settlers are provoked to interrogate their complicity, responsibilities, and political priorities with respect to the continual colonization of Indigenous peoples and lands.²⁰

Over the years Maracle’s formal and informal affiliations with publications, organizations, individuals, and events that advance a variety of Indigenous, feminist, anti-racist, and leftist political causes have persistently upheld the insights about intersectional cultural activism that she develops in her writing. For instance, the majority of Maracle’s published works have issued from two presses: the First Nations press Theytus Books, which operates in partnership with the En’owkin cultural and educational center, and Press Gang publishers, a leftist, women’s, activist publishing collective that operated from 1974 to 2002.²¹ In 1988 Maracle was a featured panelist at the Telling It conference, organized by Daphne Marlatt, who was then serving as Ruth Wynn Woodward Chair of Women’s Studies at Simon Fraser University.²² Organizers

20. For instance, I argue that this form of historical and praxical analysis of the work and experiences of feminist activist-artist-intellectuals who have organized across intersectional differences supplements recent scholarly work that challenges and critiques anti-racism theory. See, for example, Lawrence and Dua.

21. Maracle helped to found the En’owkin International School of Writing in the 1980s. Her first book, Bobbi Lee, *Indian Rebel* was written in collaboration with, and originally published by, the Liberation Support Movement, a transnational (Canada-US) Marxist group that supported anti-imperialism and Third World liberation movements. Press Gang Publishers was a notable feminist press that “consciously adopted an anti-racist editorial policy” in the late 1980s and began actively pursuing the publication of Indigenous women and women of color. See Barbara Kuhne, “Becoming Visible: A Brief Profile of Press Gang Publishers.” Nancy Pollack, a former member of the Press Gang Publishers Feminist Collective, and Rita Wong, whose first book of poetry, *Monkeypuzzle*, was published by Press Gang, both corroborated Press Gang’s active engagement with Indigenous and women of color writers and the importance of Press Gang for racialized women writers.

22. While it is beyond the scope of this chapter to provide a detailed analysis of the Telling It conference and book, more work is warranted that considers the legacies of this groundbreaking conference on shaping feminist praxis in the Canadian context. In the second chapter of her dissertation that posits a transnational feminist theory for reading Canadian women’s writing, Andrea Beverley lays out a valuable summary and analysis of some practical and theoretical contexts surrounding the conference. See “Telling It and the Politics of Difference,” in *Grounds for*

envisioned the conference as a platform to feature critical and creative works by Indigenous, Asian Canadian, and lesbian women writers, or as Marlatt describes in the introduction to the book that followed the conference, “the three largest groups of marginalized women in British Columbia” (Marlatt 12). Additionally, Marlatt explains that although the conference was being put on through an institutional setting, the goal at the outset was for it to be a “community-focused conference, or rather communities—(in the plural)—focused” that would clear some “space for dialogue” and to “provoke [long overdue] discussion” (12).

Marlatt locates the Telling It conference within a historical moment of concentrated and at times contentious women’s cultural organizing in Canada that began with the 1983 Women and Words/Les femmes et les mots conference in Vancouver, BC, organized by self-identified lesbian writer and critic Betsy Warland. Marlatt would later invite Warland to join her, Maracle, and SKY Lee in forming the Telling It Book Collective in order to co-edit the conference proceedings. According to Marlatt, the 1983 Women and Words “was the first women’s conference in Canada where racism was openly addressed,” and as nationwide women’s literary events continued to follow off the momentum of Women and Words, race arose again and again as a flash point (11). These events and the tensions around race that reflected form part of the background for Maracle’s public statement in 1988 for Anne Cameron to “move over.”²³ Maracle’s comments for a time placed her centrally within a public debate about race, cultural appropriation, and censorship that Marlatt also records as part of the immediate context for the Telling It conference.

As Marlatt explains, the intervening years between the Women and Words and Telling It conferences marked a significant shift in the direction of discourse within Canadian literary feminism, one of “painful” reckonings with differences, exclusions, access, power, and representation (16). The conference itself, while recording moments of excitement and appreciation among participants, also raised controversy and brought participants face to face with uncomfortable questions, ongoing conflicts, and even a few unbridgeable gaps. Like the meeting in “Eunice,” the Telling It conference confronted women writers in attendance with continual landmines in the form of the irreducible differences between them—only the conference involved a much larger number of women and the conversation was public. Panelists at the conference

Telling It.

23. It should be noted that while Maracle served as the microphone for these sentiments, she was acting as a representative for “a group of Native writers” at the Book Fair (see Maracle, “Moving Over” 10). Moreover, in voicing these objections, Maracle joined other Indigenous writers, notably Lenore Keeshig-Tobias, who at the time were speaking out against the appropriation of First Nations stories by non Indigenous writers.

repeatedly acknowledged the risks involved in coming together to initiate conversation around language and identity. Okanagan writer Jeannette Armstrong, for example, spoke about language and communication as “dangerous territory” and stressed the importance of taking responsibility for one’s writing and speech (Telling It Book Collective 28). On the same panel, Betsy Warland spoke about the writer’s relationship to her work and identity, noting that women’s judgments of one another inhibit creative experimentation in both writing and identity formation: “What all this is about is fear. Fear blurs our vision. When we are afraid, we cannot perceive the specifics of difference. We can only perceive our fear” (Telling It Book Collective 35).

The very first panel of the Telling It conference, of which Armstrong, Warland, and Maracle were a part, produced perhaps the most confrontational moment at the conference—one made more difficult to qualify because of its elliptical representation in the published conference proceedings. During her remarks, a fourth panelist, who participated in the conference but withdrew herself from inclusion in the book, “questioned the inclusion of lesbian writers in the conference” on the basis of whether “lesbians could constitute a culture” (Telling It Book Collective 44).²⁴ Beverley explains:

The subsequent debate seems to have been one of the most salient and memorable moments of the conference, judging by the editors’ insistence on including it, the space that it occupies in the three retrospective essays, and the fact that it seems to have driven [the unnamed panelist] away. (86)

As Beverley notes, Maracle, Warland, and Lee all remark on the panelist’s comments and the debate it incited in the volume’s closing essays. As the conversation shifted from the physical event of the conference to the representational event of the book, the incident became a crucible moment symbolizing the ultimately inarticulable conflicts between women occupying different social, epistemological, and subject positions. Directly confronting the panelist’s remarks and reproaching the panelist for attempting to silence lesbians at the conference, Maracle suggests in her closing essay that her goal in listening to other women is not necessarily to understand them, or even to “seek allies among them,” but rather to uphold “people’s right to be” (“Ramparts” 161). Amid racism, sexism, classism, homophobia, and other oppressions, safeguarding “people’s right to be” is a way of mutually reinforcing and

24. The panelist’s remarks were paraphrased in a brief footnote in the discussion transcripts from the first panel. The footnote was offered to contextualize an audience member’s remarks and to explain gaps in the conversation where the panelist’s comments had been removed. Beverley offers a thoughtful analysis, more comprehensive than I am able to provide here, of the unnamed panelist’s conspicuous silence throughout the published volume (83-91).

energizing each other's struggles and thus ensuring each other's survival. Maracle underlines this point when she narrates overhearing her daughter on the phone protesting an employer denying her a job based on race: "I watch her. Like me she is fighting back. Unlike me the fight seems to energize her, give her life. . . . If I had not opposed the erasure of Lesbian women, of women of colour, she would not be fighting back" ("Ramparts" 171-172). Locating her indigenist, feminist, anti-homophobic, anti-racist perspective within a deeply (though emphatically anti-Enlightenment) humanist imperative to uphold people's right to be, Maracle demonstrates that her defense against "whiteness" is not a matter of reverse racism but, instead, a rallying cry against systemic inequalities perpetrated by an entrenched ideology of white supremacy—one that "violate[s] white people and coloured alike" (Ramparts 172).

Maracle's writing about the labor and politics of women's organizing in stories like "Eunice," and her continued engagement with events and activities like the Telling It conference, demonstrate her stance that while Indigenous women's participation in broader feminist struggles is fraught, it is also vital. In her other writing, including the stories in *Sojourners and Sundogs*, Maracle underscores the significance of Indigenous women developing their own sense of Indigenous feminist consciousness that includes confronting and resisting patriarchy, recognizing and valuing what she calls "the politics of our lives" and enacting a kind of intergenerational inter-animation (*Sojourners and Sundogs* 268).

POLITICS OF OUR LIVES

Indigenous, Aboriginal, Native, or Tribal feminisms have long been debated by Indigenous women activists and thinkers. A recent and growing body of scholarly discourse seeks to theorize, trace, and expand upon debates surrounding Indigenous women and feminism. A number of these recent works on Indigenous feminisms and on Indigenous women's intellectual histories and political and cultural activism summarize the main points of contention in more detail than I am able to provide here. Among them are two scholarly collections on Indigenous feminism, *Making Space for Indigenous Feminism* and *Indigenous Women and Feminism: Politics, Activism, Culture*, that both refer to feminism as "fraught" for Indigenous women, even for those actively organizing on women's issues (Huhndorf and Suzack 5; Green 16). Contributors in both collections echo these ambivalences in their personal reflections. For instance, Cherokee-Choctaw educator Denise K. Henning writes, "as a scholar, as a woman, as a mother and as a Cherokee, I cannot assert that I am a feminist" (196); Inuit political leader Minnie Grey states, "I have long grappled with the word feminism" (21); and

Cree-Métis scholar Kim Anderson adds, "'I'm not a feminist,' is a remark I often hear from Indigenous women—even though many of the people I associate with are advocates for women in one form or another" (81). Moreover, it is important to acknowledge that the category Indigenous women is itself very broad and accounts for vastly different experiences and identifications; thus a wide variety of definitions of and attitudes toward feminism is not surprising. As Huhndorf and Suzack write: "a single, normative definition of Indigenous feminism remains impossible because Indigenous women's circumstances vary enormously throughout colonizing societies, where patriarchy dominates, and in Indigenous communities with distinct histories and cultural traditions" (2).²⁵ Terminologies remain contentious, but scholars tend to agree that regardless of Indigenous women's identification with feminism, Indigenous women's consistent and significant contributions to Indigenous political activism animate and at least to some degree inspire emergent discourses surrounding Indigenous feminism.²⁶

While Indigenous feminist intellectuals, activists, and artists including Maracle have long contended that gender empowerment must accompany Indigenous sovereignty, even as recently as 2010 scholars such as Huhndorf and Suzack have observed that the focus on Indigenous nationalism since the 1960s "has devalued issues of gender" (3). Recounting an anecdote near the beginning of *I Am Woman*, Maracle underscores the centrality of Indigenous feminisms to

25. Two arguments against Indigenous feminism stand out among those most often cited: objections to mainstream feminism's ignorance and exclusion of Indigenous women's perspectives and objections relating to sovereignty and nationalism. Influential works appeared in the 1990s that at once center the political contributions of Indigenous women and, at the same time, voice these objections to feminism. See: M. Annette Jaimes and Theresa Halsey, "American Indian Women; Patricia Monture Angus, *Thunder in My Soul*; and Haunani K. Trask, "Feminism and Indigenous Hawaiian Nationalism." An early reflection on Indigenous feminism may be found in Kate Shanley, "Thoughts on Indian Feminism." Two more recent essays that summarize and respond to some of the objections to Indigenous feminism are Verna St. Denis, "Feminism Is for Everybody"; and Andrea Smith, "Native Feminism, Sovereignty, and Social Change."

26. See, for example, Dorothy Nason, *Red Feminist Literary Analysis*. Nason's introductory chapter offers a chronology of Native feminist organizing leading to the development and articulation of Indigenous feminist discourses, focusing primarily on a US context. Nason makes an important point in noting that Indigenous feminist discourses should be read as responding in distinct ways to different contexts of gendered colonialism in Canada and the United States. In addition to Green's *Making Space for Indigenous Feminism*, more on Indigenous feminisms in a specifically Canadian context can be found in Grace Oulette, *The Fourth World*; and Crystal H. Phillips, "Theorizing Aboriginal Feminisms." For more on the development of Indigenous feminisms in a US context, see Mishuana R. Goeman and Jennifer Nez Denetdale, eds., "Native Feminisms," special issue of *Wicazo Sa Review*; and Andrea Smith and J. Kehaulani Kauanui, eds., "Native Feminisms Without Apology," special issue of *American Quarterly*.

developing rigorously decolonial thought and action. Maracle begins by apologizing for remarks she made in 1978 that denied the relevance of her identity as a woman. Through this apology, Maracle unpacks gendered colonialism and violence, which she argues is rooted in denying Indigenous women the recognition of their own personhood, power, and capacity for love. “Racist ideology had defined womanhood for the Native woman as nonexistent,” she writes, and “The denial of Native womanhood is the reduction of the whole people to a sub-human level” (15; 17). The apology is striking, first, because through it Maracle demonstrates that Indigenous sovereignty and liberation are incomplete if Indigenous women are not recognized, empowered, and free. Second, the apology is important because Maracle addresses herself first and foremost to other Indigenous women: “I apologize to Robert Mendoza’s wife and all the Native women who watched the video I made in San Francisco for International Women’s Day in 1978” (15). Speaking directly to Indigenous women, Maracle argues for Indigenous feminisms and solidarities that refuse to take a backseat to feminisms that only recognize and value Indigenous women for token contributions and Indigenous nationalisms that fail to empower women. Maracle’s critique of mainstream feminism reiterates the one leveled by Chrystos in “Maybe We Shouldn’t Meet”; Maracle writes, “I am not interested in gaining entry to the doors of the ‘white women’s movement’” (18). Instead of arguing against a “white feminism,” however, Maracle makes a case for feminisms that are specifically Indigenous. Such Indigenous feminisms would seek to restore and reclaim the standing of Indigenous women within their communities, to protect Indigenous women from violence, injury, and injustice both within and outside their communities, and to recognize Indigenous women’s power and sovereignty. Andrea Smith draws a similar conclusion about Indigenous feminisms after interviewing Indigenous women activists, stating, “many activists argue that feminist, far from being a ‘white’ concept, is actually an Indigenous concept white women borrowed from Native women” (119).

Like Maracle, Smith calls both for Indigenous feminist solidarity and intersectionality. Smith writes:

Women of colour have for too long been presented with the choices of prioritizing either racial justice or gender justice. This dualistic analysis fails to recognize that it is precisely through sexism and gender violence that colonialism and white supremacy have been successful. (127)

Smith draws direct and explicit connections between Indigenous women activists’ critiques of colonial power and politics and women of color feminism, noting, “This analysis mirrors much of the work currently going on in women of

colour organizing in the U.S. and in other countries" (130). Indigenous feminist scholars join Smith in pointing out the potential in broader decolonial solidarities. For example, Joyce Green underscores the significance of Indigenous feminism not only as "a tool for challenging racism and colonialism" but also for "building bridges to other movements working for social justice" (*Making Space* 3). Likewise, Huhndorf and Suzack identify "one of the most pressing challenges for Indigenous feminism today" as the need to "find a basis for collective political action and engagement in broader anti-colonial struggles that also address the particularities of Indigenous women's social positions" (3). First and foremost, this means engaging Indigenous people from diverse backgrounds who are motivated to support gender empowerment and make the empowerment of Indigenous women a political priority. Second, an ongoing practice of Indigenous feminism may be to seek out meeting points between Indigenous peoples and their anti-colonial allies, who may importantly include other people of color. Significantly, Huhndorf and Suzack identify "action" as the meeting point for collectivity. By locating meeting points around action, this approach to Indigenous feminism and solidarity takes the pressure off essentialist identity politics as the primary justification for collectivity. Yet it is not enough that people are willing to act toward the same goals; as Huhndorf and Suzack maintain, it is also crucial that those engaged in collective action attend to the "particularities of Indigenous women's social positions," which must be acknowledged as complex and differentiated—not monolithic. Emphasizing the need to act from a place that acknowledges and values Indigenous women's differential social positions, Huhndorf and Suzack develop a basis for collectivity that is not merely strategic but also ethical.

Huhndorf and Suzack's theory of an Indigenous feminism based on collectivity through action is consonant with Maracle's representation of Indigenous feminist praxis in her writing. For example, the story "Who's Political Here?" features a protagonist constantly in action, in which the fluid movements of her actions as a mother, wife, friend, lover, meeting host, granddaughter, dreamer, and (encompassing all of these) Indigenous woman constitute not only the substance of the story but also her composite identity. Narrated in first-person stream-of-consciousness, the story, as O'Brien notes, draws readers "into the consciousness of the narrator, [and confronts readers with] a world in which existence is defined by activity" (91). Nevertheless, even while the story emphasizes the narrator's agency through her actions, its focal point turns around her shifting consciousness while she is engaged in the everyday activities of her life. In other words, conscious reflection about her actions in the context of her movement among other "political people" resituate the narrator's self-awareness and subject position in relation to others, and most important, locate

her centrally in an intergenerational cycle of Indigenous women's survival and vitality.

In "Who's Political Here?" a meeting takes place in the living room of the protagonist, a twenty-something Indigenous woman whose husband Tom has been sent to jail for anti-apartheid postering. Tom's friends begin arriving at the family home shortly after he has been jailed, and immediately the focus of activity in the house gravitates toward discussion of the crisis of his incarceration. The group of mostly male activists continues to take up space in the living room, ostensibly oblivious to the presence of the protagonist, who is simultaneously trying to care for her two toddlers, clean the house, cook dinner, and stave off advances from a male friend who came in to help with the groceries, while accommodating the uninvited guests in her home. During this time she also recalls other meetings of similar kind hosted in her house and the demands that those meetings made on her energy. In contrast to the meetings between women writers described earlier, the impromptu political meeting imposed on the protagonist in "Who's Political Here?" points out the problems and losses from ignoring the presence, experiences, and perspectives of Indigenous women. The story's title, phrased in the form of a question, interrogates the definition and priorities of political work, or what it means for different people from different social positions to "be political."

By revealing the scene of the story through the narrator's stream-of-consciousness observations and reflections, "Who's Political Here?" demonstrates the irony of the political organizers' misplaced political priorities. The contrast between the narrator's constant action and the organizers' impotent talking, combined with the narrator's keen self-consciousness in comparison to the organizers' apparent lack of self-awareness, informs readers of the irony of claiming to be political when one's actions do not substantiate the claim. "It seems absurd to attach a whole world analysis to a simple postering charge," the narrator ruminates when, for instance, the guests are not attentive enough to notice that they are encroaching on the space of the narrator and her family (*Sojourners and Sundogs* 242). In a broader sense the story thus alludes to the problematic politics of settler-activists who fail to acknowledge their complicity in ongoing colonization of Indigenous people and lands, and who unselfconsciously occupy space to do their "important political work," while excluding and exploiting the hospitality of Indigenous people and the land. Additionally, "Who's Political Here?" compares the public face of political work—postering, getting arrested, and meetings—with the invisible "politics of our lives"—childcare, getting groceries, getting around. The phrase "politics of our lives" appears in "Eunice" during a reflection about the unseen and unacknowledged material and labor that goes into even being present at a

meeting (286). After Jamila, an Asian Canadian writer, asks why women rarely write about political meetings, the narrator muses:

Meetings, I tell myself, serve political ends, but they are not that political. Agendas, concealed and open, tend to obscure the politics of our lives. I recall my efforts to get here, running about readying my four kids for my departure, giving last-minute instructions about their care to my husband, and finally robbing my change bank of loonies so that I can buy gas on the way—that's political. (286)

The value of effort and resources put into “the politics of our lives” is difficult to calculate. But by concretely enumerating some of the actions involved in this type of political work, Maracle is at least able to give it a name and attach to it a measure of worth; in doing so, she further qualifies Indigenous feminist praxis, since most of the burden for these unseen actions continues to fall onto the shoulders of women, whose political agency and subjectivity—like that of the unnamed narrator in “Who's Political Here?”—likewise goes largely unaccounted for by the people around her.

Nevertheless, there are those who notice—and the narrator's developing Indigenous feminist consciousness in “Who is Political Here?” is apparent and will be important to those who matter. The protagonist's two young daughters are constant presences throughout the story. While the girls, three-year-old Tania and infant Columpa, tend to show up in the background to the action, always there in the back of the narrator's mind, it is also clear that the daughters (especially the three-year-old) are present and attentive to everything they observe around the house. Tania, for instance, actively asserts herself in the activities of the household and closely watches her mother as a model for behavior. The first scene of the story depicts the narrator getting herself and her daughters washed up and ready to head out of the house to run errands. The scene illustrates domestic chaos—objects tumbling around, items lost and recovered, conversations crossing over one another, activities interrupted and restarted. In the midst of the chaos, the narrator is once again interrupted; her daughter Tania says, “Here, Mommy,” and hands the narrator the baby's shoes (234). The interaction briefly changes the pace of the scene, and the narrator comments, “She is three and really does know what's going on” (234). After the exchange the mother allows Tania to help with baby Columpa's shoes, even though this will delay them getting out the door. Later in the story, the narrator tries to serve her daughters dinner while having a conversation with Frankie, a family friend whom she has just taken to bed. As Frankie prods her about what just happened, the narrator exasperatedly says, “I am married to your gawdamn friend for chrissakes,” and Tania immediately “repeats the choicer words,” showing just how closely the child watches and mimics her mother (241).

Frankie, who gets increasingly frustrated with the conversation and agitated by the household chaos, calls the children “wild,” and the house a “gawdamn zoo” (241). The narrator then attempts to throw Frankie out: “I don’t need anyone calling my girls animals to their faces” (241). Even while the narrator’s actions mostly show her unconsciously going through the motions of parenting, in these moments that foreground her daughters, it is clear that the mother is committed to and fully conscious of valuing her daughters’ freedom to learn, act, and develop their intellects. The narrator in “Who’s Political Here?” demonstrates that Indigenous feminist consciousness develops intergenerationally as daughters observe mothers, as mothers support their daughters’ developing strength and agency while enacting their own, and as women of all ages turn to previous generations for culturally grounded models of feminism.

Even while the story unfolds through the narrator’s constant activity, “Who’s Political Here?” also advances through its stream-of-consciousness narration. As the young mother contemplates her actions, makes decisions and judgments about what is going on around her, stands up for herself and her daughters and, at the end of the story, turns to the memory of her grandmother for spiritual support, the story develops Maracle’s conception of an Indigenous feminist consciousness that it is fed not just from intergenerational transmission but by intergenerational inter-animation. Like the image of grandmother standing with granddaughter in the preface to *Sojourners and Sundogs*, Maracle’s stories show the process of transformation initiated by cycles of women meeting in different configurations to share and mutually transmit knowledge; the stories show the inter-animation of meeting over cycles of time. Maracle’s ongoing commitment to organize and share knowledge with women writers across differences also instantiates a kind of intergenerational inter-animation. For instance, her activist work and Indigenous feminist praxis lives on outside her critical and creative production, in the work and lives of writers, activists, students, and artists she has encountered and mentored. Rita Wong, for example, documents a small part of this legacy, mentioning a 1993 workshop that Maracle facilitated for a woman of color collective in Calgary (“seeds” 22). Wong also acknowledges the formative experience of participating in the *Imagining Asian and Native Women* conference that Maracle organized at Western Washington University in 2002 (*Forage* 83-84). It was at this conference that Wong met Dorothy Christian, a Secwepemc-Syilx (Shuswap-Okanagan) scholar, visual storyteller, writer, and activist (Christian, personal communication). Through ensuing collaborations, for example their leadership in developing and shaping the Downstream Project, a collaborative, multi-disciplinary project centered around engaging culturally sensitive and culturally grounded approaches to water, Wong and Christian extend the legacy

of women meeting across different social positions to enact social justice struggles²⁷.

IMAGINING ASIAN CANADIAN AND INDIGENOUS WOMEN'S FRIENDSHIP

Within the recently burgeoning scholarly field of Asian Canadian Studies, questions around settler colonialism have underscored analyses of racialized subjectivity ranging from those challenging notions of citizenship to those critiquing the effects of globalization.²⁸ Notably, literary scholars Marie Lo, Rita Wong and others have each suggested repositioning Asian Canadian critique to align itself with more explicitly with Indigenous decolonization.²⁹ Analyzing representations of Native figures in Asian Canadian literature, both Lo and Wong argue that Asian Canadian racialized subject formation is inextricable from the ongoing colonization of Indigenous peoples and territories that has been part of Canada's nation-building project. As I have alluded to in the foregoing analysis of *Press Gang*, the Telling It conference, and Maracle's *Imagining Asian and Native Women* conference, Asian Canadian cultural activists, particularly women writers and artists, have collaborated and worked in formal and informal alliance with First Nations artists and intellectuals since at least the 1980s, a point that Maracle reinforces in the dedication to her short story "Yin Chin." "Yin Chin" is dedicated to Sharon (SKY) Lee, author of *Disappearing Moon Café* and Jim Wong-Chu, founding member and long-time president of the Asian Canadian Writers' Workshop (*Sojourners and Sundogs* 271). Lo and Wong are among several Asian Canadian literary critics to gloss "Yin Chin" in critical essays. Using this as a starting point, it is possible to trace a pattern of appearances by Asian Canadian characters in Maracle's work. To close this essay, I briefly consider a few.

In "Yin Chin," Maracle makes explicit reference to the possibilities for Indigenous-Asian alliance from her opening dedication and epigraphic poem that addresses a "tough . . . verbose," experienced woman and makes a word play that references both the woman who falls from the sky and SKY Lee

27. Wong, Christian, and some other collaborators brought together a group of artists, community workers and scholars who would eventually contribute to a multi-year, multi-disciplinary project that included a series of workshops and public events around World Water Day in 2012, an interactive, online space, and a book, co-edited by Wong and Christian, *Downstream: Reimagining Water*.

28. See, for example, Lily Cho, "Diasporic Citizenship"; and Roy Miki, *In Flux*.

29. See Lo, "Model Minorities, Models of Resistance"; and Wong, "Decolonizasian."

(*Sojourners and Sundogs* 271). The story consists of an Indigenous narrator's recollections of a series of encounters between herself and Chinese Canadians. In one scene the narrator recalls a Saturday evening gathering of Indigenous and Asian writers, who "laugh[ed] . . . spoke very seriously . . . [and] ran on and on about our growth and development" (273). As the narrator describes, "The mood in the room is excited, but also edgy. It seems hard to imagine that Hans and Natives could sit and discuss all things under heaven, including racism, and not talk about white people" (273). It is precisely this direct connection between racialized others not triangulated through experiences with whiteness that activates a sense of surprising energy and excitement in the room. The energy of surprise is important because it jolts the narrator into realizing a different political consciousness—one that perceives and situates itself in broader anti-colonial struggles. In the story, this realization instigates recognition of, and further action toward, solidarity. As the narrator goes through her memory bank, she recalls a series of incidents: shopping with her mother at Mad Sam's Powell Street store and the Chinese storekeeper's gesture of generosity and forgiveness when she, as a child, betrays her internalized racism by making a comment about scary Chinamen; being invited to join a group of Chinese Canadian students at their cafeteria table during her first alienating years in college; a few years later laughing in community with Chinese Canadian writers; and most recently defending an elderly Asian woman from an Indigenous man's physical bullying in Chinatown. In these experiences it becomes clear that small, everyday gestures of friendship and mutual support illuminate the constructedness of racial boundaries and produce conditions for alliance formation and solidarity.

Sundogs tells the coming-to-consciousness story of Marianne, a twenty-year-old urban Aboriginal woman, during the Meech Lake Accord and Oka crisis in Canada in the late-1980s and early-1990s. Set twenty years after the Quiet Revolution and Trudeau-era politics, *Sundogs* reflects on the ongoing political work of Constitutional negotiation that followed significant changes to minority and Aboriginal rights discourses initiated in Canada in the late-1960s. The novel is narrated by and centers around a university student in her early twenties named Marianne. Through the course of the novel Marianne matures into adulthood, finding her place within her family, becoming politicized, and forming community around her as she goes. In the novel, there are many different representations of meeting, that range from meetings at the kitchen table over cups of coffee, to work meetings, to classroom meetings, to meetings within a sweat lodge, to the meeting of the Canadian legislature. Through the course of these multiple encounters with others, Marianne develops into a politicized Indigenous feminist with a consciousness of intersectionality. This maturity is marked by her newfound acceptance of her family, her coming to

terms with her identity as an Aboriginal woman and feminist, her acknowledgement of complexity, her ability to be inspired by but also to question other Indigenous people she encounters, and her willingness to explore love. It is also interesting that a significant aspect of Marianne's self-discovery and self-reflection occurs as she contemplates solidarity and identification with other people of colour, including black women opposing apartheid and Asian Canadian women.

Toward the third act of the story, as Marianne is about to join the Peace Run, she begins reflecting on a Chinese Canadian friend from university, Sue. Marianne compares the course of her own studies to Sue's. While Marianne avoids courses in university that have to do with "people of colour and/or Natives," Sue has "entrapped herself in an Asian Studies course" (160). As Marianne considers their last conversation, in which Sue complained about being tokenized in her Asian Studies class, Marianne recalls being "obsessed with looking at Asian faces," in particular thinking about physical similarities: "their comportment, their bodies, all reflect[ing] a commonality between themselves and us" (161). Interestingly, reciprocal acknowledgements that lead to meaningful friendship between Indigenous and Asian North American characters *Sojourners and Sundogs* begin with references to relatively surface features of race, that is, observations of phenotypical similarity and passing.

The tension between identification and difference in identity formation is a consistent theme throughout the novel and reinforces the notion of solidarity encapsulated in the novel's central image of sundogs. Sundogs are bright patches of light that appear in the sky around the sun (usually one on either side) that appear to mirror the sun's light. As Maracle describes, "Sundogs [are] impossible reflections mirrored under extraordinary circumstances" (205). As Marianne begins to see when she joins the Peace Run, a thread of solidarity is possible among diverse Indigenous peoples against heteropatriarchal colonialism. Even though, as Marianne observes, "our whole life has been designed to kill all solidarity and co-operation between us," she is able to discern a "mirroring" between Joan, the Métis mother of a pair of fellow Peace runners, and her own mother and sister: "Joan mirroring my mother and Lacey under impossible circumstances" (206). Likewise, reflecting on the distances and differences between herself and Sue, Marianne also begins to see herself mirrored under impossible circumstances in other women of color, including her Chinese Canadian friend.

Concluding with this analysis of multiple meetings between Indigenous and Asian Canadian characters across *Sojourners and Sundogs*, theorizing the quality of friendship between Indigenous and Asian Canadians, and contextualizing these textual meetings against a history of alliance-building

practices and actions among Indigenous and Asian Canadian women since the 1980s, I argue that the conflicted space of meeting is essential for productive decolonial alliance. Moreover, a critical understanding of friendship as a political relationship may help to develop an ethical course for Indigenous-settler relations. Further work that theorizes the relationship between meetings, friendship, and sisterhood in decolonial, cross-cultural, intersectional feminist politics may serve to illuminate how to develop and maintain ethical relations in cultural activist endeavors.

CHAPTER 4

WHAT'S LEFT TO SAY AFTER SORRY? HISTORY, PROPHECY AND THE ETHICS OF RECONCILIATION IN MARIE CLEMENTS' *BURNING VISION*

In previous chapters I examined reciprocal representations in SKY Lee's *Disappearing Moon Cafe* and Lee Maracle's *Sojourners and Sundogs* within contexts of Indigenous and Asian Canadian women writers engaging in creative acts of acknowledgement and reciprocity. As I argue, SKY Lee and Lee Maracle's works not only surface the necessity of practicing acknowledgement and reciprocity, but they also explore the inevitable problems, failures and limits of acknowledgement and reciprocity—in other words, the imperfectability of solidarity praxes and the need for continual learning, regrounding, and openness to transformation in relationships. In this chapter, acknowledgement and reciprocity take the form of listening differently across time to knowledges held in place and transmitted by ancestors, survivors, and visionaries. Here, acknowledgement and reciprocity interrogate the amnesia of settler colonial violence and the hollow acts of official apologies that attempt to erase and replace intergenerational knowledges of love, grief, witnessing, and survival.

This chapter examines the ethics of interracial reconciliation in the context of settler colonialism through representations of apology and reciprocity in Marie Clements' play *Burning Vision*. Contemporary nation-states increasingly evoke reconciliation discourses to address histories of trauma caused by war, colonialism, and racial discrimination. Official apologies are thus one of the means deployed to occlude state mechanisms of violence and to reinforce the legitimacy of its power. *Burning Vision* takes up questions of reconciliation between the state, Indigenous peoples, and diasporic Japanese subjects, casting a critical eye on the efficacy of official apologies to reconcile past and ongoing social and political relationships damaged by complex, layered injustices and

violence. While official apologies in Canada have been addressed towards both Indigenous and Asian Canadian communities, for example, to recognize the Indian Residential Schools system, or to acknowledge and redress Japanese Canadian internment, state discourses of reconciliation rarely speak to specific political relationships between Indigenous and Asian communities. The chapter begins with an analysis of the unique structure of the play, which takes the historical events surrounding the construction and detonation of the atomic bomb and radically unsettles them. Next, I turn my attention to an analysis of the perverse “nuclear family” depicted in *Burning Vision* to illustrate the play’s critique of nuclear trauma culture and the inefficacy of official state apologies. I discuss an alternative example of interracial reconciliation in Peter Blow and Gil Gauvreau’s documentary *Village of Widows*, which records a delegation of Sahtu Dene elders and women who traveled to Hiroshima to apologise for the uranium mined on Dene lands used to build the atomic bomb. Finally, I close by revisiting the Dene prophecy that foretells the historical events that the play is based upon to theorize how *Burning Vision* positions prophetic listening as a form of resistance to the violent erasures of history. In writing this chapter, I hope to mark *Burning Vision* and the Sahtu Dene delegation to Japan as interruptions and subversions of settler colonial and foundational violence. Through acts of literary imagination and collective conciliation and grief, *Burning Vision* and the Dene delegation demonstrate interventions of acknowledgement and reciprocity that unsettle the politics of official reconciliation and enact other possibilities for ethical healing, justice, and solidarity.

REMAPPING “LITTLE BOY”

“I believe we are all personally responsible for resurrecting, reclaiming and reshaping the very notions of time and space that will invite the knowledge of others into our fields of study, so that a genuine sharing can occur.” (Lee Maracle, Memory Serves 127)

First performed at the Firehall Arts Center in Vancouver, BC in April 2002, *Burning Vision* recasts a historic catastrophe in the theatrical crucible, prompting uneasy reimaginings of the event, its elements, and people’s past and present involvements. The event in question, the dropping of “Little Boy” at Hiroshima, Japan in August 1945, is one of such unprecedented destruction that it has been distilled into a singular image seared into historical memory: the atomic mushroom cloud. The mushroom cloud not only symbolizes the limits of human and territorial violence associated with the development of nuclear warfare, but

it also captures and reproduces the traumatic event in an iconic image, crystallizing it at a precise moment in time and space. *Burning Vision*, however, pushes against the transcendent singularity of the mushroom cloud's symbolism; while the play builds in dramatic tension around the climactic event of the bombing, its imagery more often evokes the life of radioactive dust.¹

Tracing the diffuse, minute, elemental particles constituting the bomb and bombing, *Burning Vision* investigates Little Boy's far-reaching affective legacies through the movements of characters in diverse and shifting settings who are bound together, blown apart, scattered, shattered, and transformed through the course of the play. Clements draws a complex web of human, environmental, and spiritual connections that entwines the Sahtu Dene peoples, to the US military complex, to the victims and survivors of Hiroshima, to contemporary audiences of the play. Remapping the historical contours of the atomic bombing, *Burning Vision* not only proposes a more complicated version of the story but also provokes ethical questions about relationships, responsibility, and reconciliation in imagining and dealing with the atrocities of war and imperialism. In *Burning Vision*, Clements breaks down and reshapes the constitutive elements comprising the moment of the bombing into a dramatic representation that ultimately shifts the position of audience members from spectators to witnesses, and further interrogates us, as witnesses, to confront ethical questions about what it means to locate ourselves as agents within a history that is normally offered as distant and always already past; what responsibilities we have to each other and the environments we inhabit across generations that reach both forward and back; and how to deal with the inheritance of grief over collectively held but separately experienced losses, injuries and traumatic erasures.

Burning Vision confronts readers and audiences with its imaginative and deconstructive representation of the historic events surrounding the dropping of "Little Boy" at Hiroshima. Its engagement with an underexamined history and critique of history have been raised by some scholars, with recent critics analyzing how the play's form and structure gesture towards the limits of historical representation, narrativity, and memory. For example, Robin Whittaker writes, "Clements' play attempts no less than the remapping of post-Hiroshima North America and the rehistoricization of its perceived narratives" (147). Allison Hargreaves notes, "More than an effort to simply dramatize an untold story of Canadian history, *Burning Vision* is concerned to query the normative, linear conventions of Western social memory" (53). Utilizing theoretical frameworks circulating out of trauma studies, recent essays by

1. See Sophie McCall's reading of the "insidious consequences of radioactive contamination" in "Linked Histories and Radio-Activity in Marie Clements's *Burning Vision*" (251).

Sherrill Grace and Sophie McCall offer insightful close readings of the play that shed light on *Burning Vision's* ethical dimensions. Grace, for instance, analyzes *Burning Vision* as a site of “empathic unsettlement,” while McCall considers “Clements’s exploration of the interconnectivity of traumas” (Grace 111; McCall 246). Its fragmentary and chaotic structure challenges readers and audiences to actively engage in making sense of the disarrayed yet entangled pieces. This process mimics the complex and problematic activity of forming coherent historical narrative, a problem I discuss in this dissertation’s second chapter with respect to *Disappearing Moon Cafe*.

Some of the critical literature on *Burning Vision* has focused on the difficulties of teaching the play or mounting a production due to its fragmentary and surreal treatment of time and space.² Annie Smith, for example, observes the collapsing of time and space in *Burning Vision* to create a sense of “interwoven worlds and times” (55). The majority of the action takes place between the “discovery” of radium on Sahtu Dene territories at an Eldorado claim site near Great Bear Lake in the 1930s and the dropping of the atomic bomb on Hiroshima, Japan in the summer of 1945. However, actions and events in the play are staged to happen simultaneously across time and space, often mirroring, responding to, or calling out to one another. In much the same way, the more than twenty characters in *Burning Vision* move fluidly—and sometimes abruptly—through space and time to arrive at and intervene in scenes where their presence may be unexpected and incongruous. In staging characters and settings Clements deftly interweaves the historical and imaginary, the factual and fantastical. For example, fictional characters such as the Métis breadmaker Rose and the Dene ore carrier, intermingle with those based on historical figures, such as the prophet Etseo Ayah and Iva “Toyko Rose” Tonguri, and characters based on abstraction such as Fat Man, a 1950s nuclear test dummy, and Little Boy, a young Indigenous boy who symbolizes uranium. The play’s structure, in a series of movements, as opposed to acts, further reinforces *Burning Vision's* deconstructive approach to history and historical memory. *Burning Vision's* movements call to mind layers of symphonic convergence as opposed to a conventional dramatic arc. Movements, therefore, highlight contingency and complex interdependence of elements surrounding events and situations, rather than linear causes and effects. This is not to say that characters in *Burning Vision* do not exercise agency,

2. Hargreaves notes the play’s “undoing of normative temporal and geographical distinctions” (52); Whittaker theorizes on the play’s “chronotopic dramaturgy” that unsettles and challenges typical spatial and temporal logics (129); Jennifer Read describes the play as “a nightmare image of a world outside time or place” (19); and Theresa J. May questions how to mount a play “in which conventional boundaries of time and space evaporate, and different historical moments overlap in a kind of double and triple exposure” (5).

take action, or experience the consequences of actions. However, the play's structure demonstrates that characters' actions and experiences are not isolated from the forces that surround and exert pressure on them. Meeting characters and situations together across time and space in each of the play's four movements, Clements thus presents history as an ever-present site of active, heated, and constant revisioning.

Audiences, too, are enfolded in the play's "interwoven worlds and times," raising the ethical stakes of the drama and urging audiences to examine our own positions with respect to history. Connecting the historical subject matter to the play's here-and-now, the printed text of *Burning Vision* includes a timeline that extends from the late 1880s when the Dene prophet foretells his vision, to *Burning Vision's* opening night on April 26, 2002. With the timeline, Clements proposes continuity amongst an assortment of events whose significances range from spiritual to scientific, from political to artistic. For instance, other entries on the timeline include Einstein's formalization of his theory of relativity in 1905, the discovery of radium at Port Radium in 1930, the attack on Pearl Harbour and subsequent order by the Canadian government that Japanese Canadians carry identification in 1941, Iva Toguri's arrest and prosecution in 1948, and the first Dene miner to die of cancer in 1960. The timeline is superimposed on an enlarged map of the eastern Great Bear Lake region, cross cut with lines extending from the Eldorado mine site at Port Radium to points located off the page. The image calls to mind historical maps of the Pacific War that attempt to visually organize and make sense of the times, locations, and events leading up to the moment of the dropping of the Hiroshima bomb. But the map and timeline appearing in the play's front matter reverse the usual logic of maps of the Pacific arena, which in general show a concentrated series of events taking place between 1941 and 1945 overlaid on a much wider geographical area, highlighting Asia and the Pacific Rim. Reorganizing the spatial-temporal contours of "Little Boy" through the play's map and timeline, Clements at once focalizes the history of capital extraction and labour mobilization on Sahtu Dene territories as a pivotal nexus for the devastating events at Hiroshima in 1945, and, at the same time, broadens the view to demonstrate the delicate transhistorical connections and complicities linking the people implicated in these events, including current and future audiences of the play, to each other and the interconnected historical traumas represented in the play.

It is not only *Burning Vision's* non-linearity and layered representations of place and space that challenge the forms and structures of history and remembrance, but also the way *Burning Vision* handles questions of responsibility and ethics in the face of history's narrative irreconcilability that suggest other ways to imagine and enact relations across time and space.

Situated at the center of *Burning Vision's* ethical argument is a critique of Western democracy's fetishism of nuclear power and culture, which leads characters in the play towards disaster. In the next section, I consider the play's critique of nuclear family, trauma, and culture.

THE NUCLEAR FAMILY IN PIECES

*So that is how to create a single story, show a people as only one thing over and over again, and that is what they become. It is impossible to talk about the single story without talking about power. There is a word, an Igbo word, that I think about whenever I think about the power structures of the world, and it is 'nkali.' It's a noun that loosely translates to 'to be greater than another.' Like our economic and political worlds, stories too are defined by the principle of nkali: How they are told, who tells them, when they're told, how many stories are told, are really dependent on power. Power is the ability not just to tell the story of another person, but to make it the definitive story of that person. (Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, *The Danger of a Single Story*)*

Some critics working at the intersections of theatre and trauma studies highlight the effects that dramatizing history can have on audience members.³ Both Hargreaves and Smith both propose that *Burning Vision* implicates audience members by shifting their position from spectators to witnesses (Smith 58; Hargreaves 52). Yet, it may also be prudent to heed Caroline Wake's warnings against assuming that the theatre is an inherent site of witnessing, and that theatrical witnessing is, of itself, an ethical act.⁴ Even as *Burning Vision* calls audiences to witness an alternate and radically deconstructed history, the play also points out the failure of witnessing and testifying to history, especially when that history is one as overdetermined and monumental as the atomic bomb. As

3. For example, Rebecca Rovit underscores the shared experience of witnessing a theatrical performance and theatre's invitation to, in her words, "collective responsibility" (51). Rovit writes, "witnessing is . . . the crucial centre of theatre-going," and in the case of theatre that "is a mimetic enactment of a historical trauma or expresses its memory, our witnessing takes on an added urgency, moving us to co-own and even resuffer the event by proxy" (51).

4. Wake writes, "The theatre itself is increasingly being positioned as a place, or medium, with a particular ability to witness and produce others as witnesses. In short, there is a growing sense that the word witness is becoming a self-sacralised term that scholars employ when trying to emphasize the historical import or emotional impact of a particular performance without thinking through the significance of the term itself" (34-5). Wake also asks compelling questions that put assumptions about "ethical spectatorship" under pressure: "Within theatre and performance studies, the witness is assumed to be ethical; however, trauma studies indicates while witnessing can be an ethical mode of spectatorship, it is not necessarily so" (37).

literary critic Glenn Deer writes, the nuclear bomb is “the ultimate ‘stylus’ of power” (“Writing in the Shadow of the Bomb” 6). *Burning Vision* resists the totalizing symbolism of the nuclear mushroom cloud, a singular image that obliterates as it signifies. Film and cultural studies critic E. Ann Kaplan coins the term “trauma culture” to refer to “a culture in which discourses, and especially images, about catastrophic events proliferate, often managed by government” (54). As Kaplan argues, repetitive images of traumatic events not only fail to capture the meaning and significance behind the imagery but, on the contrary, produce “empty empathy” (53). *Burning Vision* works against the singular signifying power and “empty empathy” of the traumatic image of the atomic bomb through multiple diffusions and deconstructions. McCall observes, for instance, that “The play stages the nuclear blast no less than five times” (250).

In contrast to trauma culture’s “empty empathy,” Grace proposes that *Burning Vision* urges viewers towards what historian Dominick LaCapra has called “empathic unsettlement” (Grace 111). In *Writing History, Writing Trauma*, LaCapra explains, “empathic unsettlement poses a barrier to closure in discourse and places in jeopardy harmonizing or spiritually uplifting accounts of extreme events” (41). By drawing attention to the violent power of singular, idealizing narratives and undermining these ideals, for example through satire, Clements provokes audiences into a position of active, or one might suggest “faithful” witnessing. Drawing on the work of Maria Lugones on “faithful witnessing,” Yomaira Figueuroa writes:

faithful witnessing challenges singular narratives or dominant perspectives and in doing so takes away from singular interpretation of truth, knowledge, and rights and toward a polysensical approach: one that understands that there are many worlds, that sees/reads many perspectives, particularly the perspectives of those who are dehumanized or rendered invisible. (3)

In demonstrating the diffuse narratives of history that persistently resist closure, *Burning Vision* both reveals and works against the grain of forceful denials that uphold deterministic, singular signifiers of nationalistic love and power. A politics of acknowledgement that upholds life in even the most dehumanized characters in *Burning Vision* and reveals the forces that contribute to their dehumanization invites audiences to solidarity through faithful witnessing.

In this section, I turn to a close reading of Clements’ satire of the postwar nuclear family to discuss the play’s critique of nuclear power and culture. The symbol of the nuclear family is an ideal image of national love, one that resonates with Sarah Ahmed’s description of “how love becomes a way of bonding with others in relation to an ideal, which takes shape as an effect of such bonding” (124). The nuclear family functions as a synecdoche for the single story of the American dream of post-war prosperity and nation-building in the wake of the

devastating events of global warfare. By defamiliarizing the nuclear family and bringing it to crisis, the play reveals the “empty empathy” that circulates through nuclear trauma culture via high-fidelity dissemination and reproduction. Reconciliation discourses, likewise disseminated and reproduced in hi-fi quality, complete the circular logic of nuclear trauma culture. As Round Rose’s insists in her speech at the end of the third movement, emptied of feeling, the word sorry, like the image of the mushroom cloud, obliterates as it signifies.

In one of the play’s confections of time and space, three characters converge to produce a perverse allegory of the nuclear family. The “blended” family of Fat Man, Little Boy, and Round Rose symbolizes the mobilization of gendered middle-class American consumer culture, Dene land and resources, and Asian American racialization in collusion to produce the global tragedy of the atomic bombings and the aftermath of nuclear culture constructed to scrub away collective memories of trauma. In a blithe instance of double-entendre, the family is birthed at the moment when Little Boy is dropped—into Fat Man’s living room in the Nevada desert in the play’s second movement. The character Little Boy is first introduced to the audience earlier in the play when he dramatically appears on-stage after the sound of an explosion amidst the chaos of the opening scene. At this moment, the eight- to ten-year-old boy is shown alone and naked, “huddled in darkness at the center of the earth” (Clements 20). Little Boy is an abstract figure symbolizing purity and potential. The play’s liner notes describe Little Boy as “The personification of the darkest uranium found at the center of the earth” and “a beautiful Native boy”; the stage directions describe him, in this first scene, as “a naked Indian boy-man” (20). The next time we encounter Little Boy is in the living room of Fat Man, where the boy appears to have suddenly fallen out of the TV set with no apparent explanation.

As Lai writes, “If Clements’s Little Boy is figured as raw uranium and the starting point in nature of the bomb’s construction, then her Fat Man is figured as the encultured, technologized, and violent end point” (“Epistemologies” 119). Fat Man, a humanized nuclear test dummy who inhabits a mock home in the Nevada desert in the 1950s at one of the US’s atomic testing sites, accepts Little Boy’s sudden presence in his life without much question. This unquestioning acceptance is characteristic of Fat Man, who, as a nuclear test dummy has only one directive: to perform his duty as a human-stand-in and sacrifice his plastic body to the nuclear effort. It is not part of Fat Man’s job to think or feel—only to exist and be destroyed for the development of nuclear power. Lai describes Fat Man as “an isolated figure and a figure of pure technology” (“Epistemologies” 119). His directive is to fulfill a single story of nuclear power and national love.

Joining Fat Man and Little Boy is Round Rose, a character based on Iva Toguri, popularly known as Tokyo Rose. As referenced on the map and timeline

accompanying the play's printed text, Toguri was famously prosecuted in the late 1940s by the US government for broadcasting anti-Allied propaganda for the Japanese government during the war. Round Rose, like Little Boy, crosses time and space in the play. Initially described in the liner notes as "work[ing] in her father's Japanese souvenir store in Chicago," and throughout the early part of the play appearing in voice-over broadcasting as Tokyo Rose from an exilic position in Japan, Round Rose turns up in Fat Man's living room first as her radio persona, and later as her embodied self during the play's third movement — when she is invited to stay to complete the nuclear family.

The creation and dissolution of Fat Man, Little Boy, and Round Rose's nuclear family satirically reveals deeply sublimated complicities behind the U.S. nation-state's dependence on militarized violence, exploitation, domination, conquest, and colonialism. The play reveals that as much as nuclear weapons are technologies of the global imperialism and the carceral state, so too is the nuclear family. Fat Man, the plastic dummy-turned-patriot, owes his identity to World War II jingoism and the military industrial complex. His identity develops foremost through acquisition of and engagement with consumer goods and knowledge. Sitting alone in the center of his prefabricated home on his Lazy-Boy recliner, admiring his new high-fidelity broadcast console and thumbing through his *Playboy* magazine, Fat Man muses, "Hi Fi...Hi Fi Fee Fo. I am part of the world . . . just like this new Hi-Fi equipment" (Clements 29). The plastic crash test dummy is a hi-fidelity human. The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines "high fidelity" as "the reproduction of sound with little distortion, giving a result very similar to the original" (my emphasis). Fat Man's human-likeness is actually improved by his inhuman qualities: disposability, extreme manipulability, and mass reproduction. As Fat Man observes, "high-fidelity" is not just an acceptable attribute in modernity, but a coveted one: "We want the unreal real thing . . . We don't want thinking, we want . . . highly skilled unthinking reaction" (Clements 29).

Part of Fat Man's job in the desert is to unthinkingly perform gender and to play it off as "predictable . . . comfortable . . . and safe" (Clements 34). In a moment of self-consciousness, Fat Man comments on the gendered implications of performing his directive as a test dummy inhabiting a model home at a nuclear test site: "I'm an...it and I'm MAN-ing it . . . What kind of a job is MAN-ing it? It's a man's job in an unpredictable world. Being an it" (Clements 34). Here, Fat Man explicitly acknowledges the gendered biopolitics of his existence as a hi-fi man, at the same time as he articulates his own dehumanization within this role. Tellingly, Fat Man associates his hi-fi technology and what it represents, quality simulacrum, with the performance of masculinity. Reading from the *Playboy* magazine, Fat Man explains, "A high-fidelity system is commonly

accepted as a badge of sophisticated masculinity” (Clements 29).

This lack of thoughtfulness that defines Fat Man’s existence as a “dummy” is what enables him to easily accept Little Boy and Round Rose when they appear in his house. As Lai explains, Fat Man hyperbolic characterization as “dummy” reveals the superficiality of hi-fi attachments: “Fat Man will not and cannot see or know the world except in the ways it comes to him through his technologies, which will always provide the ‘unreal real’—similacra and stereotypes” (“Epistemologies” 120). Fat Man’s desire to incorporate with Little Boy and Round Rose into a family unit is driven by unconscious desires he absorbs and assimilates from broadcast media. This is especially apparent in a scene where Fat Man begins to masturbate after first hearing Round Rose broadcasting as Tokyo Rose. After Little Boy falls asleep in front of the TV, Fat Man finds himself lonely without anyone except the hi-fi stereo to communicate with. Responding to Round Rose’s disembodied voice, he states: “A guy could get horny sitting all day . . . Sometimes I think I should get a wife. A perfect mate. A Fridgidaire . . . I could get fucked while thinking of the evil-doers and then go spend more money” (Clements 65). At this point, Round Rose breaks from her radio anonymity and directly addresses Fat Man: “Hey soldier...” (Clements 65). The two engage in suggestive banter, which builds in intensity as Round Rose describes kitchen appliances made out of shiny chrome. Although Fat Man is interrupted before he can reach sexual climax, the build-up of the scene illustrates a post-war version of the (wet hot) American Dream that is contrived through a desire for heteronormative domesticity, the desire for wife sublimating from a masculinized desire for capital and consumable products, which in turn is conflated with the exploitation of raw materials and a fetishization of militarism that feeds an increasingly violent need for conquest.

Round Rose’s participation in the seductive dialogue with Fat Man exposes her complicated complicity as a diasporic Asian American in the violent nationalist fantasies that underscored US justifications behind the atomic disaster. The play introduces Round Rose not in her shadow radio persona of Tokyo Rose, but sitting at a typewriter, composing a letter that begins, “Dear America” (Clements 50). Round Rose, like Fat Man, is also “high-fidelity”—her version of hi-fi comes in the form high-fidelity citizenship, a blind loyalty to her home country and a highly skilled mimicry of citizenship’s appearance: “I know you will recognize me when you see me,” Round Rose writes in her letter, “We will look at each other—one American to another” (Clements 50). Round Rose continues, describing her university pedigree, carefully styled hair and tailored American suit: “I look just like you like me” (Clements 50). Round Rose signs off her letter, “your true American daughter, Tokyo Rose” and waits for a response from America that never comes (Clements 51). Round Rose’s patience signifies

her nationalistic devotion to the single story of her assimilation to citizenship, even as citizenship is an unrequited promise for the racialized diasporic subject. As Ahmed writes, “One could think of national love as a form of waiting . . . *The failure of return extends one’s investment*” (emphasis in original 131). Intercut with Round Rose’s monologue is the voice of Koji, a victim of the Hiroshima bombing. As Koji describes what he sees in the “charred landscape of hell” wreaked in the immediate aftermath of the bomb, Round Rose stands her ground and reiterates, “They will recognize me . . . They will know who I am because I love them . . . I am not Japanese . . . I am American” (Clements 51-52). Her shift in pronoun from directly addressing America as “you” in the letter, to referring to America in third-person plural as “they,” even whilst insisting she belongs to America, demonstrates her increasingly strained loyalty as the country she has worked so hard to assimilate towards rejects her.

Round Rose’s love for and commitment to America is equal to her disavowal of Japan, though both nations collude in her treachery. The historical allusion to Iva Toguri’s impossible position—as a US citizen of Japanese heritage who was effectively stranded in Japan after arriving as a tourist shortly before the war broke out, prohibited from returning to the US in 1941 on the grounds of her racial identity, captured as a Japanese POW and enlisted to broadcast Allied-propaganda, then tried for treason upon her return to her home country—underscores the pressure that Round Rose feels, leading to her despair and eventual disillusionment with US nationalism. Round Rose’s despair leads her directly into the plastic arms of Fat Man, at a point when she is about to break from the pressure of her multiple, competing roles as model-minority, inscrutable Asian, seductive dragon-lady, and enemy alien. “Look at me,” Round Rose implores through the radio, “Could you imagine I was a woman who loved you? Could you imagine I wanted a family? A home? A husband? A baby? Could you imagine I was just a woman, not the enemy...just a woman?” (Clements 86). Round Rose’s response nevertheless illustrates the multiple affective binds of gendered, racialized citizenship. Ahmed observes that “The reproduction of femininity is tied up with the reproduction of the national ideal through the work of love” (124). In expressing her desire to be seen as “just a woman,” Round Rose appears to plead for some recognition of her humanity, but in pleading to be affirmed strictly within the bounds of gendered domesticity, Round Rose unwittingly accedes to a racialized, patriarchal power structure that will again, ultimately and intimately, betray her.

The elements of the nuclear family come together to create only a short-lived peace. After all, this is a *nuclear* family, constituted by unstable elements, and its consummation naturally leads to a literal coming of the bomb in *Burning Vision* as the play swells to climax at the end of Movement Three. As the world of

the stage moves into chaos, Fat Man jumps up from his Lazy-boy poised to protect family and country. Quyhn Nhu Le notes that, Fat Man often explains his actions “through the paternal language of ‘responsibility’” and “iterates the discourse of ‘benevolent paternalism’” (55; 63). Of course, Fat Man’s benevolence is a kind of hollow or “dummy” benevolence. As the sounds of war swirl into a crescendo around him, Fat Man becomes increasingly disoriented, taking on a stance of defensive fear. Through his increasing panic, Fat Man begins to mimic what he has heard on the television: “Nothing is wrong. I repeat, nothing is wrong. Everything is under control” (93). Fat Man’s insistence on vocalizing denial is starkly ironic in the face of his overzealous and unthinking reactions to the on-stage commotion. Fat Man’s inability to process what is happening reveals how isolated he really is and how, as a “living room soldier,” he has at once been conditioned to read crisis everywhere, and at the same time, is not at all prepared to deal with any actual crisis (94). Turning to his “family,” he can now only see the threats he has been trained by popular representation to perceive: stereotypes of a savage Indian and an enemy alien. In his panic, Fat Man picks up a gun and drives Little Boy and Round Rose out of his house. The two leave wordlessly without protesting Fat Man’s violent threats. As soon as he realizes they are gone, Fat Man snaps out of his abject panic for a moment and suddenly expresses regret. Yet his regret remains a kind of “hi-fi” regret, an unreal real regret, an unthinking reaction. Looking around at his empty home, he intones, “Where is my family? What did I say? . . . I didn’t mean it. I said it..I did it...but I didn’t mean it. I’m sorry. What did I do wrong?” (Clements 99).

Through this representation of “hi fi” apology, we can read Clements’ critique of neo-liberal reconciliation discourses. Though Round Rose leaves Fat Man’s house berated, humiliated, and without a word, she comes back at the end of movement three to deliver a monologue on apology. What follows is a sarcastic and cynical rant targeting neo-liberal attitudes surrounding apology, an ideology that drives much of the contemporary momentum towards reconciliation. She ends her rant by turning to questions of law and institutional justice: “And the next time someone says, ‘There’s one law for everyone.’ Say, I’m sorry, you’re an idiot” (Clements 101). By pointing out the hypocrisy of neo-liberal democracy, in which “there’s one law that applies equally to everyone” (except in the many documented cases when it does not), Round Rose finally offers a searing critique of state and corporate-initiated reconciliation, where “politicians . . . cops . . . priests . . . logging companies . . . mining companies . . . electric companies . . . water companies,” and so on, feel no remorse, only regret for being caught in wrongdoing (100-101). The discourse of reconciliation, as Round Rose illustrates, is another version of the single story intended to reinforce historic amnesia and create “empty empathy.” This is clear as Round

Rose states, “Half the time we don’t even know what we’re sorry about . . . You can’t really be sorry for something you don’t want to remember, can you” (100). In the concluding sections, I continue to explore Clements’s critique of apology alongside other alternatives for reconciliation in *Burning Vision*.

ON RECONCILIATION

Reconciliation discourses have increasingly been engaged by contemporary nation-states to address histories of trauma caused by war, colonialism, and racial discrimination. Recent works by scholars such as Melissa Nobles, Julie McGonegal, Will Kymlicka and Bashir Bashir, Mark D. Walters, and Andrew Schaap suggest that reconciliation is a powerful strategy for liberal democracies to sustain political legitimacy in the face of past exclusions and oppressions.⁵ As Jennifer Henderson and Pauline Wakeham note, Canada has taken a leading role in “the global trend of reconciliation” (4). In particular, Henderson and Wakeham observe that Canada is notable for its “culture of redress” which can be traced back to activist movements agitating for government recognition of social inequities in the post-1982 Constitutional era and concomitant official responses that began with Brian Mulroney’s 1988 apology for the internment of Japanese Canadians during World War II (4). Raising the stakes of official reconciliation and redress in recent years, the government of Canada established the Indian Residential Schools Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) in 2008 to address the historic traumas and intergenerational legacies of residential schools for Aboriginal people and communities. The TRC final report and 94 Calls to Action were released in 2015 to public interest, but progress on the calls to action have been uneven.⁶ While these and other campaigns for official recognition and redress have doubtlessly (but to differing degrees) galvanized communities, brought public attention to historic injustices, and provided some affirmation for survivors, the politics and processes of reconciliation continue to beg unsettling questions. For instance, to what degree is reconciliation commensurable with lingering effects of structural and direct violence? How do governments, societies, institutions, and corporations reckon with the affective dimensions of apology? What are the

5. See Melissa Nobles, *The Politics of Official Apologies*; Julie McGonegal, *Imagining Justice*; Will Kymlicka and Bashir Bashir, eds., *The Politics of Reconciliation in Multicultural Societies*; Mark D. Walters, “The Jurisprudence of Reconciliation”; ; and Andrew Schaap, *Political Reconciliation*.

6. See Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada *Honouring the Truth, Reconciling for the Future*; Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, *TRC Calls to Action*; CBC News Interactive, *Beyond 94*.

politics of representation and reconciliation between diasporic and Indigenous communities who have experienced and participated in different histories of traumas and loss, while also negotiating unequal power and privilege? And, finally, is reconciliation an ethical or even desirable outcome for those who have been wronged?

In “States of Arrest: The Affective Temporalities Structuring Canada’s Official Apologies,” Quayhn Nhu Le examines discourses of public apology within Canada against literary representations of Asian and Indigenous relationality Joy Kogawa’s *Obasan* and Marie Clements’s *Burning Vision*. Le’s analysis of reconciliation discourses in Canada cogently illustrates how the white settler state deploys apology to buttress its own power by monopolizing historical narratives that undermine Indigenous futurity and enfold racialized others into complicity with settler colonialism. Le writes, “Separated by twenty years, Prime Minister Brian Mulroney’s 1988 public apology and Prime Minister Stephen Harper’s 2008 public apology both employ narratives of progress that unevenly strive to register Nikkei internment and Indian residential schools into the past tense of Canadian history” (“States of Arrest” 43-44). Specifically, Le cites an interview with Roy Miki, who has written powerfully about the Japanese Canadian redress movement,⁷ in which Miki “laments that the 1988 apology constitutes a loss for the Nikkei community insofar as the nation-state ‘strengthened itself by taking ownership of redress’ and re-narrated it within the official history of Canada” (qtd. in Le “States of Arrest” 42). As Le shows, contemporary settler colonial states like Canada turn to public apologies to perform resolution over differentially inflected anxieties from historical wrongdoings committed against racialized settler and Indigenous populations. Le writes, “These apologies’ repeated citations of emotions . . . suggest affect’s critical relation to the activation of the future oriented settler national narrative” (“States of Arrest” 44). Moreover, the emphasis on temporality within official apologies works to reinforce a linearly progressive conception of history which also serves to assert the singular dominance of the national narrative. This single story of the nation, like Fat Man, presents itself as benevolent and responsible, even while apologetically admitting to the opposite in a past it glibly disavows. As Coulthard states, “reconciliation takes on a temporal character as the individual and collective process of overcoming the subsequent legacy of past abuse, not the abusive colonial structure itself” (qtd. in Le “States of Arrest” 42). Dian Million points to the powerful affects and effects of history when she writes, “‘history’ is not just a set of individuals who attempt to write narratives that glen the nature of a ‘past’; it is a bastion” (“An Indigenous Feminist

7. See Roy Miki and Cassandra Kobayashi, *Justice in Our Time*; and Miki, *Redress*.

Approach" 64).

Million's work on "felt theory" through her engagement with First Nation's women's first-person and experiential narratives directly pushes back against the violent singularity of national histories. Million writes, these "narratives were political acts in themselves that in their time exploded the measured 'objective' accounts of Canadian (and U.S.) colonial histories" ("An Indigenous Feminist Approach" 54). Million's felt theory draws attention both to the affective dimensions of historical knowledge as well as the space for intersecting and interanimating temporalities through the "inclusion of our lived experience, rich with emotional knowledges, of what pain and grief and hope meant or mean now in our pasts and futures" ("An Indigenous Feminist Approach" 54). Indigenous women's narratives and testimonies, Million contends, exist as "alternative truths, as alternative historical views" ("An Indigenous Feminist Approach" 64). One of *Burning Vision's* key critical and creative interventions is to dramatize and materialize a version of history that relies less on the singular image of the self-contained mushroom cloud, and instead resembles the radioactive dust that contaminates everything in Port Radium after it has been mined.⁸ As LaCapra writes, the process of empathetic unsettlement involves seeking:

knowledge whose truth claims are not one-dimensionally objectifying or narrowly cognitive but involve affect and may empathetically expose the self to an unsettlement [that would be] addressed in a manner that strives to be cognitively and ethically responsible as well as open to the challenge of utopian aspiration. (41-2)

LaCapra's suggestion that empathetic unsettlement compels "utopian aspiration" may be a lofty claim, but *Burning Vision* indeed not only explodes the uni-dimensional hypocrisy of nuclear power and post-war reconciliation, but it also suggests alternative forms of unsettlement and ethical reconciliation. The play does so through its gestures towards the Dene delegation of elders and community members who travelled to Hiroshima, Japan to meet with *hibakusha*, surviving victims of the nuclear bombing, and through its allusions to a Dene prophecy from the late nineteenth century. These gestures instantiate McCall's reading of "the politics of listening across great distances and the accidents of historical and geographical overlappings" that ground the play's ethical

8. Kyoko Matsunaga has written about Japanese, Native American, and Asian American authors who have likewise looked at nuclear power and culture in their literary works. See Matsunaga, "Resisting and Surviving Apocalypse"; "Before and After the Quake"; "Radioactive Discourse and Atomic Bomb Texts"; and "Leslie Marmon Silko and Nuclear Dissent in the American Southwest."

argument about reconciliation (255).

In 1998, a delegation of Sahtu Dene elders and community members traveled to Japan to commemorate the Hiroshima bombings, meet with survivors, and to apologize for the role that their people and their land had played in the construction of the atomic bomb. The event was documented in Blow and Gauvreau's documentary *Village of Widows*, which was produced in the midst of the Deline negotiations with the Canadian government for a review of the mine and its environmental effects on the land and people. *Village of Widows* is one of a handful of non-fiction sources that have attempted to chronicle the story of uranium mining on Dene territories in the context of the building of the atomic bomb and the ongoing pressure by the Canadian government and industry to pursue a course of aggressive resource extraction on these territories. These accounts, including David Henningson's 2005 documentary *Somba-Ke: The Money Place*, and Peter Van Wyck's book *Highway of the Atom*, make notable reference to the 1998 apology delegation and to the late nineteenth century prophecy that warns of strange people arriving at the mine site and using what they take from the ground to burn and harm others in a faraway place. *Village of Widows* is notable for its primary footage of the delegation's visit, as well as interviews with people who worked in the mines, their family members, members of the Sahtu Dene community affected by the mining, and Deline community leaders.

McCall writes about the significant role of Dene elder, the late-George Blondin, who performed in *Burning Vision* and also attended the delegation to Japan. Clements has credited Blondin's work as part of her inspiration for writing *Burning Vision* (McCall 250). McCall explains that "Over the course of at least fifteen years, Blondin collected and wrote stories told by elders living in Denendeh (the Dene people's territory, which stretches across part of Northwest Territories, Nunavut, and northern British Columbia)" (249). Blondin retells the vision of the Dene prophet Etseo Aya who "foresaw the extraction of a rock from a site on the east side of Sahtu or Great Bear Lake, where Port Radium is today, as well as the terrible consequences of transforming that rock into fire" in his book *When the World was New* (McCall 250). During the delegation's visit to a Korean *hibakusha* hospital in Hiroshima, Blondin says to the survivors, "We, as an Indian, we share your sorrow, our sorrow, and we share that together" (qtd. in McCall 247). In this moment of intimate, shared conciliation and grief, Blondin locates the delegation's actions within a Dene ethical worldview, one that grounded in reciprocity. Blondin states earlier in the documentary that "Sharing is the foundation of Dene law" (Blow and Gauvreau).

Village of Widows is significant because it also highlights the importance of women's contributions and women's leadership within the Sahtu Dene

community. Cindy Kenny-Gilday, then chair of the Deline Dene Band Uranium Committee, also attended the delegation and spoke words of apology to survivors of the Hiroshima bombing: “It is not only as an Aboriginal person—a Dene from Deline—I take on a personal responsibility for what’s happened here but also what is present now” (Blow and Gauvreau). Kenny-Gilday’s words draw attention to her positionality across multiple dimensions: her identity as an Indigenous woman, specifically the importance of location and her connection to Dene lands, as well as her personal stakes. She also takes care to address and acknowledge the specific histories that have impacted both communities but also to locate the relevant and wide-ranging impacts to the present. Later in her apology, Kenny-Gilday widens the geo-political frame to global events as well as the intergenerational impacts on her daughter. Like Kenny-Gilday, Gina Bayha, another member of the Uranium Committee, draws connections between reconciling relationships not only with people, but complex relationships that include the land:

To us, the land and the resources and everything is very sacred because of the fact that we rely on it to continue to live. And that very source is actually what caused damage to other people. It’s very hard to comprehend. People here, I think, basically want to make amends and to be able to acknowledge that this actually happened, and yet, at the same time, we acknowledge that something as sacred as that that came from the land could be just as harmful. (Blow and Gauvreau).

Here, Bayha makes reference to the profound relationalities between Dene people and the lands, while also acknowledging the complexity of having been involved through the land and through the labour of capital extraction in harming others. Thus, the alternative form of reconciliation in this context requires acknowledgement as well as reciprocity, acknowledgements of shared grief and sorrow, as well as the sharing of complex burdens of responsibility. Not only that, as the Dene delegation articulate in their apologies, the process of reconciliation is ongoing and spiritual. Kenny-Gilday states, “I hope that this first visit will become a pilgrimage for peace from our people and we will continue working and praying together for peace” (Blow and Gauvreau).

WHAT’S LEFT TO SAY AFTER SORRY?

Set in the heated throes of atomic past, presents, and futures, *Burning Vision* dramatizes ways in which carceral state logics of militarization, exploitation, assimilation, and dispossession at once discipline and punish Indigenous and Asian bodies and, at the same time, enlist Indigenous and Asian

subjects to perpetrate carceral state violence. McCall writes, “In order for reconciliation to function differently from amnesia, it must begin with a recognition of interrelationships, as well as with an acknowledgement of how benefits and privileges are accrued for one group at the expense of another” (247). War heightens the urgency and intensity of the state’s demands on its subjects, strengthening the state’s monopoly on violence and directing subjects to actively work in complicity with state violence. Yet, the play is saved from despair through its allusion to a Dene prophecy. *Burning Vision’s* engagement with notions of the prophetic offers characters and audiences a mode of telling and listening through time that counters historical truth and reconciliation.

Round Rose also draws attention to the temporality of apology in her rant at the end of Movement Three. Instead of emphasizing a linear temporal trajectory where “sorry” marks a moment in time to demarcate past from future, Round Rose instead *slows down the moment of sorry’s when*. She states, “You have to know when to be sorry. You can’t really be sorry for something you don’t want to remember, can you” (100). Pushing against “sorry” as a technology for historical forgetting, Round Rose instead insists upon “sorry” as an active state of remembrance and acknowledgement. Later in her rant, Round Rose locates reconciliation as a process that actively locates the past within present practices, thoughts, and actions. She states, “Don’t be a sorry ass, be sorry before you have to say you are sorry. Be sorry for even thinking about, bringing about something sorry-filled” (101). Round Rose’s words here are an apparent conundrum: *How can you be sorry before you have to say you are sorry?* But the ethical attitude towards reconciliation presented by Round Rose is one that collapses linear temporalities. It is not, as she underlines, “after sorry” that should be the focus of our efforts, but “before sorry.” Round Rose’s critique of apology is a critique of remembrance, structures of time and history, and structures of feeling over collective memories and responsibilities.

Both history and prophecy are forward and backward thinking genres. History is often narrated to support heroic or redemptive themes, so its form and structure directs us to find meaning within its enclosures. Prophecies tell time in a different way, offering a vision of the future that overhangs the present and, in that way, invites us to look for meaning in our actions. Whereas we view history as somehow past and stable, and therefore a source of reliable evidence for telling the future (looking at the mistakes of the past to decide how to act in the future), prophecy offers ways of connecting past, present, and future that carry no such guarantees. What prophecy does is change to nature of the conversation to ask, *if this is going to happen, what is my part in it? What is my responsibility I knowing this?* In other words, prophecy depends upon a politics of acknowledgement that guides actions on contingent knowledge and putting

ethical responsibilities at the forefront.

I read the end of the play, which reviewers interpret as voicing hope, as returning to the theme of prophecy and prophetic time. In the last movement, *Burning Vision* turns to the words of those who communicate across distances of time and space, those who speak to others without guarantee of being heard and who look for signs of being spoken to by their distant loved ones. First, the words of the Dene See-er, who says, “This burning vision is not for us now . . . it will come a long time in the future. It will come burning inside” (120); second, The Widow, who speaks into the fire towards her deceased ore-carrier husband: “You have carried our burden long enough, you do not have to carry me. I will care you inside” (120); and third, Koji the grandson, who is actually the son of baker Rose and atomic bomb victim Koji after they meet on the Radium Prince: “I know Obachan, I can hear them. They hear us” (121). After these words, the sounds of radio announcers, who have been broadcasting in the Slavey language at intervals throughout the play calling out messages for loved ones back home, pronounce messages one after the next. Joining the Slavey announcer are a Japanese announcer and a Canadian announcer: “Hello Grandad, brother, sister, son, husband, father, cousin, nephew, friend, my teacher, my love . . . We love and miss you” (122). Koji’s words uttered just before the curtain falls are: “They hear us and they are talking back in hope over time” (122). These characters speak out towards the play’s conclusion about the possibilities of reciprocity and transformation. McCall provides an analysis of the theme of transformation in several of the characters. She writes, for instance, that “Koji is strongly associated with the idea of transformation, and his journey from Japan to Sahtu Dene territory takes place through a hole in the sky (250). As McCall explains, characters who double each other and transform through the play “create a sense of shared responsibility for unwitting historical correspondences” (258). By listening across time with an open ear to the prophetic, characters not only enact acknowledgement, but also reciprocity.

If we listen carefully to how this play tells time, its form, structure and content in fact invite us to listen differently to and through time, to lost ones reaching out in greeting and affirming their love. Koji the grandson, who willfully hears these messages, is not necessarily expressing his own hopefulness, but invites the audience to see the hopefulness of the people before us, who “hear us and talk back in hope over time.” Prophecy is offered as a gesture of hope—a message about the future that those who utter it hope others will hear. Thus, Clements’ turn to the prophetic not only defies recent trends towards institutional reconciliation discourses that have proliferated since the 1980s but also, significantly, poses an alternative and hopeful ethics of reconciliation. Repeated allusions to prophecy in *Burning Vision* intervene and

resist against state technologies of truth and reconciliation, opening up an imaginative plane where different possibilities for action and forgiveness may be tested. As the play demonstrates, prophecy guides action that recognizes and reaches across generational, geographical, national, and racial differences through principles of hope, compassion, and responsibility.

CHAPTER 5

BODIES OF WATER: ASIAN CANADIANS IN/ACTION WITH WATER

RECURSION, OR V. 06.07.2018

Different versions of this chapter have previously been published and permissions have been provided for it to appear in this dissertation.

It was first published as two separate articles, “Eau Water! A Personal Essay” and “The Downstream Project: Speaking with Rita Wong” in the Asian Canadian arts and culture quarterly, *Ricepaper Magazine*, in 2011. The article I pitched to *Ricepaper* was a relatively straightforward profile on the Downstream project and Asian Canadian artists, scholars, and community members involved in grassroots water projects around Vancouver. I proposed interviewing poet-scholar Rita Wong about her recent work on water issues. I also wanted to interview Shahira Sakiyama, an activist and mother of three originally from California, who had attended the World Social Forum on water issues in Brazil in 2005 and had worked with Rita Wong on the St. George Street Rainway Project in Vancouver’s Mount Pleasant neighbourhood. In the process of researching and writing, I found myself asking self-reflexive questions about my own relationship to water. The essay for *Ricepaper* began taking a different shape, incorporating both personal reflection as well as reporting on Downstream, and was eventually published as two adjoining feature articles.¹

1. See Lew, “Eau Water” and “The Downstream Project.”

I continued to follow the Downstream initiatives over the next few years. When Rita Wong and Dorothy Christian put a call out for the *Downstream: Reimagining Water* anthology, I recognized the potential to revise the piece and see it in print whole, as I had originally intended—an extended personal essay. As part of the revisions process, my editors pushed me to add a preface and conclusion to provide more explicit framing of my argument and to give context to the essay's form. In the preface to that version, I alluded to Philip Lopate and Joan Didion as exemplars of the personal essay and went on to explain my intention for my writing in the piece to follow the form of water.²

As I now arrive at the concluding chapter of my dissertation, reconsidering and revising this chapter yet another time, I realize that the writing is like water not only in *form* but in *flow*, in the sense that in this version/recursion, it has moved into another cycle of action, meaning, and circumstance. Situating the writing in the context of my dissertation, I come to see that my writing has not only been informed by the genealogies of form I had absorbed from reading Euro-American essayists like Didion and Lopate, but also by the Indigenous intellectuals I had been reading and researching for years for this project on writing and solidarity: Vine Deloria Jr., Elizabeth Cook-Lynn, Winona Wheeler, Lee Maracle, and Thomas King. My point here is not to say that I am a better ally now that I claim to be inspired by Indigenous writers. Instead, it is to draw attention to recursion, which I would like to theorize in two ways, both as *re-occurrence* and *re-cursiveness*.

Recursion as reoccurrence suggests repetition, return, resumption. Deanna Reder has written about the significance of Indigenous autobiography as culturally specific epistemological form (“Writing Autobiographically” 161). Reder identifies Indigenous autobiographical form with a common pattern or practice of self-identifying and genealogical introductions.³ Reder writes, “to do so, to describe yourself and your family and where you come from, follows Indigenous protocols that are part of an intellectual tradition” (“Writing

2. See Lew, “Bodies of Water.”

3. I want to make clear that Reder explicitly counters pan-Indigenous generality in her analysis, situating her understandings of Indigenous autobiography first in relation to Cree concepts and her own theory/narrative, as well as locating her claims within culturally-specific examples and references to concepts and practices located within other Indigenous epistemological contexts. Her point is to avoid the tendency to conflate Indigenous form with Indigenous identity. Reder notes, “The problem with defining and codifying Native American literary aesthetics, for example, as holistic, cyclical, and humourous, is that such projects often deteriorate into defining the Native American person as spiritual, non-hierarchical, and funny. These identity checklists not only are prescriptive and oppressive but are unable to account for the diversity and range of writers and their works” (“Writing Autobiographically” 157).

Autobiographically" 160). In another piece recalling an instance when she heard Harold Cardinal speak at the UBC First Nations Longhouse, she describes Cardinal introducing and explaining the Cree concept Neehiyow:

"When I say I am a 'Neehiyow' what I what I really am saying is that I come from 'the people who seek the knowledge of the Four Worlds.' In short, when I apply the word Neehiyow to myself, what I am saying is that "I am a seeker of knowledge."

As Cardinal understands it, the Four Worlds contain so much knowledge that not even over the course of a lifetime could one person learn everything. Writes Cardinal: 'Hence [the Cree] saw the pursuit of knowledge as an unending, continuous, intergenerational exercise . . .' (Reder "Awina Maga Kiya" n.p.)

When I first began attending events at the UBC First Nations House of Learning, I was surprised to hear nearly the same words of welcome and introduction repeated at the beginning of every event. Over time, I learned that the specific recursive practices of being (attending, witnessing, participating) in Indigenous spaces at UBC—land acknowledgements;⁴ recounting specific stories about place, location, and landmarks; and self-identifying, to name a few—are aspects of ceremony and protocol. While Reder's experience of this is necessarily different than mine, her words speak into my experience as well: "it was through teachers there that I learned the value of following Coast Salish protocols" ("Awina Maga Kiya" n.p.). In my current role as an Educational Consultant working in the area of Indigenous engagement at UBC, I often hear settlers asking what the purpose of land acknowledgments are and whether they lose meaning in repetition. On one hand, the people asking generally have the intention to think critically and carefully before acting in order to avoid further Indigenous erasure by engaging in a tokenistic (or worse, empty) gesture.⁵ On the other hand, as I rethink the role of recursion in learning, knowledge practice, and solidarity, I have come to think of this question as a misapprehension of form.

Earlier this week, on July 4, 2018, twelve protestors were arrested from the Ironworkers Memorial Bridge that connects East Vancouver, the neighbourhood where I live, and Burnaby, the municipal site of a planned pipeline expansion, to the North Shore, where the Squamish and Tsleil Waututh reserves are located. Like the rest of Greater Vancouver, this area is unceded land, land that has never been given up, surrendered, or signed away by treaty. The protestors, including

4. As Wilkes et. al. write, "At many Canadian universities it is now common to publicly acknowledge Indigenous lands, treaties, and peoples" (89).

5. For instance, see Justin Wiebe and K. Ho, "An Introduction to Settler Colonialism at UBC: Part Three."

Will George, a member of the Tsleil Waututh Nation, suspended themselves from the bridge to form an “aerial blockade” against the construction of the Trans Mountain Pipeline. George’s statement after his release stated:

I will remain in fierce opposition. It is in my blood to protect the water. Our Indigenous rights are being completely ignored, the safety of our water is being ignored, and most of all my son’s future is at stake. I will do whatever it takes to protect the water and my family and your family. (qtd. in Ip and Johnston)

Crisis does not signal an end, nor even necessarily a beginning, but rather a moment of difference in recursion. In *Discourse on Colonialism*, Aimé Césaire writes, “My only consolation is that periods of colonization pass, that nations sleep only for a time, and that peoples remain” (42). Recursion in the sense of repetition or reoccurrence can be read as a knowledge practice for Indigenous survival and resurgence, one that also provides openings for solidarity. I would suggest that learning to identify and acknowledge recursion located within culturally specific contexts and particular historical reverberations is an important step for settlers seeking to engage in solidarity. A few months ago, I was in California writing when I got a message from Rita Wong calling for solidarity and support to join the Protect the Inlet group to mount resistance to the Trans Mountain pipeline (“26 Apr 2018”). I found myself back in a very similar situation to when I was working on the very first draft of this essay, writing towards a deadline and reflecting on my own inaction. This is not something I can resolve through writing; I can only acknowledge it. But in the act of writing, I can also draw attention to George’s words and his explicit invitation to solidarity: “I will do whatever it takes to protect the water and my family *and your family.*”

A second way that I theorize recursion in this chapter is as recursiveness that impels not only rewriting but revision, not only recitation but resuscitation. Recursion is, therefore, a textual negotiation. Recursive strategies of writing do away with notions of innocence, purity and originality in the spirit of writing. As Trinh offers, “writing constantly refers to writing, and no writing can ever claim to be ‘free’ of other writings” (21). Citation, furthermore, cannot be separated from suscitation, or an acknowledgement, indeed incitement, of the cited text’s breath and life. By enacting a practice of “speaking nearby” in my scholarly and creative writing, my intent is to suggest ethical models of critical engagement based upon an ethic of love and valuing life, rather than writing practices that cause harm and erasure. Moreover, speaking nearby demands accountability towards those with whom one has chosen to keep company in discourse. By accountability, I refer back to the notion of reciprocity I have been developing throughout my project: a responsibility of opening up to personal

transformation, admitting vulnerability, and sharing. In recursion, a different breath and life must also be added to the citation: thus, *re-(sus)-citation*.

MOBILIZING IN/ACTION

I would like to acknowledge that I wrote this essay while living on the ancestral, unceded territories of Coast Salish peoples. The essay also touches upon my observations and experiences while living on the ancestral territories of the Huchuin (Ohlone) peoples. My gratitude for the privilege of living and being a guest on these lands and waters.

Having lived my entire life on the West Coast, I tend to take water for granted. At the same time, living by the ocean has attuned me to water's continuous cycles and its intense power. I was, even before writing the piece, obsessed with water-related disasters. My worries about the environment could be captured in three stock images: a polar bear clinging to a melting ice cap, cars floating on hurricane-flooded streets, and ducks covered in crude oil. Even so, working on the essay confronted me with my ignorance about water issues and water activism, both globally and locally. After interviewing Rita, I kept thinking about how not a single Chinese Canadian showed up for the 2007 Protect Our Sacred Waters event organized by Dorothy Christian and Denise Nadeau. As a scholar of Asian Canadian and Indigenous studies, my interests have moved increasingly toward questions of culture and activism in a settler-colonial context. As I worked on the essay, I couldn't shake feelings of guilt and helplessness: researching Asian Canadian water activism drew attention to my own inaction, the precise problem Dorothy Christian had called Chinese Canadians out on after Protect Our Sacred Waters.

When Rita and Dorothy put the call out for the Downstream anthology, I recognized the potential to revise the piece and see it in print whole, as I had originally intended—an extended personal essay in the tradition of Phillip Lopate and Joan Didion that flows from topic to topic, personal to factual, intimate to grand scale. This form reflects the form and flow of water in the varied ways it touches our lives and the ways we interact with it. Water is both inside of us and outside of us. Though our interactions with water are often intimate and mundane, bodies of water and water issues can also appear distant and overwhelming. How much does the average city-dweller know about the journey water takes to arrive at the kitchen tap, or where the water that flushes down the toilet goes? What kinds of connections can we begin to make between

our own watery bodies, the water we use in our homes, and the immense ocean waters or the hurricane waters that occasionally devastate communities? Moreover, the Downstream project invites us to investigate culturally sensitive approaches to water, which directs us to think about how water flows through and shapes our cultural histories. In addition to becoming more aware of our daily water uses and global water issues, what kinds of creative practices can we undertake to develop a more ethical relationship to water and, in turn, more ethical relationships with each other across cultural, racial, national, geographical, and other divides? What can we learn from how our different ancestors travelled and treated the waters that made their lives possible? How do the stories we tell about our cultural communities and water affect our water practices? While pursuing the original goal of profiling some actions taken by Asian Canadians on water issues, I continued to be provoked by these larger questions, which demanded further thinking through in writing. I started to wonder, in what ways might writing on water constitute a form of action with water? After talking with Rita, the notion of a participatory water ethic struck me as offering some answers to my questions. I also turned to Trinh Minh-ha's concept of "speaking nearby" to guide me as I explored the many flows of water that converge in my essay.

Water's ubiquity and its scope can make it an overwhelming topic to tackle. I certainly struggled with scope and scale as I drafted and revised this piece of writing. The sense of feeling overwhelmed or powerless can be a huge barrier to taking action on any issue. But changing how we think about power and action may help to unlock some of the painful inertia that comes from not knowing how or where to begin exercising our ethical responsibilities for social justice and environmental stewardship. For example, what if the principle guiding human power in relation to water was love instead of control? Likewise, recognizing the potential of creative practice to change minds and thus influence actions may redefine what constitutes activism while reminding us that imagination is a vital part of taking action.

This essay traces changes in my thinking on water as I contemplated connections between global water disasters, local water initiatives, Asian Canadian cultural activism, and my own anxieties over inaction. I came to realize that because we interact with water so regularly and intimately in our daily lives, even when we don't think we are being active with water, we nevertheless consciously and unconsciously enact ways of thinking about and relating to water through routine water practices. Therefore, changing our consciousness about water necessarily influences our actions, which in turn can develop and take on more creative forms as we allow ourselves to define and partake in action, and perhaps activism, differently.

THE BLEEDING GULF

Driving to and from the University of California Berkeley campus in the summer of 2010, my attention was repeatedly caught by the radio news that tar balls were washing up almost daily on the southeastern shores of Louisiana. The BP oil spill, which had been set off by the explosion of a drilling rig in a marine oil field on April 20, 2010, had released, by the time it was capped in mid-July, just under 5 million barrels of petroleum in three months' time into the Gulf of Mexico; it was reported to be the petroleum industry's single largest accidental marine spill.⁶ Tar balls are semi-solid clumps of crude oil that form through weathering in the ocean. As an oil slick spreads into the ocean, pieces of it begin to separate and disperse, aided by wind and waves. Some of the chemical components evaporate, and what remains mixes with ocean matter and undergoes further physical and chemical changes, resulting in globs of oil that eventually wash ashore onto beaches. In the months following the BP spill, tar balls appeared on beaches in all five U.S. states bordering the Gulf of Mexico: Louisiana, Alabama, Texas, Mississippi, and Florida.⁷ Reporters described the tar balls as having the shape of coins, and I heard of parents in the affected states bringing their children to nearby beaches to see the tar balls.⁸ I pictured these beach-going families in their cover-ups with umbrellas and plastic buckets, walking in small groups with their heads down, hunting a perverse treasure. The image of "tar coins" and the words of a pilot flying over the area above the spill, who compared the reddish streaks of the spreading oil slick to a bleeding wound,⁹ came suddenly into my thoughts every so often that summer, the last I spent in Berkeley, California, as a PhD student. I waited out those last few weeks of my time in Berkeley sitting on the edge of my apartment building's swimming pool with my legs dangling in the water, reading and preparing my lectures. It

6. See Robertson and Krauss, "Gulf Spill Is the Largest of Its Kind, Scientists Say"; and Glenn Hess, "Congress Stalls on Oil-Spill Response."

7. See Lozano, "Texas Official Says First Known Tar Balls from Gulf Oil Spill Wash Up on State Beaches." As recently as September 2012, tar balls were found washed upon the shores of Louisiana beaches. See Daryl Lease, "The Blobs That Crashed the Party Punditry."

8. In a *New York Times* article reporting on disaster cleanup efforts, published in May 2010, Clifford Krauss and Jackie Calmes describe a Louisiana beach "lined with coin-size tar balls attributed to oil from the BP leak." Kathi Bliss reports that tar balls found on Texas beaches vary in size, but "most are coin sized" (6A).

9. In a video taken on May 7, 2010, which circulated on the Internet, pilot and environmental consultant Tom Hutchings states, "The Gulf appears to be bleeding." See Wathen, "BP Slick." *National Public Radio* did a follow-up interview with Hutchings, where he again compares the "almost burgundy spots of oil" to blood. See Elliot, "Drilling Advocate Frustrated by Handling of Oil Spill."

calmed me to be near water.

It had been a summer of intense instability in my personal life, with the anticipation of more changes to come in the process of moving home to Vancouver. Those inner preoccupations, which at times felt so big, were unsettled and diminished by the larger events of that summer of catastrophe and contradiction, in which I keenly felt the powerlessness of witnessing, from the distance of my California pool, an environmental disaster of such great magnitude. My thoughts often drifted to the surface of the pool, rippling between calm and rough, as I grasped at my everyday routines intricately tied to complex and overwhelming urban infrastructures, and meditated on my relationship to bodies of water.

Years ago, I had read Joan Didion's essay, "Holy Water," which describes in detail the immense yet intricate infrastructure required to keep water in flow around the state of California. Occasionally, when I stood over sinks in California, the words "drain Quail" would come into my head. "Quail," as Didion notes in her essay, "is a reservoir in Los Angeles County with a gross capacity of 1,636,018,000 gallons," and "draining Quail," in Didion's essay, is synecdoche for the elegance and power of a massive engineering structure (one largely buried from view in a complex system of canals, pumps, pipes, and containers) that is able to, at the press of buttons, move vast amounts of water across extensive geographical distances to sustain the quotidian habits of washing, drinking, and flushing the toilet (62). California is the third-largest U.S. state, contains its highest populace and supports its largest economy (ranking among global economies in the top ten, with a larger gross domestic product than the entire country of Canada). Although much of the state has a Mediterranean climate, three deserts—the Mojave, the Colorado, and the Great Basin—cover 16 percent of the landmass in California. Writing in the late 1970s, Didion reflects on the regularity of the well running dry during her childhood, and notes that "[e]ven now the place is not all that hospitable to extensive settlement" (64).

Didion's essay turns on her observations about water and control. On the symbol of the ubiquitous California swimming pool, Didion writes, "a pool is misapprehended as a trapping of affluence, real or pretended, and of a kind of hedonistic attention to the body. Actually a pool is, for many of us in the West, a symbol not of affluence but of order, of control over the uncontrollable" (64). But situated in the context of Didion's 1979 essay collection *The White Album*, which meditates on the rapid and overwhelming social upheavals in the United States

from the 1950s to the 1970s,¹⁰ “Holy Water” is not so much an affirmative commentary on human control over the elements as it is a tense contemplation on the cycles of pressure and release that revolve in the management of both human and water bodies. In particular, the essay points out the intense irony of having created so many measures for control that result only in ever greater feelings of powerlessness.

“Water is important to people who do not have it,” Didion writes, “and the same is true of control” (65). Didion’s analogy rings true, but there is more to unpack. Water is equally significant whether there is too little or too much. Recent water-related natural disasters, like the massive tsunami that followed the 8.9-magnitude Tohoku earthquake in the northeastern Honshu Island of Japan on March 11, 2011, demonstrate that the chaos produced by flood can be as devastating as the inability to provide water during drought. If anything, the desire to control water extends deeper and projects more complex motivations than Didion’s essay suggests. Water encompasses opposites. While we experience water’s power daily in innumerable large and small ways, its most brutal exertions appear in its extreme ends: excess and lack. While it is, as Didion writes, “the only natural force over which we have any control . . . and that only recently,” (64) recent environmental events demonstrate that human control over water is nominal and temporary at best, illusory at worst. In fact, the very opposition of humans to water is ironic, since human bodies are mostly water.¹¹ If we were to think of ourselves as “bodies of water,” how might that change our behaviour or perceptions? How could a more integral awareness of human relationship to water affect how we think and act in our own lives and in our relationships with other people and other bodies of water? Could focusing on water help to humanize us more?

10. In the book’s well-known title essay, Didion records in characteristic style a set of diverse and seemingly unconnected first-person observations about life around Los Angeles, California, in the 1960s. Combining notes from her own personal life with details about popular music, counterculture, the Black Panther Party, and the Manson family trial, the essay’s tone ranges from anxious ambivalence to jittery awe and tackles the social and political chaos of the 1960s, setting up the collection of essays to follow.

11. Water content of the human body is referred to in medical physiology as body water. Guyton and Hall note that “In the average 70-kilogram adult human, the total body water is about 60 per cent of the body weight” (293). Body water varies; the exact level of body water in an individual changes constantly throughout the day, and body water varies from person to person, depending on factors such as age, gender, and fat content in the body.

HUMANIZING THE DISASTER

Since 2004, there have been three major submarine earthquake and tsunami disasters in the Asia-Pacific region. The first and deadliest of the three was triggered in December 2004 by the Sumatra-Andaman earthquake, whose hypocentre was located northwest of Sumatra, Indonesia, about 160 kilometres underwater in the Indian Ocean. The 9.0-magnitude earthquake initiated a series of powerful tsunamis that amassed over 230,000 casualties in fourteen countries, including Indonesia, Thailand, India, and Sri Lanka.¹² In the months that followed the catastrophe, donations to the Canadian Red Cross alone delivered over \$130 million in emergency relief funds to the affected areas (Canadian Red Cross). Of this disaster, I recall a few things: I remember waking up the morning after Christmas that year to headlines announcing disaster; I remember making an online donation to the Red Cross in the days following the event and filing away the tax receipt; I remember taking care to avoid footage on CNN and other newscasts of the tsunami, taken in real time by panicked tourists on their cameras and cell phones.

Sitting in pajamas in my living room littered with wrapping paper and Boxing Day tinsel, I found myself disturbed by the relentless circulation of photo and video images of blurry humans clinging to trees and staggering half-naked through muddy, ruined streets. Could these images possibly humanize the disaster, or did they simply heighten the distance between the receivers of the news and the event, adding to an already false sense of security? Even as I avoided the news, my mind dwelt on the scale of destruction, turning over the phrase “hundreds of thousands of lives.” These thoughts were themselves difficult to grasp; they seemed so small, like my actions, like all the accumulated details in my day, in comparison to such a large happening so far away, so forceful, so spectacular.

How do you justify thinking for a living? I was waist-deep in my graduate studies and living in Berkeley when an earthquake struck the Samoan Islands in September 2009. I caught news of it off my Facebook news feed; a few hours later, on the evening news, a precautionary tsunami warning was issued for the San Francisco Bay area, but the effects were never felt on the continent. The Samoa earthquake happened in the same week that Typhoon Ketsana passed over Southeast Asia. In total, this single week of calamity in the Pacific claimed hundreds of casualties, with many more injured and missing. Shortly afterward, I happened to be cleaning out my closet at the same time that one of my friends was collecting donations to send to the Philippines; one afternoon I met her in

12. See Inoue et al., “Field Survey of Tsunami Effects in Sri Lanka.”

San Francisco and transferred two garbage bags of clothing from the trunk of my car to hers. As we parted, she thanked me and I recall being embarrassed, repeating, “It’s nothing, it’s nothing.”

I also happened to be in California, in a hotel room at an academic conference, when the Tohoku earthquake and tsunami struck in March 2011. As with the Samoa earthquake, I first learned of the Japan disaster from my Facebook feed. I was working on my conference paper late into the night and, between paragraphs, would flip to Facebook as news rolled in, first, about the earthquake, and then the tsunami. It was an odd bricolage: rumours of the number of dead intermixed with posts announcing high scores on Farmville. The essay I was writing was a reworking of one of my comps papers, tracing the notion of “Asian Canadian” as an academic field of study—a topic that has preoccupied scholars since the late 1990s. On that trip, a few days later, a group of us gathered around the computer to watch a YouTube rant that had gone viral. A UCLA student named Alexandra Wallace had posted a video blog directed at “these hordes of Asian people that UCLA accepts . . . every single year” (World Monitor TV). Observing that the Asian students in question do not “know American manners,” Wallace points to an example of students answering their cell phones in the library, noting in frustration that the students “[must be] going through their whole families, just checking on everybody from the tsunami thing.” One part of the video, which inspired a backlash of responses, shows Wallace mock-answering her cell phone by saying “OH! Ching chong ling long ting tong!”¹³

My students squirm when I bring up the topic of race. They like to insist that historic injustices like the head tax and internment are simply that—historic; the multicultural world we live in is unafflicted by race. The blatant and brazen racism exhibited by Wallace in her video diary seemed to shock and certainly to outrage many people who watched and shared the video in the ensuing weeks of the controversy before the clip had been removed from the Internet and Wallace had apologized, withdrawn from UCLA, and faded from public scrutiny. But far from being anomalous, Wallace’s vitriolic contempt toward Asians is remarkable only for its ordinariness. Nothing she observes about Asian American students ventures off the established script of yellow-peril invasion, an anti-Asian trope that has circulated alongside the “Ching Chong Chinaman” refrain since at least the nineteenth century. Nor does Wallace’s conflation of ethnic stereotypes, her

13. A small sample of responses to Alexandra Wallace’s video include: David So “Vlog 4: Asians in the Library – UCLA Girl (Alexandra Wallace) Going Wild on Asians”; Tim Chantarangsu, “Asians in the LIBRARY?! Perspective on UCLA Girl Alexandra Wallace”; and Kate Rigg, “UCLA Girl’s Hilarious BFF— ‘Asians in the Library’/Insane Response Video.”

inability to distinguish between the ching chongs and possible tsunami victims, diverge from slant-eyed generalization. “Asian” has perhaps replaced “Oriental” as the acceptable term of parlance but, in the absence of knowledge and ongoing discussion about the specific political and historical contexts that drive movements for pan-ethnic solidarity and identification, it continues to function in many of the same ways as its predecessor — othering, essentializing, objectifying, and generalizing.

For the most part, reactions to the video have disengaged Wallace’s comments from the water-related disaster that prompted them. Another way of looking at it is that the event of the tsunami prompted Wallace to remove her finger from the dam, unleashing a torrent of racial anxiety that has been building in pressure against the surface of North American neo-liberal multiculturalism. What was it in the particulars of seeing Asian American faces in the library after a global environmental catastrophe that caused this young woman to respond so disconnectedly, emphasizing inherited racial hierarchies instead of raising larger questions about extreme storms in the context of climate change? Could it have been that the combined markers of Asian phenotypical difference and national presence triggered a sense of vulnerability that comes from bringing the imagined distances of Japan and natural disaster too close to home? In short, could the sight of “Asians” have disrupted Wallace’s sense of political or environmental security, a security predicated on denial of responsibility for mutual human life and our global environment? And what does all this tell us about the underlying insecurity or powerlessness that prompts this form of violent outburst? These are the kinds of self-reflective questions I would expect my own students to ask about their own reactions to significant world events. While it is tempting to attack Wallace for her ignorance and antipathy, what her insulting rant demonstrates most disturbingly to me is the failure of humanistic education to get through to a political science upper-class woman enrolled at an elite public university, as well as the marked absence of any consciousness or ecological literacy in relation to climate change.

In the days that followed the Tohoku earthquake, warnings were issued about aftershocks and possible tsunami effects that extended, this time, from California to British Columbia. Back in Vancouver, I attended several earthquake-relief fundraisers, including one at Vancouver’s Vivo Media Arts Centre, where Asian Canadian writers Fred Wah, Roy Miki, Proma Tagore, Lydia Kwa, and Hiromi Goto read recent work on water, Japan, and the tsunami. Again, I donated money, collecting books (“all proceeds to Japan Relief Fund”) and tax receipts in return. I was wrought with familiar feelings of compassion, coupled with the numbness, helplessness, and paralysis that I had felt upon donating clothes to support the Philippine typhoon relief efforts and pouring

over news about the BP oil spill. I felt dwarfed by the scale of these catastrophes, which seemed to befall so suddenly, distantly, and powerfully out of control. Technologies introduced these events with an intense immediacy into my consciousness, but also held them there transiently. Unable to grasp the direct effects of these global disasters, I offered what small gestures I could. But my own responses have left me to wonder: In what ways are my actions meaningful? What good does my thinking do?

DOWNSTREAM

Water flows deeply through my family's history, one that reaches across the Pacific from southern Guangdong province in China, where my parents were born, to my present-day life and travels along the West Coast of Canada and the United States. Beyond the scope of my own family, water is perhaps the quintessential element symbolizing Asian migration to the Americas. Settlers of Asian descent began arriving by ship on the Indigenous lands of Turtle Island (North America) as early as the late eighteenth century. A few historians take the origin stories back even further, locating the first contact between China and North America during Buddhist monk Hui Shen's 499 CE nautical expedition to Fusang.¹⁴ My mother's father travelled alone by ship from Kaiping¹⁵ county in southern Guangdong province to British Columbia in 1919. According to scholar Madeline Hsu, Chinese emigration soared from the mid-nineteenth to early twentieth centuries, a large concentration of it originating from the Four Counties (Kaiping, Taishan, Xinhui, Engping) district of southern Guangdong province (19). Rapid population growth mixed with poor agricultural conditions in the Pearl River Delta created poverty for the inhabitants of the Four Counties, which caused the area to become a major source for exporting Chinese labour.

14. My point in bringing up theories of historical contact between China and the Americas that reach back to the fifth century is not to suggest a replacement narrative for contact or "discovery," nor do I mean to reify or legitimate essentialist connections between Asia and the Americas. Instead, my goal is to emphasize that waterways have facilitated possibilities for movement of people, goods, and ideas between Asia and the Americas in ways that may exceed hegemonic expectation. Scholarly work on the topic of Hui Shen's voyage does go back several centuries, as Charles Leland notes in the preface to *Fusang* (v-vi). Literary scholar Lien Chao also sites Hui Shen's mission in the introduction to *Beyond Silence* (ix). Hui Shen also appears as Hoi-shin, based on the Gwoyueu Romatzyh system of romanization. For the sake of consistency, in this essay, I generally render Chinese place and proper names in *pinyin* romanization, which is based on *putonghua*, or Standard Beijing Mandarin.

15. 開平 Kaiping is pronounced "Hoiping" in its original dialect.

Both flood and drought are common to these areas of southeastern China, and to this day dictate agricultural output. Perhaps it was this intimate familiarity with water they carried over with them, and an acknowledgement of a vast ocean joining their two homes, that caused the earliest Chinese settlers to dub Vancouver “Saltwater City.”

A trans-Pacific flow of migrant labourers, in large part, built the infrastructure of this country. Generations of Asian migrants crossed the ocean by boat to arrive and settle on this continent. The image of Asian migrants and refugees arriving by boat is a well-recognized trope in both recent and historical discussions of not only immigration, but also national identity, transnational labour, and race politics in Canada. More recently, the arrival off British Columbia’s coast of nearly five hundred Tamil asylum seekers aboard the MV Sun Sea in the summer of 2010 sparked off another round of debates linking Pacific ocean currents, Asian bodies, and Canadian “national security.” Following close behind a smaller boatload of Tamil passengers who arrived in the fall of 2009, the second group of migrants prompted Prime Minister Stephen Harper to respond that “this trend gives us significant concern” (Leblanc; “Tamil Ship”). Both official discourse and mainstream media have generally expressed more concern over the security of the country’s marine borders than it has for the safety and well-being of those who arrive in numbers from Asia by boat. An iconic historical precedent was set during the May 1914 Komagata Maru incident, in which a cargo ship carrying 376 Indian passengers landed in Vancouver’s Burrard Inlet. Anticipating the ship’s arrival and riding a wave of anti-Oriental sentiment already simmering in the province, British Columbia newspapers warned of “Hindu excursioners . . . the forerunners of a horde of a few million” (“Hindu’s Ship”).¹⁶ The majority of the passengers aboard the Komagata Maru, which had been at sea for seven weeks before anchoring in Vancouver, were refused admittance to the country and detained on the ship for two months before sending it back to Asia.

With this history in mind, I sat down with Rita Wong to talk water. At the time, she was working with Dorothy Christian and others to bring together the group of artists, community workers, and scholars who would eventually contribute to the Downstream project. At the time that we spoke, Wong described Downstream as a gathering for a diverse cohort of collaborators to

16. The Komagata Maru and its passengers appeared as front page news almost daily in *The Province* newspaper from the time of the boat’s arrival through the end of June 1914. By June 20, 1914, headlines asked, “Is it Better to Wait or Throw Hindu’s Out in Quick Time?” For more on anti-Asian sentiment in British Columbia surrounding the Komagata Maru incident, see Chapter 5, “The Komagata Maru Incident,” of W. Peter Ward’s *White Canada Forever* (79–93).

explore and develop a culturally sensitive poetics of water. Asked how her interest in water came about, Wong told me the story of being invited to attend a forum in 2007 called Protect Our Sacred Waters. As Wong recalls, event organizers Dorothy Christian and Denise Nadeau “were concerned about the many threats to water, including, in BC, the possibility that our rivers might be privatized” (29 May 2011). The organizers, especially Christian, wanted to have a public gathering that brought together diverse cultural perspectives on water. Wong, who could not attend the event because she was out of town, forwarded notice of it to friends and members of the Chinese Canadian community at Dorothy Christian’s request. Despite Wong’s efforts, “[n]ot a single Chinese Canadian showed up [. . .] even though threats like water pollution and the privatization of rivers in BC will hurt everyone, including people of Chinese ancestry” (29 May 2011). After that, Wong started to focus more deeply on water and committed to collaborating with Christian on water-related actions.

In the late 1990s, Wong was involved with a grassroots group advocating for and supporting six hundred Fujianese refugees who arrived off the British Columbia coast in four separate cargo ships during the summer of 1999. In particular, Wong connected with many of the ninety Fujianese women who, after their arrival, were detained in prison. In an open letter addressed to Storefront Orientation Services, an organization that provides services to refugee claimants, some of the Fujianese women spoke out about their experiences in the Burnaby Correctional Center for Women: “The ocean waves did not swallow our lives. But here in this civilized country, we are living in such unusual conditions. This is a prison. We long to see the world outside. We dream of being like the people outside—welcoming and celebrating the millennium” (DAARE). Remarking on the “very racist language” surrounding the event, including local newspaper headlines that urged passengers to “Go Home!”, Wong described how she wanted to bridge her theoretical analysis on systemic racism with the daily experiences of people directly affected (7 Jun 2011).¹⁷ Wong spoke with me about the irony of the Canadian government’s involvement in overseas ventures that displace local populations, such as the Three Gorges dam in China,¹⁸ and contribute to the factors that cause people to flee their home countries. This kind of global project displaces people, and when they come to Canada seeking a new home, the government refuses them entry (Wong, 7 Jun 2011). The government

17. On August 15, 1999, Victoria’s *Times-Colonist* ran a front-page article with the headline, “Go Home: We Asked You to Have Your Say about the Latest Wave of Migrants to Reach Our Shores. Your Response was Huge, the Message was Clear: Send Them Back Immediately” (Harnett).

18. The dam was financially supported by Canada’s Export Development Corporation after the project was turned down by the World Bank. See Ian Johnson, “Canada’s Aid Seeded China Dam.”

justifies its irresponsible exclusions by dehumanizing people, imprisoning them, and referring to them as “boat people” and “bogus refugees.”

Wong described writing as a form of commitment to embodied experience, social justice, and evolving communities: “When you write something you have to live by what you’ve written” (7 Jun 2011). Writing, she contends, “changes the way you want to act because it changes the way you see and think” (7 Jun 2011). She felt a natural progression from working with people who’ve journeyed by ocean to the substance of the ocean itself—the gift of water, without which people would not survive.

DAYLIGHTING

Water surrounds Vancouver—not only geographically on three sides of the city, but also from above and below. Six months of the year, the average monthly precipitation is above ten centimetres (Environment and Climate Change Canada); within those months, rain will sometimes fall every day for weeks at a time. That we are blanketed by water is an easy observation to make, but many people may not be aware that much of the city was built over water that continues to run underneath the streets in pipes. I learned this about this in June 2011 at a community design workshop hosted by a group of citizens who have been organizing to “daylight” a stream that runs beneath St. George Street in Vancouver’s Mount Pleasant neighbourhood. The St. George Creek (or Rainway) project is something that Rita Wong has been involved in organizing as part of her water-related activities; the daylighting initiative has been part of the constellation of community, artistic, and scholarly activities surrounding the 2012 Downstream event, and it demonstrates the variety and scale of action and collaboration possible. Daylighting refers to the process of bringing a stream that has been culverted underground to return to surface flows. Over the last century, in the effort to develop the city, nearly all the freshwater streams in Vancouver have been buried underground. About seven hundred kilometres of these “lost” streams and creeks now flow through underground sewers.¹⁹

I grew up in the 1980s on the edges of Vancouver’s Chinatown and the

19. Stephen Hui reported about a digital mapping program developed by the University of British Columbia library, which shows the location of Vancouver’s pre-development shoreline, and buried streams and creeks. The interactive map can be viewed online at: hss.library.ubc.ca/gis-services/oldstreams/. The False Creek Watershed Society, a non-profit organization dedicated to educating the public about the history of the watershed and environmental sustainability, also features a downloadable map and historical overview of the watershed on their website: www.falsecreekwatershed.org/history.html.

Downtown Eastside. I remember when I was elementary school-aged, walking with friends around the marshy flats of False Creek surrounding the Expo '86 site. Expo '86 sparked a massive wave of construction that included dense residential development in the areas around Science World and Yaletown in the years that followed the fair. Even now, it is hard for me to imagine living in these neighbourhoods, which I associate with chain-link fences, bogs littered with trash, and abandoned warehouses. "There is so much more to history than meets the eye," writes Lee Maracle in her essay "Goodbye Snauq" (123). The contemporary urban geography of Snauq, the area now known as False Creek, overlays a historical palimpsest of Indigenous land use, colonial occupation, industrial and urban development, and Indigenous title. Maracle's essay peels back the layers to reveal how water originally slaked the landscape "from what is now 2nd avenue in the south to just below Dunsmuir in the north," extending the shoreline as far east as "what is now Clark Drive" (118) Not only did colonial settlers have to drain the watershed to make room for the CPR railway station and to build sawmills and amenities to serve a booming forestry industry, but to do so they also had to forcibly evict Indigenous peoples by burning down the Squamish village, which had been established there since the nineteenth century. After driving out the villagers, settlers went on to drastically alter the landscape by using the basin as "a garbage dump" (121) for disposing industrial waste, in the process killing wildlife and eradicating flora. The Urban Fare that now sits the centre of the Olympic Village is a dissonant reminder that Snauq, as Maracle describes it, served as a "supermarket" (118) for Musqueam, Squamish, and Tsleil-Waututh people before the arrival of settlers. Reading Maracle's elegiac essay, I try to hold these layers distinctly in my imagination: the industrial wasteland of my childhood, the runners and strollers populating today's steel and glass seawall, and Snauq, a social meeting ground and "common garden" that First Nations communities not only collectively drew from but also tended to (119).

I had purposefully stayed in California during the mayhem of the 2010 Vancouver Games and was absent from the city for much of the construction of the Canada Line and the Olympic Village. In the lead-up to the Olympics, it seemed that every time I visited home, I encountered a brand-new city. Streets that I had known intimately, like Main Street and Granville Mall, were suddenly new, like boyfriends from a past life who had lost weight, gotten sexy haircuts, and developed European accents. My friends were blasé in the face of my astonishment, uttering just one word, "Olympics," as if it alone explained everything. As many people have commented, the long-term benefits of the 2010 Games have yet to be measured. The worldwide attention garnered by the Olympics has already resulted in an influx in global capital for development, and

no doubt will generate investment for years to come. People heralded the 2010 Winter Games as the moment when Vancouver arrived as a world-class city.²⁰ But lately, as I have been walking around the city, trying to get to know the place again, I find myself gripped with inexplicable nostalgia and loss.²¹

The loss of freshwater streams around False Creek has led to the loss of habitat for wildlife that have historically depended on the watershed, including salmon that used to run in the streams that crossed the city. During the community parade, which happened on the same morning as the St. George Creek design workshop, I gathered with a large crowd of people from the neighbourhood, including many children, around a manhole cover at the corner of 6th Avenue and St. George Street and listened quietly to the sound of the water running below. Wong, who lives around the corner from the buried stream, explained to me that when she passes over St. George Street, the underground creek sounds “like it’s gurgling its longing to return to daylight” (29 May 2011). Earlier in the week, students from Mount Pleasant Elementary School had marked the storm drains up and down St. George Street with yellow fish and blue signs reading “Flows to St. George Creek.”

Since 1985, Vancouver has been converting its combined sewer system into a separated one.²² A system of pipes runs water in and drains water out of buildings and homes. Residential pipe systems consist of at least two, and sometimes three, different lines. One line pumps in fresh water from one of Metro Vancouver’s three protected reservoirs—the Capilano Lake, Seymour River, and Coquitlam Lake reservoirs that supply Vancouver’s drinking water. A second line, the sewer system, drains wastewater from our sinks and toilets and directs it to one of five treatment facilities that service Metro Vancouver. Wastewater in Vancouver is collected and treated (often inadequately) before it is released back into the Fraser River, Burrard Inlet, or the Strait of Georgia. A third

20. Not unlike how Expo ‘86 was thought to have heralded Vancouver as a major global metropolis. Not only were the rhetorical patterns of world-class urbanization similar surrounding both events, but Expo ‘86 and the 2010 Olympics also wrought similar patterns of gentrification and capitalization for the city. I thank Rita Wong for urging me to clarify this point.

21. Thinking this through, I wonder, am I in the grips of what Renato Rosaldo has termed “imperialist nostalgia,” a form of mourning that the colonizer adopts for that which she herself has destroyed? Rosaldo, in particular, warns writers against taking on a posture of imperialist nostalgia as a cover of innocence that occludes “complicity with often brutal domination.” See: Renato Rosaldo, *Culture and Truth* (69–70). Once confronted with imperialist nostalgia, it is not only important to acknowledge complicity (I am a settler, and I benefit from certain privileges of settler colonialism and urban development that have political and environmental effects on the territories where I live), but also to proceed with thoughtful action.

22. I learned this attending the St. George Street Parade and Community Design Workshop, June 4, 2011.

line, the storm system, runs outside under the street and directs rainwater back untreated into the local water bodies. During heavy rains, combined sewer overflows cause a mix of untreated waste and storm water to be released into the natural environment. The advantage, then, of a separated system, especially in a rain-heavy city like this one, is that it takes pressure off the sewer system and allows rainwater to be more easily recycled into the watershed. The thing to keep in mind is that storm drains flow directly to natural sources, so anything deposited in a storm drain likewise gets transported into surrounding waters. The gum that you spit into a storm drain may end up in the Fraser River. The soapy runoff from washing your car in your driveway could end up in the Strait of Georgia. The effort to daylight streams and creeks not only restores an urban water feature to its more natural state, improving the riparian environment (the natural environment around the stream that, for example, helps to sustain wildlife and improve biodiversity), but daylighting also brings public awareness to our relationship with the natural water cycle, reminding us where our water comes from and how we contribute to the living watershed.²³

I was invited to participate in the St. George's Creek parade and community design workshop by Shahira Sakiyama, an activist and organizer who has worked in the grassroots peace movement in Los Angeles and the Bay area. She moved to Vancouver in 2005 and has been involved in efforts to daylight St. George's Creek. Turning her attention away from peace movement organizing, Sakiyama sought another unifying issue on which to shift her focus; she dove into the topic of water. As Sakiyama explained to me, quoting Nigerian musician and political activist Fela Kuti, her interest in water is an extension of her interest in peace: "water no get enemy." Her shift in focus toward water led Sakiyama to attend the World Social Forum in Brazil in January 2005, at which time she connected with a global network of people advocating for water rights. Shortly afterward, a death in her family took her to Vancouver; it was a fateful trip that had one silver lining. While in Vancouver with her family, Sakiyama met her future husband. By the end of that year, she had moved to Vancouver and, by the spring of 2006, she had given birth to her first child, a daughter. As the mother of three young children, Sakiyama identifies family as an organizing metaphor that informs her activism. She explains that her cultural background (her mother is from the Philippines, while her father's family is South Asian from Uganda) to some degree underlies and inspires her passion for global peace, justice, and environmental issues. "[K]nowing the conditions that not only some of my family live in, but that people around the world live in," Sakiyama reveals,

23. For more information on the False Creek watershed and daylighting efforts in Vancouver, see www.falsecreekwatershed.org.

“influences my activism.” But water in particular appeals to Sakiyama because it literally and metaphorically connects all humans. “Here in the West,” she explains, “I feel our privileged lifestyle creates a duty to the rest of our family around the world.” Water, she continues, is “an ‘Asian Canadian’ issue because it’s a human issue . . . it is quite relevant for me across racial, gender, and economic lines.”

YOU ARE WATER

[L]ie back, sink smoothly without a ripple, and assume the texture of water. Osmosis. You will not drown. You are water. And when you rise, you will take a part of that with you. (Hiromi Goto, “Osmosis” 20)

Many Asian Canadian and American writers and artists have taken up the issue of water in their practice. For example, Asian American artist and architect Maya Lin, who is well known for her design of the Vietnam War Memorial in Washington, DC, has been working since 2002 on a multi-site public art project along the Columbia River. I visited several of the sites of Lin’s Confluence project in the summer of 2013, which engaged with public land use, collaboration with local Pacific Northwest Indigenous communities, and histories of settler/Indigenous contact.²⁴ Likewise, Asian American writer Wang Ping has been drawing connections between the Mississippi and Yangtze rivers through her Kinship of Rivers project. Working with a group of collaborators, Wang has been working on an ongoing project to deliver a series of gifts to both rivers, produce multimedia exhibits, and document the process.²⁵ Another project engaging the theme of connected rivers, Gu Xiong’s *Waterscapes* installation, opened at the Richmond Art Gallery in the fall of 2010 and considers transnational connections between the Fraser and Yangtze rivers.²⁶

24. More on the Confluence Project can be found on at: www.confluenceproject.org/.

25. More on the Kinship of Rivers project can be found at www.kinshipofrivers.org/home.

26. A summary of the *Waterscapes* exhibition can be found at <http://www.richmondartgallery.org/xiong.php>. Like Wong, Xiong initiated a collaborative project on water (with literary scholar Christopher Lee and sociologist Jennifer Chun) funded by a SSHRC research-creation grant. Chun, Xiong, and Lee co-authored a piece on the project containing Chun and Lee’s field notes from a trip to China and Xiong’s photographs. See Chun, Xiong, and Lee, “Waterscapes.”

Zimbabwe-born, Vancouver-based multimedia artist Laiwan chose to thematically feature water at one of her public art gatherings as part of the PDA for Your PDA (Public Displays of Affection for Your Personal Digital Assistant) series. The resulting piece, “Ode to an Oceanic Turn,” was displayed at Vancouver’s Britannia Community Centre in 2011. The event invited people to contribute to a collective poem on the topic of water by texting messages to a pre-specified mobile number.²⁷ The PDA for Your PDA project explores our relationship with technology and social media, intervening in the ways we routinely engage with each other. Laiwan’s work, more generally, explores concepts of mindfulness, slowing down and disrupting quotidian life. Her theoretical and critical practice of slowing down has been influential on the Downstream project, particularly in terms of developing a participatory water ethic.

Having a participatory water ethic involves being conscious of the social relations one enacts through and with water in everyday choices. A participatory water ethic, Wong contends, encourages you to ask yourself, “What relationship am I enacting, and do I want to enact, with water?” (7 Jun 2011). The keys to this practice are its ethical and creative aspects that invite participation from people at the level of their everyday routines and habits. But a participatory water ethic is also about developing sensitive and inclusive cultural relationships with water. In envisioning a participatory water ethic, Wong takes her direction from water itself. As she explains, although water is to some degree constrained by certain forces that influence its “patterns and flows . . . there is also infinite variation in terms of the paths that this finite amount of water can take. This teaches me that creativity is not so much limited to the individual, or ego, but involves attending to the dynamic environment that one lives in and with” (29 May 2011). The invitation to imagine a participatory water ethic was a major issue on the table during the Downstream gathering at Emily Carr University in March 2012. I can attest that the process of interviewing Wong and Sakiyama for this article and participating in some of the Downstream activities opened up my own questions about how to creatively and ethically engage with water. Not only that, in observing and reflecting on Sakiyama and Wong’s work on the St. George Street daylight project, as well as contributions from other Downstream participants, I came to appreciate how local issues can relate to larger global water concerns. Wong notes, “We can’t control the things that are far away, that we don’t see, but we can change things within our daily lives, that we’re implicated in, and think about how they are connected to those larger things” (7

27. Laiwan has documented the *PDA for Your PDA* project on her blog: see Laiwan, “PDA for Your PDA”; see “Ode to an Oceanic Turn” for the full text of the poem.

Jun 2011).

A unique aspect of the Downstream project is its attention to language and the poetics of water—a theme that is reinforced in the publication of this anthology. When I asked Wong about what a poetics of water means to her, she revealed that she thinks of it as an “investigatory” process, one that brings us closer to “the roots, the anchors from which to begin to orient oneself to a watershed consciousness” (29 May 2011). The idea of engaging different poetics of water interests me because of its potential to radically transform the ways we think with and relate to water. As Lee Maracle asserts in this collection, “water owns itself.” We rely on water for life, borrowing it, reshaping it, and returning it eventually. The shift in perspective from thinking of water as something outside of ourselves, as an external object in need of control, to thinking of water as something constitutive of ourselves, as something that we are a part of and that draws people together in common with each other and their natural environment, is indeed a poetic shift that instigates an intellectual and political one. Disconnection and disempowerment in one’s environment may be remedied by a way of thinking about water that is radically decolonial: instead of imagining water as something to be tamed for our exploitation and convenience, which separates us from consciously engaging with our natural environment in ethical and participatory ways, we can begin to think of water as what we act creatively with. The approach reminds me of Trinh Minh-ha’s post-colonial practice of “speaking nearby.”²⁸ Indeed, speaking nearby and acting with are modes of ethical engagement that move action forward while being attentive to matters of power. As Wong argues, the problem is not that people do not care about water, but rather that they feel “disempowered to act. Because people feel disempowered, they tune out” (7 Jun 2011). Freeing ourselves from disempowerment does require us to be willing to be imaginative because, as Wong contends, “action is not easy” (7 Jun 2011) Her advice is to “figure out what makes sense for you to do [and] to act in creative ways. Increasingly, we must take action in creative ways to be effective” (7 Jun 2011).

28. In the opening voiceover for the film *Reassemblage*, her influential first film documenting her ethnographic research in Senegal, West Africa, Trinh states, “I do not intend to speak about, just speak nearby.” Trinh elaborates on this practice, stating that speaking nearby is: “a speaking that does not objectify, does not point to an object as if it is distant from the speaking subject or absent from the speaking place. A speaking that reflects on itself and can be very close to a subject without, however, seizing or claiming it. A speaking in brief, whose closures are only moments of transition opening up to other possible moments of transition—these are forms of indirectness well understood by anyone in tune with poetic language” (qtd. in Chen 87).

SPEAKING NEARBY ASIAN CANADIANS AND WATER

In writing this essay, I have chosen to speak nearby Asian Canadians in action with water, rather than simply reporting on Asian Canadian water activism. Speaking nearby is an ethical creative practice that attentively and humbly acknowledges the subject while also emphasizing the complicity, power, and responsibilities of the speaker. Principles of responsibility have the potential to transform creative practices from ego-driven to ethically driven acts. The interviews, events, stories, and artworks I engaged with in my research all approached water guided by principles of collaboration, creative exploration, and calls to action. Investigating some of the different actions that Asian Canadians are taking with water causes me to consider my own actions in relation to water and their meanings and impacts.

I'd like to say that writing this essay completely transformed my water practices, but the truth is much more humbling and complicated. I still take water for granted at times. For example, I have a long-standing habit of turning on the faucet about halfway through brushing my teeth and leaving it running awhile before rinsing my mouth. I noticed this when I first started working on the article for Ricepaper and every night it would bother me, so I began a practice of consciously turning off the tap in an effort to break the habit. It's embarrassing to admit how difficult it is to change my behaviour. After all this time, I still occasionally catch myself with the water running when I brush my teeth; other times, I manage to stop myself with my hand on the tap; and there are, of course, those mornings and nights when I'm not mindful and don't have any idea how long I may or may not have left the tap running. It's easy to beat myself up for this kind of unintentional habitual behaviour—and indeed, multiplying this example by the hundreds of quotidian interactions with water in my day—Am I taking too long in the shower? Shouldn't I be collecting rainwater for the garden? How wasteful is it to run the garbage disposal?—it would be easy to become paralyzed and despondent about my water choices and practices. But getting overwhelmed, I realized in working on this essay and reckoning with the idea of having a participatory water ethic, is too easy. Confronting with humility my actions with water, thinking consciously about my responsibilities in relation to water, and acting intentionally to change my water practices is more difficult, but also more rewarding and empowering.

While some activism around water is focused on securing water rights, I find it more helpful and empowering to think, as Indigenous activists and cultural teachers Toghestiy and Mel Bazil discuss, in terms of exercising our responsibilities toward water (*Beyond Boarding*). The moment at the bathroom faucet regularly reminds me of what I learned in the process of researching and

writing this essay, and it reminds me that I have choices to make that respond to my knowledge (however imperfect and incomplete) about water and the actions others are taking to encourage more ethical water consciousness and relations. Acknowledging that I have responsibilities to carry out in my water practices may be humbling, but it also reminds me that while many aspects of water may be beyond my control, I still have something to do, more to learn about water, and the ability to ethically exercise my power in how I interact with and think about water. Perhaps these small changes and actions are too modest to be considered activism, but I would like to suggest that culturally sensitive water activism begins with this kind of attentiveness to the humble details in how we interact with water and the stories we carry and share about our water bodies.

CONCLUSION

IN PLACE OF SOLIDARITY: CARTOGRAPHIES OF STRUGGLE AND DISPOSSESSION

Let us speak of cartographies of struggle (Mohanty, Russo, and Torres) then, if solidarity is too compromised a word. More, let us speak of cartographies of dispossession—the kind that rips away, distances, alienates—but also the kind that is waged upon us like war.

The kind that is manufactured for my destruction.

(Angie Morrill, Eve Tuck, and the Super Futures Haunt Collective 4)

In June 2013, I attended inaugural meetings of the Asian Canadian Studies Network at the Congress of the Humanities and Social Sciences, held at the University of Victoria on the traditional territories of the Lkwungen-speaking Songhees, Esquimalt and WSÁNEĆ peoples.¹ Our meetings opened with a land acknowledgement from Dawn Smith, a University of Victoria alumna of the Indigenous Governance program who identifies as Nuu-chah-nulth from Ehattesaht and grew up in WSÁNEĆ (Tsawout) territories (*Camosun College*, “Faculty”).

In acknowledging our presence at the university on Coast Salish lands, Smith provided some background on intersecting histories of Lkwungen-speaking peoples on the lands where the University of Victoria sits, and

1. “Congress,” as it is familiarly called in Canada, is an annual meeting of over 70 scholarly association conferences and “Canada’s largest gathering of scholars across disciplines” (Congress).

illuminated her own understanding of acknowledgement practices that she learned from her grandfather. Paraphrasing what I heard from Smith, acknowledgement practices exist:

To start things off in a good way, when you arrive as a guest on someone else's territory, you have to let them know you are there as a guest, ask for permission, say how long you plan to stay, and what you will do for their people.

Smith's explanation of acknowledgement practices is specific, personal, place-based, and relational.² My point in recalling this moment is not to generalize from Smith's narrative or to claim it as my own but to dialogue with it and discuss its impact on me as a listener and Asian Canadian settler. I had heard and practiced land acknowledgements for a few years by this point and understood them as a way of acknowledging my own positionality as a guest on stolen lands.³ But Smith's explanation shifted and enhanced my thinking by centering reciprocity as part of a land acknowledgement and the need for reciprocity to drive ongoing enactments of settler dispossession. To begin from a position that asks, *What will I do for your people?*, invites me to think first about what do I have to offer, what am I willing to give up, and what is of value to the people.

Previously, I had learned about land acknowledgements from hearing them at UBC throughout the 2000s when I was studying to finish my MA and working for the First Nations Studies Program. One afternoon, I was in the room when my supervisor Linc Kesler was having a conversation with Mohawk lawyer and educator, Patricia Monture-Angus. As I recall, Monture-Angus spoke about traveling to Coast Salish territories for the purpose of giving a talk at UBC; in this informal conversation after her public presentation, Monture-Angus spoke to us about her practice, when traveling, to learn more about the Indigenous lands and people not only where she visits but also over whose lands she moves in transit to get there. This conversation stuck with me for a long time

2. Mishuana Goeman writes, "Unlike Western maps whose intent is often to represent the 'real,' Native narrative maps often conflict, perhaps add to the story, or only tell certain parts. Stories and knowledge of certain places can belong to particular families, clans, or individuals. These maps are not absolute but instead bring present multiple perspectives—as do all maps. While narratives and maps help construct and define worldview, they are not determined and always open for negotiation" (Goeman qtd. in Morill et. al. 3).

3. Defining positionality, Marisa Duarte writes, "The methodology of positionality requires researchers to identify their own degrees of privilege through factors of race, class, educational attainment, income, ability, gender, and citizenship, among others, before seeking the epistemological basis of their intellectual craft. Doing so helps to understand how their way of making meaning, of framing research, within their conceptual universe is tied to their positionality in an unjust world" (135)

and influenced how I began to think about moving around in the world and my relationship to histories of dispossession as a settler subject. Land acknowledgements result in my constantly confronting what I do not know, and each time I make a land acknowledgement or listen to one, I enact a process of learning and enunciating — only ever partially and at great risk of error — complex histories of dispossession, conflict, relationship, survival, and struggle. Nevertheless, what I heard in that conversation led me to commit to engaging in this learning process both privately as I move around in the world, and publicly whenever I speak and act amongst others, and to work with and through the sense of vulnerability I feel whenever I do this.

I reflect on practices of land acknowledgement here, in the conclusion of my dissertation, to frame the critical praxes of acknowledgement and reciprocity that I have been exploring throughout this project. Whereas I began this project with an intent to survey Indigenous and Asian Canadian literature for reciprocal representations and from there make a case for solidarity, what I learned from my readings of the literature and from critical works theorizing ethical solidarities was the need to not only theorize but also to enact acknowledgement and reciprocity in my own writing, research, and critical and creative work.

This dissertation has explored the writings of Indigenous and Asian Canadian women such as SKY Lee, Lee Maracle and Marie Clements who have addressed narratives of acknowledgement and reciprocity in their creative works and cultural collaborations. The argument of the dissertation addresses itself from within and towards Asian Canadian studies, an emergent scholarly field that has turned towards settler colonial critiques to make interventions and build intellectual alliances with Indigenous studies. As I argue, theorizing Asian Canadian love moves Asian Canadian studies towards more solid grounding for decolonial solidarities and futures. Moreover, there is a need to situate our movements for solidarity within specific place-based relations and knowledges. Love is a somewhat buried affect within Asian Canadian studies, but it pulses in the undercurrents of our work, and can be found in the writings of Asian Canadian women and queer artists and activists.

In the introduction, I outline the scope of my argument and define solidarities as contingent, multiple, grounded, and in movement. Drawing on Edward Said's writing, I emphasize the importance of solidarities situated within robust criticism, but even so, the intellectual and material work of solidarity to a large extent requires dispossessing ourselves of the pursuit of mastery, expertise, and professionalism and instead taking on unruly methodologies fueled by amateurist care and affection. Following the work of Indigenous scholars such as Coulthard and Audra Simpson, I resist political recognition as an arena for resolving racialized and settler colonial conflicts. Instead, I turn towards a

politics of acknowledgement for engaging solidarities between Asian Canadians and Indigenous communities. Building off of Patchen Markell and Stanley Cavell on acknowledgement, I define acknowledgement not in terms of *knowing another* but rather in terms of acting against the persistent denials, or the kinds of (to paraphrase Audra Simpson) profound *not seeing* embedded within settler colonial logics, that get in the way of mutuality. Rather than defining mutuality and reciprocity in terms of strict one-to-one equivalence, I instead posit notions of sharing, vulnerability, and mutual transformation.

The first chapter begins with a literature review tracing a trajectory of Asian Canadian studies's key critical contexts and interventions. I argue that Asian Canadian studies's anxieties over institutionalization reflect a broader anxiety over complicity within settler colonialism and being overleveraged in our critical investments. Next, I turn to recent work within Asian Canadian studies that belies eroticism to urge more rigorous theorizing of Asian Canadian love as a way of tuning our critical and political investments away from the multicultural settler colonial state for recognition. As I suggest in this chapter, attunement towards Asian Canadian feeling and intimacy can lead us towards more complex and ethical bases for solidarity. I argue here for greater critical attention to Asian Canadian feminist and queer knowledges, histories, and critiques for examples of acknowledgement and reciprocity, as well as for bricks that have already been laid in the world-making efforts of Indigenous and Asian Canadian solidarity.

In chapter 2, I consider SKY Lee's *Disappearing Moon Cafe*, a ground-breaking work of Asian Canadian literature that has received critical attention for its representations of Indigenous and Asian Canadian historical relationalities. Taking a closer look at the novel's unsettling commentary on history, I read into the novel's narrative openings, ambivalences, and hauntings. This focus on hauntings leads me to a close reading of the character Kelora Chen, whose brief but profound presence throughout the novel has been read as a figure of indigeneity. Instead, I propose reading Kelora through the lens of what Danika Medak Saltzman has called "specters of colonialism" ("Empires Haunted Logics" 17) that flips attention back to logics of Asian Canadian possessive investments that haunt the Wong family in the novel. Even as the novel critiques the patriarchal possessive logics that bind the women characters in the novel to cycles of intimate violence, it also pushes against this violence by holding up the complicated dynamics and power of love that women carry and pass on across the generations. The novel's ending suggests potential within a refigured concept of queer Asian Canadian love and family, but the promises of healing and solidarity are left to be *lived rather than written*.

In the dissertation's third chapter on Lee Maracle's intersectional

Indigenous feminist praxes, I read Maracle's *Sojourners and Sundogs* against a history of queer, women of colour, and Indigenous women's creative collaborations and cultural activism. Focusing on the trope of meetings which are prominent in *Sojourners and Sundogs*, I consider how figures of meeting and of the kitchen table have figured prominently to symbolize the dynamics of solidarity across difference in Indigenous, queer, and women of colour writings in Canada and the U.S. since the 1980s. As I argue, meetings are sites for reciprocal acknowledgements and for acknowledging differences. Meetings have also been represented as sites where queer, Indigenous, and women of colour bodies have been invisibilized and hypervisibilized. In Maracle's work as well as others in this period, the kitchen table and the book symbolize sites for contact and sites to explore the possibilities of mutuality. Not only that, meetings often document significant moments of tension, which, as Maracle points out, are important to work through in any coalitional action. Maracle's representations of meetings within *Sojourners and Sundogs* dig into the affects of discord within collectivities, or what Joy Harjo has called "the most tender place of conflict" (9). Within this tender place of conflict also lies the relief of connection as well as empowerment through practices of writing together and sharing the agonies of creative process and collaboration. Maracle's intersectional Indigenous feminist praxis may be summarized through her articulation of "the politics of our lives" (*Sojourners and Sundogs* 286), a phrase that applies to her reciprocal representations of friendships with Asian Canadians to illustrate possible directions for building solidarity.

Chapter 4 explores the ethics of interracial reconciliation and justice through an analysis of Marie Clements's play *Burning Vision*. Like *Disappearing Moon Cafe* and *Sojourners and Sundogs*, *Burning Vision* interweaves and unsettles the boundaries between fiction and non-fiction by deconstructing and reimagining historical events in creative literary form. Recasting and recontextualizing the historical catastrophe of the atomic bombing at Hiroshima, Japan in 1946, the play subverts the singular signifying power of the atomic mushroom cloud to draw attention to the diffuse affects and effects of nuclear power and culture. In this chapter, I provide a close reading of Clements's satiric representation of a "nuclear family" consisting of the characters Fat Man, Little Boy, and Round Rose (or Tokyo Rose), who are hastily thrown together in the course of the play's events. By examining Clements's critique of the ultimate unsustainability of the post-war American Dream of consumerism and nuclear family life, this chapter also calls attention to the failures of official reconciliation discourses that attempt to scrub out traumatic histories of racial discrimination and colonial violence through the singular signifying power of the word "sorry." The chapter ends with a consideration of prophetic listening as an alternative to

linear, progressive narratives of history that attempt to obliterate national responsibility, and enactments of interracial solidarity and collective grief that point to new directions for imagining acknowledgement and reciprocity.

In the final chapter of my dissertation, I synthesize my learning on solidarity in the form of a personal essay on Asian Canadian water activism that aligns with Indigenous water sovereignty movements. The chapter takes a number of recursive turns as I self-reflexively theorize writing as a form of action in dialogue with Rita Wong's calls for a culturally sensitive poetics of water and a participatory water ethic. I am guided in this chapter by Trinh T. Minh Ha's concept of speaking nearby, which she describes as:

[A] speaking that does not objectify, does not point to an object as if it is distant from the speaking subject or absent from the speaking place. A speaking that reflects on itself and can be very close to a subject without, however, seizing or claiming it. A speaking in brief, whose closures are only moments of transition opening up to other possible moments of transition—these are forms of indirectness well understood by anyone in tune with poetic language. (qtd. in Chen 87)

I suggest that “speaking nearby” aligns with solidarity practices which are also driven from moment to moment by transition and transformation.

Coming to the end of this project, I acknowledge that as a settler, and particularly as a racialized settler, my entry point for solidarity with Indigenous sovereignty and resurgence folds back to a commitment to practicing accountability towards Indigenous people, lands, and waters, and to move in alignment with place-based grounded normativities. To be accountable, I come to the table prepared to *give an account of myself*. Butler writes, “It is only in dispossession that I can and do give any account of myself” (37). As someone showing up to work in solidarity, I think of this as arriving with open hands, ready to listen, ready to take out the garbage, ready to answer for who I am and what I bring, ready to contribute any skills I have, ready to learn, ready to change my mind, and ready to move aside. I started this project hesitant and resistant about sharing myself in my work, since I had been trained to write the first-person out of my scholarship and to approach scholarly work with an appropriate degree of distance. But what I have learned through the process of writing this dissertation on solidarity is to give up some of my desire for expertise and to give up some of my investments in my own training and education. I have learned that giving an account of myself when asked or sometimes even when I'm not asked, is a necessary part of giving up some of my settler privilege, of attempting to dispossess myself of the privileges of settler silence. I cannot pretend that I am not here taking up space, and in giving an account for myself, I try to approach it as giving up something, for example,

admitting to the vulnerability of taking up contested space and of having personal investments in my work.

Dispossession is an enduring and necessary practice of settler solidarity; so is acknowledging that my practices of dispossession are felt and experienced differently and unequally than others. To give an account of myself that acknowledges indebtedness to others, what I have still yet to learn, to histories that have come before me and futures that I want to be part of building, this is partially what I mean by reciprocity. Solidarities shaped by critical engagements with acknowledgement and reciprocity are guided by a willingness to give things up; to risk ourselves dearly; to account for our settler privileges by naming them; to re-educate ourselves about the very process of learning which is always about vulnerability and transformation; to value and enact other ways; and to hold space and be ready with open hands to share and to negotiate our living presences.

What matters about this project and more generally about theorizing Indigenous and Asian Canadian solidarities? Why has it mattered to center the argument around literary texts and writing? Why does it matter as a scholarly, academic project? And, *as a scholarly exercise, how can it matter* when it comes to the material realities of Indigenous and Asian Canadian lives—and to other lives that matter? This project is an homage to the creative power of Indigenous and Asian Canadian women who have turned to writing to document, explore, and imagine struggles and solidarities in the face of complex violences and structural barriers. As the work of these writers demonstrate, living and loving our ways towards solidarity involves facing up to our vulnerabilities and opening up to transformation. Is this work possible within the academy? In this dissertation, I have considered the work of women intellectuals, the majority of whom who have chosen to work outside of the academy. There are others now who are doing related work in the academy, and the current task for those committed to ethical solidarity praxes is to consider how to transcend the limitations of academic institutional structures that continue to reward the accumulation of knowledge as cultural capital.

Only a few months ago, I attended the Association for Asian American Studies 2018 conference in San Francisco, California. I found myself after a hiatus of several years back in Ohlone lands and was interested to hear and witness land acknowledgements at the opening of several of the panels I attended. It had also been several years since I had attended a meeting of AAAS, and in the time that had elapsed since I last attended, the number of panels and meetings on topics related to Asian settler colonialism had increased dramatically. At the 2018 AAAS conference, I attended the first meeting of the Asian Settler Colonial caucus, which included senior scholars as well as graduate students entering the

field, and there were no less than seven panels and roundtables on related topics, including: “Asian-Indigenous Alliances,” “Countering Settler-Colonial Territoriality,” Asian American Studies, Indigenous Epistemologies, and Unsettling Solidarity,” and “Settler Colonial Studies, Asian Diasporic Questions.” This growing body of work by scholars such as Iyko Day, Marie Lo, Karen J. Leong, Quynh Nhu Le, Nishant Upadhyay, Malissa Phung, Dean Itsuji Saranillo, and Juliana Hu Pegues, is promising. It is on this hopeful note that I would like to end my dissertation, looking towards futures of critical collaborations and solidarities. It is also to illuminate and provoke further ways we can transform this time of *critical mass* into work that propels, nurtures, and engages robust *critical matters*. For, as Morill et. al. write, “The opposite of dispossession is not possession. It is not accumulation. It is unforgetting. It is mattering” (2).

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