Canadian Literatures Beyond the Colour Line:

Re-Reading the Category of South Asian-Canadian Literature

by

Diana Frances Lobb

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Author's Declaration

I hereby declare that I am the sole author of this thesis. This is a true copy of the thesis, including any required final revisions, as accepted by my examiners.

I understand that my thesis may be made electronically available to the public.

Abstract

  This dissertation examines current academic approaches to reading South Asian-Canadian literature as a multicultural "other" to Canadian national literature and proposes an alternative reading strategy that allows for these texts to be read within a framework of South Asian diasporic subjectivities situated specifically at the Canadian location. Shifting from the idea that "Canada" names a particular national identity and national literary culture to the idea that "Canada" names a particular geographic terrain at which different cultural, social, and historical vectors intersect and are creolized allows for a more nuanced reading of South Asian-Canadian literature, both in terms of its relationship to the complex history of the South Asian diaspora and in terms of the complex history of South Asian encounters with the Canadian space. Reading prose, poetry, drama, and theatrical institutions as locations where a specifically South Asian-*Canadian* diasporic subjectivity is reflected, I am able to map a range of individual negotiations among the cultural vector of the "ancestral" past, the cultural vector of the influence of European colonialism, and the cultural vector of this place that demonstrate that the negotiation of South Asian-Canadian diasporic subjectivity and its reflection in literature cannot be understood as producing a homogenous or "authentic" cultural identity. Instead, the literary expression of South Asian-Canadian diasporic subjectivity argues that the outcome of negotiations between cultural vectors that take place in this location are as unique as the individuals who undertake those negotiations. These individual negotiations, I argue, need to be read collectively to trace out a continuum of possible expressions of South Asian-Canadian diasporic subjectivity, a continuum that emphasizes that the processes of negotiation are on-

going and flexible. This dissertation challenges the assumption that Canadian literature can be

contained within the limits of a Canadian nationalist mythology or ethnography. Instead of the

literature of the Canadian "nation" or the Canadian "people," Canadian literature is best

understood as the literature produced in this location by all the "minority" populations, including

the dominant "minority." Reading Canadian literature, then, is reading the differential

relationships to history and community that occur in this place and which are inscribed in these

collectively Canadian texts.

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Dedication

For

Vincent L'Abre

(né1738, Poitou, France)

and

Ione Ghose

(née 1932, Lahore, British India)

Settler/Invaders of the "New World"

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Introduction: Reflections In/On South Asian-Canadian Literature

In an academic environment where the terms of literary study are being transformed, where the discourse of the nation seems to be being rewritten by processes of globalization to become the discourse of the transnational postnation, where the discourse of the postcolonial is being rewritten as post-theoretical discourse, does it still make sense to talk about a Canadian national literature or a "minority" literature like South Asian-Canadian literature? The answer really depends on how we choose to read those terms: Canadian national literature and South Asian-Canadian literature. If we choose to read either or both of these terms as marking out within creative texts a shared identity rooted in a cultural or ontological essential identity, then the answer is no. Reading these terms as signs of the literary expression of some sort of "authentic," embodied cultural identity assumes that we, as readers, can only adopt a stance of strategic essentialism with respect to literature. This strategy, within some areas of academic practice, of shifting away from reading the reflection of ongoing negotiations of social identity from a text and towards critically inscribing within a text a restricted (and restrictive) understanding of what socially negotiated cultural identity can be, is troubling. Reading from the perspective of strategic essentialism may consolidate literature into a viable (and manageable) object of study; however, differences within and between individual constructions of identity are erased. Literary works become either evidence of a homogenizing Canadian cultural identity or part of a discrete "Other" category of literature operating within the framework of the canon of Canadian national literature. The homogenizing pressure of any claim (strategic or otherwise) to essential identity fixes South Asian-Canadian cultural identity as the "Other" to "real" Canadian identity and subsumes the complex historical contexts of individual authors' diasporic

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movements between South Asia and Canada under a false assumption of shared identity. This

strategy positions South Asian-Canadian cultural identity as an embodied and static norm against

which individual performances of identity can be judged as more or less "authentic." It limits a

reading of the diversity of responses to and expressions of South Asian-Canadian cultural

identity within creative texts resulting in readings of South Asian-Canadian literature that are

always already approximations of the richness and complexity of these works.

However, we do not have to choose to read these terms in this way. If we read "South

Asian" as marking out a diasporic network of inter-related locations, "Canadian" becomes one

unique location within that network.[1] At each of the locations within the diasporic network we

can trace the convergence of historic, social, political, and cultural vectors that are specific both

to the locations and the moments of diasporic settlement. This reading of South Asian-Canadian

diasporic literature in terms of spatial and temporal frameworks does not validate either the

discourse of the nation or the discourse of essential cultural identity. However, it also does not

completely negate those discourses. It rather repositions both the idea of the nation (and a

national literature) and the idea of essential cultural identity (and its literary expression) as part

of the vectors of influence that are negotiated within the individual productions of South Asian-

Canadian cultural identities and South Asian-Canadian literatures. If we read the terms

"Canadian national literature" and "South Asian-Canadian literature" in this context then they do

still have value. Instead of fixing these literatures within prescribed expectations, this reading

position creates the possibility of reading within the literature a diversity of expressions of South

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[1] The "Canadian" location is a location that Win Siemerling, in *The New North American Studies: Culture, Writing, and the Politics of Re/Cognition* (amongst others) quite rightly argues must be also be read as distinct location within a network of "New World" locations and "New World" cultures.

Asian diasporic subjectivities that occur within the diverse, regional spaces of Canada over the history of South Asian diasporic engagement with this place.

What works fall into the category of South Asian-Canadian literature? There have been many critical definitions of what constitutes South Asian-Canadian literature (see M. G. Vassanji, Arun Mukherjee, Uma Parameswaran, Mariam Pirbhai).[2] At heart, these definitions are all focused on the author: the author's present relationship to Canada and some sort of past relationship the author has to South Asia, either in the author's personal past or in the author's ancestral past. Because inclusion in this category has traditionally relied almost entirely on the person of the author and the cultural identity he or she is perceived to embody, it is easy to see how "South Asian-Canadian" might become co-opted within the framework of identity politics. As an identity, "South Asian-Canadian" can too easily become enmeshed with notions of embodied culture, notions of "authenticity," and other fallacies of racist thought. Although the idea of shared collective identities "and the stubborn social movements that were built upon their strengths and tactics have contributed important moral and political resources to modern struggles in pursuit of freedom, democracy, and justice" (Gilroy 13), the risks of identity politics cannot be ignored or overlooked. When the idea of shared cultural identity becomes "understood as little more than a closed list of rigid rules that can be applied consciously without interpretation or attention to particular historical conditions, it is a ready alibi for

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[2] In his 1985 "Introduction" to *A Meeting of Streams*, Vassanji proposes "South Asian Canadian Literature [. . .] is not intended to convey a single outlook in literary matters [. . .] it is perhaps best understood as a term of contrast: the contrast being here with 'mainstream' literature - that which shares a common heritage with British and American literature." (4). Arun Mukherjee offers her definition in her 1998 essay "How Shall We Read South Asian Canadian Texts?: "Insofar as South Asian Canadian writers trace their origins to the Indian subcontinent, their work, if studied together, may yield certain recurring themes and patterns. What I am resisting here is the tendency in contemporary critical theory to categorize these writers a priori as resistant postcolonials, as subalterns and marginals." (261). Uma Parameswaran's definition of South Asian-Canadian literature, as I discuss in Chapter 3, lays out four different stages of South Asian-Canadian identity, each of which is related to a different mode of literary production. Miriam Pirbhai suggests that "writers of the South Asian diaspora self-consciously foreground their multiply positioned identities" which "challenge[s] the reader, teacher, and critic alike to re-evaluate the narrowly defined literary and cultural paradigms through which diasporic texts are commonly apprehended" (386)

authoritarianism rather than a sign of cultural viability or ethical confidence" (Gilroy 14).

However, I do not believe it is necessary for critical usage of the term "South Asian-Canadian"

to slide down the slippery slope of identity politics. Instead, "South Asian-Canadian" can be

read as marking out a range of contexts for the reading of these literary works. My insistence on

arguing that the literary reflection of cultural negotiation made visible in "South Asian-

Canadian" creative texts needs to be read separately from ideas of embodied culture in general

and nationalist culture in particular would seem to fly in the face of important work, like Katie

Trumpener's *Bardic Nationalism: The Romantic Novel and the British Empire*, that underscores

the importance of the idea of embodied culture in consolidating anticolonial resistance in both

the South Asian *and* the Canadian colonies of the British Empire. As Trumpener points out, part

of the experience of colonization was the experience of racialized (and racializing) oppression

from the Imperial centre. Resistance to colonial oppression then, Trumpener suggests, included

a repositioning and a revaluing of the racial identity of the oppressed: a transformation of racial,

cultural identity from a sign of negative alterity and location of subjugation to a sign of positive

solidarity and location of resistance. However, these attempts to consolidate resistance to

colonial authority fully participated in the language and logic of the colonizer's racist

epistemology:

> Benedict Anderson has influentially argued that modern nationalist movements, in
>
> spite of their traditionalist and communitarian rhetoric, are actually predicated on
>
> the rise of individualism fueled by political energies generated by the
>
> modernization process and shaped by "impersonal" apolitical institutional forces.
>
> [. . .] When the census designated new ethnic (in addition to more traditional
>
> racial or religious) categories in which to group inhabitants, and then records

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identity in integral terms within those categories, Anderson argues, this creates

new forms of identification with the state. Grounded in the new notions of the

universal, byproducts of new systems of categorization, nationalist movements

tend to couch their very claims to historical, ethnic, and cultural specificity in a

recognizably standard rhetoric. Even as they labor to re-create the lost

community of the nation, nationalists work within a thoroughly modern

conception of political life. Although they seem not to realize it, their sense of

community is imaginary as much as it is imagined. (Trumpener 21-2)

The "master's tools," the tools by which the imperial authority categorized and quantified its

subjugated colonial populations, becomes in turn the tools by which those subjugated

populations define themselves *against* their colonial oppressors. Within the context of

anticolonial nationalism, the notion of embodied culture may resist racial oppression, but only by

participating in racializing discourse and a racist epistemology. As Paul Gilroy points out in

Against Race: Imagining Political Culture Beyond the Color Line, this inversion of racial

hierarchy, repositioning racial identity as a source of pride rather than a source of shame, is

particularly difficult to displace:

[P]eople who have been subordinated by race-thinking and its distinctive social

structures (not all of which come tidily color-coded) have for centuries employed

the concepts and categories of their rulers, owners, and persecutors to resist the

destiny that "race" has allocated to them and to dissent from the lowly value it

placed upon their lives. Under the most difficult of conditions and from imperfect

materials that they surely would not have selected if they had been able to choose,

these oppressed groups have built complex traditions of politics, ethics, identity,

and culture. (Gilroy 12)

In the context of racially oppressed groups in general, and anticolonial nationalist movements in particular, the reluctance to give up notions of embodied culture may be understandable; however, it is still necessary to do so. The understanding of the term "South Asian-Canadian" that I have proposed, when applied to literature, tries to move beyond the language and logic of "race" and racializing thought, to allow the creative text to operate as a focal point where different vectors intersect and are differently negotiated to produce a range of interpretations and expressions of socially constructed cultural identity rather than evidence of a static and homogenizing embodied culture.

To develop a historical context for South Asian-Canadian literature it is necessary to take a diasporic view of the history of migration patterns between South Asia and Canada. By a diasporic view, I mean a perspective on history that deemphasizes nationalist historical perspectives and the time of the nation and takes a longer term, transnational approach, tracing multiple patterns of dispersion and networks of movements among different locations within the South Asian diaspora. This is not a narrative of progress where diasporic individuals move from "Third World" to "First World," from east/south to west/north, from undeveloped culture (or underdeveloped nation) to civilized culture (or developed nation). Instead, it reads historical patterns of movement, and the influence these movements have had on culture, as a series of accretions and changes. Each specific location within the diasporic network adds to and transforms diasporic subjectivity through the unique set of negotiations that the diasporic individual must make at that location. As the individual moves from location to location, diasporic subjectivity is renegotiated and transformed again. This perspective allows for the

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complexity of historical contexts to be read within the texts: the influences of multiple movements, multiple interactions and multiple reimaginings of culture can be seen to coexist within a single work.

Rather than reading individual works as historiographic (that is, questioning the writing of history) it becomes possible to read individual works as participating within multiple historical contexts, some or all of which may not be familiar to the reader. The concepts of cultural insiders and cultural outsiders encouraged by the framework of identity politics are undermined by this reading of diasporic history within South Asian-Canadian literature. No one can claim to be an insider to the entire, complex diasporic network of movements — some parts of the network and the cultures associated with different parts of the network will always be more or less familiar to a single reader. That *all* readers are in some ways cultural outsiders makes it incumbent on *each* reader to make the effort to educate him- or herself to the traces of the diasporic network reflected in the individual text and to apply that acquired knowledge to his or her reading of the text. It is through this process of carefully reading individual texts within the historical context of their relevant portion of and position within the diasporic network of movement that a comparative picture of the category of South Asian-Canadian literature begins to appear.

My insistence that a long term, transnational and complex historic context is needed to develop nuanced readings of these texts is hardly novel. In both Anglo-American and Canadian universities, many voices have been calling for the application of diasporic history as a context for reading so-called "Other" literatures. In the American academy, Rey Chow, writing on the subject of Chinese literature, has emphasized the importance of taking the whole scope of Chinese history — from the far past to the contemporary moment — as a context for

constructing readings of Chinese diasporic literature. Chow also emphasizes the obligations on

the reader to recognize and engage this broader perspective of history. She borrows the notions

of "strategy" and "tactic" that Michel de Certeau develops in *The Practice of Everyday*

Life/L'invention du quotidien. Vol. 1, Arts de faire' to describe the practices that have dominated

analysis of Chinese literature in the past and the practices that she argues are necessary now in

order to allow critics to engage the complexity of these works. A "strategy," Chow proposes,

attempts to overwrite the ambiguities of history in order to make history readable and

containable, not to clarify the nuances of the text being read but to invest in the academic reader

the power to create a place of his or her own. A "tactic," in contrast, does not attempt to

empower the academic over the text. Instead, a "tactic" is itself ambiguous and shifting; it is a

calculated action that transforms itself in response to the operation of the system of temporal

influences it engages with. The need to shift academic perspectives from the comfort of

"strategies" to the uneasiness of "tactics" has become essential, Chow argues, as the texts

themselves are becoming obscured in the academic struggle for power:

> As discussions about "multiculturalism," "interdisciplinarity," "the third
>
> world intellectual," and other companion issues develop in the American
>
> academy and society today, as rhetorical claims to political change are
>
> being put forth, many deep-rooted, politically reactionary forces return to
>
> haunt us. Essentialist notions of culture and history; conservative notions of
>
> territorial and linguistic propriety, and the "otherness" ensuing from them;
>
> untested claims of oppression and victimization that are used merely to
>
> guilt-trip and to control; sexist and racist reaffirmations of sexual and racial
>
> diversities that are made merely in the name of righteousness — all these

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forces create new "solidarities" whose ideological premises remain

unquestioned. These new solidarities are often informed by a *strategic*

attitude which repeats what they seek to overthrow. (16-17; emphasis in

original)

To calculate a return to the text it is necessary to engage the complexity of movements in time

rather than to insist on the essential congruency of culture in place.

Paul Gilroy, in the British (and later, American) academy, makes a similar argument for

using diasporic history as a context for reading cultural texts. A sociologist whose work focuses

on the cultural production of the "Black Atlantic" and black Britain, Gilroy argues that creative

cultural works need to be read within "a relational network" of trans-temporal, multi-

dimensional, extra-national influences (123). The diasporic "network," he proposes, allows for

consideration of different interconnected "nodes" of community that share certain similarities of

cultural tradition while at the same time, recognizes that the elaboration of shared cultural

traditions will vary given the differing influences that interact with each individual node.

Gilroy, like Chow, emphasizes the need to adopt a tactical perspective on the analysis of cultural

community and to move away from an insistence on the primary influence of immediate

environment. This allows for an understanding of culture as a continual process of negotiation

grounded in the common recognition of shared similarity rather than in the perpetuation of the

idea of culture as arbitrarily predetermined by an individual's invariable ability to conform to

rigid and static codes of behaviour and being. Gilroy's rejection of ontological and cultural

essentialism as a means of understanding cultural production is accompanied by an insistence

that diasporic history must be a context for reading how culture has inflected (and is reflected in)

creative production. In a move that parallels Chow's rejection of "strategy" in favour of "tactic,"

Gilroy proposes that critics have a responsibility to not attempt to assert power over the cultural products they analyze. Gilroy points to a disturbing critical practice on the part of some academics who claim particular "ethnic" essences for black vernacular cultural styles: "their expositions of [vernacular forms] specify the elusive qualities of racialized difference that only they can claim to be able to comprehend and to paraphrase, if not exactly decode" (179). This focus on the part of critics using black cultural texts to claim a place of their own within the university makes visible the imbrications of a pattern of critical cultural analysis with "absolutist definitions of culture," and suggests that, even when undertaken by "politically engaged critics," this critical practice is "inadequate" (178-79). Recognition of the extra-national, trans-temporal movements of populations and cultures "offers a ready alternative to the stern discipline of primordial kinship and rooted belonging" (123). This diasporic sense of the "Black Atlantic," much like Chow's sense of "tactical" intervention,

> rejects the popular image of natural nations spontaneously endowed with
> self-consciousness, tidily composed of uniform families: those
> interchangeable collections of ordered bodies that express and reproduce
> absolutely distinctive cultures as well as perfectly formed heterosexual
> pairings. As an alternative to the metaphysics of "race," nation, and
> bounded culture coded into the body, diaspora is a concept that
> problematizes the cultural and historical mechanics of belonging. It disrupts
> the fundamental power of territory to determine identity by breaking the
> simple sequence of explanatory links between place, location, and
> consciousness. It destroys the naïve invocation of common memory as the

basis of particularity in a similar fashion by drawing attention to the

contingent political dynamics of commemoration. (123)

Chow, a literary scholar, and Gilroy, a sociologist, with different disciplinary frameworks and

with different objects of study, say something remarkably similar: that past critical practices that

attempted to engage creative works from a sense of strategic cultural essentialism or a sense of

embodied culture are simply not good enough. If critics are not going to assert themselves over

creative cultural products and reduce those works to some abstraction that tacitly reaffirms the

validity of racist discourse, critics will have to give up the comfort of "knowing" their fields and

instead surrender themselves to the discomfort and ambiguity of not knowing and always re-

learning the relevant diasporic history of the works they are studying. The tactic that Chow

proposes flattens any hierarchical relationship between text and critic. Instead of critic being

subject to text or text being subject to critic, the relationship is changed to require the critic to

educate him- or herself to the specificities of not only his or her historical, social, and cultural

position but also the historical, social, and cultural position represented in the text.

Calls to bring a diasporic sense of history into play in the reading of literature can be

heard from the Canadian academy as well as from the Anglo-American academy. George Elliott

Clarke's examination of African-Canadian literature draws on Gilroy's concept of the "Black

Atlantic": the diasporic movement of Africans around the Atlantic Ocean. This diasporic

perspective prompts Clarke's intervention in the construction of the category of African-

Canadian literature. He argues that reading African-Canadian literature as primarily Anglophone

or rooted in immigration that occurred after the loosening of Canadian immigration policies in

the 1960's abstracts understandings of African-Canadian culture to the point that it mis-

represents the culture(s) of African-Canadians. As Clarke observes, "African Canadians

constitute an *archipelago* of blackness (our black communities reside in disparate parts of the nation)" and represent the cultures of multiple nodes of the network of the black diaspora ("Contesting" 27). This "catholicity" of place and culture that Clarke names *African Canadianité*, in parallel to Debra L. Anderson's rereading of Glissant's *Antillanité*, requires the reader to be alert to the diverse diasporic histories that are represented in the "imposing difference" represented both within African-Canadian culture and in the relationships of African-Canadian cultures to "mainstream Canadian culture" ("Contesting" 27-28, 41). Clarke acknowledges that his concept of *African Canadianité* participates in what would appear to be essentialist discourses: it argues for the presence of a "national(ist) African-Canadian literature" ("Contesting" 42-34). However, recognizing that this particular group of literary texts "will be rent — and must be — by regionalism as well as by ethnic and linguistic differences," Clarke offers *African Canadianité* as a calculated definition of a *"modal"* rather than model "blackness" ("Contesting" 43). To name *African Canadianité* is not a "strategy," in the sense that Chow uses the concept; it does not identify difference in order to impose a prescriptive definition of what the difference will be permitted to signify. *African Canadianité* is, instead, a "tactic" that, in a deliberate and calculated manner, strikes a balance between the necessity of recognizing difference (in order to establish a category of literature) and the necessity of recognizing that that there are plural possible (and equally valid) definitions for how that difference can be understood, performed, and read.

That this same "tactic" is being called for from multiple academic traditions, multiple academic disciplines, and in reference to multiple forms of "difference," reaffirms my conviction that this same "tactic" should be applied to the category of South Asian-Canadian literature in order to read these texts without imposing preconceived expectations of form, theme, imagery,

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and discourse onto them. South Asian-Canadians, those who have ancestral ties to modern-day India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Afghanistan, and Nepal, may equally have ancestral ties to the continents of Africa and South America, the Caribbean, Arabia, Oceania, China, Great Britain, the United States *and* Canada. The South Asian diaspora is a trans-temporal, trans-national and trans-oceanic network. South Asians have been forced into diasporic "exile" for a plethora of reasons: colonization(s), religiously sanctioned social oppression, economic catastrophe, civil war, sectarian violence, and racism among other factors. South Asians have also voluntarily entered into transnational movements. South Asian-Canadian communities, with their internal diversity, exist throughout Canada, and over the last hundred years have experienced wildly differing receptions from both the Canadian population and the Canadian state. For example, in the early twentieth century, South Asians were often met with anti-Asian hysteria in British Columbia and the Canadian government's collusion with the British Empire to prevent the expansion of Sikh communities in the "new world." In the 1970's many encountered the move towards social multiculturalism and the granting of asylum to 50,000 Asian-Ugandans by the Canadian government. The South Asian-Canadian community is diverse in its internal constitution, its relationship to itself, and its relationship to Canada, and any critical attempt to read South Asian-Canadian literature must recognize that diversity. However, as Clarke points out, *"c'est le dilemme canadien"* ("Contesting" 43), and that bidirectional complication — the Canadian inflection on South Asian diasporic cultural production as well as the South Asian diaspora's inflection on Canadian cultural production — must be brought to bear on readings of the literature that is produced at the *Canadian* node of the South Asian diaspora.

To develop a reading "tactic" flexible enough to adapt to the diverse historical contexts operating within a cultural community would indeed appear to be the dilemma of literary

scholarship in an officially multicultural Canada. In the specific case of South Asian-Canadian literature, current critical treatment can be described as reinforcing hierarchies of difference rather than an egalitarian plurality. As Mariam Pirbhai suggests:

> Despite their multiple positioning, South Asian diasporic writers continue to be taken as wholesale representatives of a qualitative *South Asianness* on the one hand and of a quantitative *minority* status on the other — at least as they are studied, theorized and perceived in the academic arena. For the most part, these writers continue to be viewed as a homogeneous entity regardless of their complex networks of identification. They are, in turn, examined in terms of their status as immigrants, which is quite often synonymous with their position as visible minorities (a misnomer in such metropolises as Toronto where South Asians have earned the arguably absurd label as an "ethnic majority-minority"). (Pirbhai 386-387)

Pirbhai is not alone in her disappointment with the treatment that South Asian-Canadian literature receives in Canadian universities. Himani Bannerji, Arun Mukherjee, and Uma Parameswaran make similar criticisms of academic practice: to address the complexity of South Asian-Canadian literature, critical practice has to change.

The question of how this situation has come to pass has many possible answers. Depending on the specific combination of political, cultural, social, and disciplinary communities the individual critic is affiliated with, the response to this question can be anything from the perpetuation of colonial attitudes to "Other" cultures; systemic racism; under *and* over theorization of the problem; or the idea that, given the position amongst some that this is a relatively immature literature, the works merit this "special" treatment to foster further

development of a South Asian-Canadian literature. Be that as it may, there are two important

and interconnected historical contexts that are frequently overlooked in considering the issue of

how South Asian-Canadian literature is approached in Canadian universities: the recent

institutionalization of Canadian literature as a legitimate field of academic study and the

influence of postcolonialisms on the theorization of "Other" literatures. While debates over the

study of Canadian literature in Canadian universities have been ongoing since the nineteenth

century, Cynthia Sugars observes it is not until the 1960's that its study became "entrenched"

within the postsecondary study of literature (*Home-Work* 3). In a curious parallel to arguments

made for the current immaturity of South Asian-Canadian literature as a field of study, Sugars

notes that the initial institutionalization of Canadian literature was "dependent on the availability

of professionals trained in the field of Canadian literature as well as anthologies, journals,

conferences, and critical studies devoted to Canadian authors" (*Home-Work* 3-4). Although

Canadian literature gained a foothold within the Canadian academy it was, in the early stages of

its institutionalization, seen by both university establishments and literary scholars as failing to

meet the standards of a "serious" field of intellectual enquiry. However, through the persistence

of its proponents, the growing social feeling of nationalism accompanying the 1967 Centennial

celebrations, and the operation of a government willing to support a nationalist agenda, the study

of Canadian literature in 2010 is no longer seen "as a swamp into which a serious scholar

venture[s] at his peril" (Sugars, *Home-Work* 4). This recent and, as Sugars describes it,

"fraught" (*Home-Work* 5) struggle to establish Canadian literature in the Canadian academy

raises questions for those of us who study the literature of "ethnic," "Other," or marginalized

Canadian writers. How is the literature we read perceived in relationship to the "entrenched"

canon of Canadian literature? Is focus on this literature perceived as part of the "various post-

colonizing and deconstructs of the discipline" that threaten to unmake Canadian national literature (Sugars, *Home-Work* 10)? Is this one of the reasons for what Pirbhai and others have observed is the treatment of South Asian-Canadian literature within the Canadian university? I believe so.

Individual authors' works are treated pedagogically and critically as if they can be read, to borrow from Pirbhai, as "qualitatively" signifying the culture of a "quantitative" minority within the Canadian population. At the heart of this problem is how the idea of "ethnicity" is created within the Canadian academy and then applied to literary works. Smaro Kamboureli's analysis of "ethnic" Canadian anthologies "that appeared around the time multiculturalism was introduced as an official policy in Canada" (*Scandalous* 163), points out authors are not identified as "ethnic" before their relocation to Canada, but only *after* they have been identified as "Other" within a Canadian population. This "Otherness" is not so much dependent on geographic origins as it is "a matter of cultural and social contingencies" *here* that value participation in an assumed normative whiteness over identification with Canada's two "founding" cultures (*Scandalous* 163). This understanding of "Otherness" is dependent on the temporality of ethnicity within its specific Canadian location, as an argument can be made that, earlier in Canadian literary history, participation in a normative whiteness has not always been valued in the same way as identification with Anglo-Celtic origins. However, Kamboureli does make a persuasive argument for reading "ethnicity" in the late twentieth century and early twenty-first century as a marker of visible "otherness." What "ethnic" means within a Canadian academic context has shifted over time. The idea of ethnicity now permits the possibility of diversity and even conflict within a particular community whereas, in earlier academic investigations in the literature of Canadian ethnic groups, internal divisions were masked by a

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reductive assumption of ethnicity as a "natural" and homogeneous condition of communities.

Despite these changes in how ethnic communities are understood to be constituted, "ethnic" is

still read as "Other" to the canon of Canadian literature. This persistence of reading "ethnic"

writing within a framework of what Kamboureli calls "essentialist thematics" has two important

consequences for this literature: it interprets official multiculturalism's injunction to "preserve"

and "enhance" ethnicity as an authorization to fix ethnic identity into a static form; and it "posits

ethnicity as the principal determinant of subjectivity" and proceeds to read the texts as primarily,

and on occasion, solely, reflective of that ethnic identity (Kamboureli, *Scandalous* 153).

Literary multiculturalism can be seen as a "strategy" intended to protect the gains made

by the recently consolidated field of Canadian literary studies. The subjectivity of the individual

"ethnic" writer is read as rooted in a *past* that is located away from his or her *present* location in

Canadian society. However, this strategy of containment is directed not only at individual

authors and their works, but also at the collective production of "ethnic" writing. This strategy

continues to position "ethnic" writing as a recent phenomenon, with respect to the body of

Canadian literature, "whose dissemination has been facilitated by the liberal humanist embrace

of cultural difference" (Kamboureli, "Canadian" 14).[3] In a gesture that both validates the current

structure of the study of Canadian literature and isolates "ethnic" writing within and apart from

that study, the "discovery" of ethnic writing is read as a product of the multicultural

liberalization of the study of Canadian literature *and* evidence that ethnic writing exists apart

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[3] Kamboureli makes this observation in 1994. In 2007, in her introduction to Trans.Can.Lit: Resituating the Study of Canadian Literature, she observes that, despite changes in the study of Canadian literature, the same caution needs to be taken when considering how "ethnic" literatures are positioned within the study of this body of writing: "Its altertist configuration may have compelled it to question some of its institutionalized and institutionalizing practices, but it has also recast its semblance of plenitude in new guises, if not with greater force. With what was illegitimate now legitimized, CanLit may be in a position to applaud itself for the 'progress' it has made, but it also runs the risk of wresting difference and otherness into a Canadian trope: rendering otehrness as familiar and familial, therby situating it within the history of its present" (ix)

from the history of Canadian literature. As Kamboureli points out, this strategy is explicitly a

function of academic practices rather than the realities of "ethnic" writing:

> The ethnic subject is not mute by default nor has it kept itself concealed so
>
> that it needs to be "discovered." It is the audience that has proven to be deaf
>
> to its clamouring for recognition. If the ethnic subject has been perceived as
>
> "silent" it is because it has been contaminated by the disciplinary practices
>
> of the social and cultural systems containing it. It is the bracketing of the
>
> disruptive narratives it embodies that have "silenced" it. (*Scandalous* 14)

While this strategy of literary multiculturalism obscures the need to reflect on what "has been

swept under the carpet in the accepted history of the Canadian academy" (Sugars, *Home-Work*

11), there are particular consequences for the field of South Asian-Canadian literature when this

strategy intersects with postcolonialism. Aside from the homogenizing tendency of

postcolonialism to "cram […] together writers of diverse cultural and national origins"

(Mukherjee, "How" 251) within a single rubric, postcolonialism prioritizes the relatively recent

temporality of European colonialism and the nations and national identities that emerged at the

end of that period. In the case of South Asia, this strategy requires an incredible re-

representation of history. To give just one example, the Taj Mahal is read as iconic of pre-

colonization Indian cultural innovation, creativity, and sophistication. However, the Taj Mahal

was built in the seventeenth century by Shah Jahan, a Mughal emperor, as a tomb for his queen.

It is not "Indian." It is an artifact of the Mughal empire's conquest and colonization of Hindustan,

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a colonization that lasted from 1504 to 1761 and only ended with the handing over of Hindustan

from one colonial power to another: from the Mughal Empire to the British Empire.[4]

The postcolonial reading of South Asian culture and South Asian diaspora as primarily a

recent phenomenon leads to a misplaced valorization of modern South Asian nationalisms as

representing "authentic" South Asian culture. As Kanishka Goonewardena points out, this

strategy allows for contemporary "political, economic, spatial, sociological, and (more broadly)

historical factors" (667) to be overlooked in academic constructions of the historic contexts

within which South Asian diasporic literature might be read. Goonewardena cautions that it is

necessary to be conscious of the impact on academic practice of the radically unaccountable

politics of what he calls, borrowing from Benedict Anderson, "long-distance nationalism" (661).

He draws on the specific example of *Hindutva*, a regressive form of religious nationalism that

became "a trend firmly established [when] the BJP (Bharatiya Janatha Party) regime assumed

political power in India" (661). Goonewardena traces the rewriting of Indian history and

transformation of Indian institutions to make both conform to the ideological precepts of

Hindutva and the legislative support of the BJP for these transformations. He goes further to

demonstrate how *Hindutva,* in its manifestation as a long-distance nationalism, has been able to

influence epistemological and academic structures outside of India, reshaping what is knowable

to conform to the "strategic evasion of the historical record" (682) promoted by this particular

mode of nationalist identity. *Hindutva* is not the only long-distance nationalism that has been

associated with the post-(European)-colonized nations of South Asia; however, through the

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[4] In the wake of the destruction of the World Trade Center in New York, New York by Islamic extremists in September, 2001, this aspect of the diasporic perspective on South Asian-Canadian subjectivity and its reflection in literature underscores the impossibility of reading religion, as an aspect of culture, as embodied in a particular people and grounded in a particular place. The site of multiple invasions, each accompanied by the introduction of a "new" creed (Islam in the case of the Mughal Empire and Christianity in the case of the British Empire) into the "melting-pot" of religions already present, South Asian history (and South Asian diasporic subjectivity) demonstrates that it is impossible to "ground" culture in place.

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influence of these long-distance nationalisms and the "imperialism and colonialism, globalization and neoliberalism [that] are *the conditions of possibility*" of these long-distance nationalisms, "much of the 'postcolonial' and 'diaspora' discourse tends to be regrettably and symptomatically silent" (685). These contexts are needed to read the complexity of South Asian literature in general and South Asian-Canadian literature specifically. Their omission from critical scrutiny makes it clear that postcolonialism can also function as a "strategy" rather than a "tactic" in its treatment of literature.

This dissertation attempts to map out a "tactical" approach to reading South Asian-Canadian literature. In Chapter One, I engage with the theorization of the contested figure of the Anglo-Celtic Canadian settler/invader. This engagement is not so much a critique of the "whiteness" and "Britishness" inherent in the figure but rather an attempt to read the figure as a critical term that continues to imbricate the study of Canadian national literature with a Canadian nationalist mythology. Separated from its racial modifier, the concept of the settler/invader is a particularly apt term for describing the society that has emerged within the Canadian nation-state: a society where an indigenous population has been confronted and colonized by successive waves of settler/invaders over an extended temporal period.   South Asian-Canadian literature, I argue, is uniquely positioned to lever open the figure of the settler/invader and separates it from the attempt to inscribe a Canadian ethnography. In part, this is a result of the shared legacy of British colonialism that the modern states of South Asia share with Canada, and the anticolonial nationalisms of all these nations that negotiate with that legacy. This tactic is necessary not just to "claim [. . .] space within the cathedral" (Parameswaran, "Dispelling" liii) for South Asian-Canadian literature but also to make room to read the *Canadian* into South Asian-*Canadian* literature. This allows for a reading of Canada as a specific node within the South Asian

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diasporic network, where South Asian-Canadian cultural identity as represented in literature expresses an ongoing process of cultural negotiation with the specific social, cultural, and historical realities of this place.

In Chapter Two I read together Sharon Pollock's play, *The Komagata Maru Incident*, Sadhu Binning's book of poetry, *No More Watno Dur*, Surghit Varughese's radio drama *Entry Denied*, and Jessi Thind's youth fiction, *Lions of the Sea* to explore the negotiation with the Canadian vector of influence in South Asian-Canadian literature. By analyzing these multiple narratives that circulate around representations of the same historical moment, the failed 1914 immigration attempt of three hundred and seventy-six South Asians on board the Japanese freighter, the *Komagata Maru*, the diversity of reactions within Canada to this single moment become visible. How do authors with different cultural affinities and relationships to power read this incident? What are the implications of this incident for the social and political histories of these different authors? How do they read this incident as impacting on the nation and the nation's historic development? Do they even see this incident as relevant to the history of the Canadian geographic space or is it relevant only to somewhere else? What is made visible by comparing and contrasting these different authors' different responses to these questions is not a comfortable restatement of the people-as-one: a shared recognition and rejection of the "colonial habits of mind" (Brydon, "Reading" 174) that made this incident possible. Both Canadian nationalist identity and Indian colonial identity share a claim to "Britishness," which becomes, in the *Komagata Maru* Incident, both the grounds on which the passengers base their claim to Canada and the grounds on which the Dominion of Canada government denies their entry. This complication of one of the key aspects of the myth of the Canadian Anglo-Celtic settler/invader, that is the claim to be an improvement on British cultural identity, allows these texts to

demonstrate how different individuals, with different cultural affiliations, performatively attempt to integrate into their understandings of *this* nation a moment when Canadian "order and good government" is revealed as a mask for racism and intolerance.

Chapter Three continues my analysis of the dynamic processes of negotiation within South Asian-Canadian cultural identity and how those negotiations can be reflected in South Asian-Canadian literature by looking at the mutual transformations that can occur between the vector of Canadian influence and the vectors of South Asian diasporic influence that intersect in this body of writing. Looking at two South Asian-Canadian theatre companies, Vancouver Sath in British Columbia and Tessri Duniya Theatre in Québec, I examine how the specifics of Canadian regional and cultural politics, and the specifics of the different histories within the South Asian-Canadian diaspora, influence not only the original play texts but also the structures of these two theatrical institutions. Reading the institutions and representative play texts within the context of Canadian theatrical nationhood makes visible that these theatrical companies, in quite different ways, reflect the dynamic processes of negotiation that produce South Asian-Canadian cultural identity. The analysis of these companies as institutions demonstrates that the negotiation of South Asian-Canadian cultural identity reflected in their creative texts is an on-going process that cannot be understood as simply hybridization or intermixing of "South Asian" with "Canadian." Instead, these creative reflections of South Asian-Canadian cultural identity suggest that in the processes of negotiation both halves of the hyphenated construction continually influence and transform each other.

In Chapter Four, I turn my attention to novel length prose works, specifically Anita Rau Badami's 2006 *Can You Hear the Nightbird Call?* and Rohinton Mistry's 1995 *A Fine Balance*. In this chapter I argue that critical engagement with the processes of negotiation within South

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Asian-Canadian literature is an act of reading the reflection(s) of those processes within the texts. Using the motif of Indra's net, a Buddhist metaphor for the interdependence of all life, I argue that the reader him- or herself occupies a unique location and has a unique perspective on the play of reflections (and reflections of reflections) that are visible in the text. The implications of this for the institutional study of South Asian-Canadian literatures are that no one reader (or critic) can claim mastery over the text. Instead individual readings must be read collectively to map out the play of reflections visible at the point of any text, always with the understanding that those readings are necessarily inflected by the limited vision of the reader. Adding critical reading to critical reading allows more of the pattern of reflections at the location of the text to become visible than any single reading can. Reading *Can You Hear the Nightbird Call?* and *A Fine Balance* through the motif of Indra's net, I argue, allows the critical reader to become positioned within the processes of negotiation that construct South Asian-Canadian diasporic subjectivity. The individual reader, from his or her specific location, as both observer and contributor to the pattern of reflections is forced to situate his or her individual identity in the context of the larger collective identity being played out. Rather than the critics discovering or imposing meaning upon the text, the critics themselves becomes self-conscious parts of the larger patterns of meaning and social negotiation of cultural identity that are reflected in the creative work.

Do I believe that this study of an "ethnic" or "minority" literature risks making the academic study of Canadian literature "obsolete?" No. No more than I believe that the category "South Asian-Canadian literature" no longer has currency as a field of academic study. What I do believe is that this study and other studies of "ethnic" or "minority" literature point out that the Canadian literature that existed long before it came to be recognized as a legitimate field of

inquiry was always already something "other" than the body of literature circumscribed by the anti-colonial nationalist narrative of the Canadian nation.

Chapter I: Debating *The Canadian Postmodern* act of *Survival* in *The Bush Garden* (While Asking: who is *Selling Illusions*?): South Asian-Canadian Literature and the Institutional Construction of Canadian Literature.

TransCanada Institute was established in 2007 at the University of Guelph by Smaro Kamboureli with a Tier 1 Canada Research Chair in Critical Studies in Canadian Literature. The Institute has sponsored, to date, three conferences of both established and emerging academics to, as the Institute's mission statement states, "initiate a renewal of purpose and vision both of the study of Canadian literature and culture and of the role of Canadianists as humanists and citizens" (TransCanada). That the Institute has been successful in generating sustained and on-going conversations on the "renewal" of the study of Canadian literature suggests that, within the academic community, there is a generalized uneasiness with traditional approaches to the institutional treatment of this body of literature. In her opening address to the Institute's inaugural event, Diana Brydon argued that, traditionally, questions of the academic study of Canadian literature have "assumed the context of the nation, in ways that privileged examining nationalism over the structures of the nation-state" ("Metamorphoses" 1). Brydon proposes that what is necessary to "renew" this discipline is to reorient the study of Canadian literature from an examination of nationalism to "the contexts of literature, institutions, and citizenship," that is, to "change the terms of engagement" ("Metamorphoses" 1) for the academic study of Canadian writing. Brydon offers a particularly succinct articulation of the collective uneasiness that frames the debates that the TransCanada Institute makes available: it is not necessarily what has been studied as Canadian national literature that is the problem, but how the institutional study of Canadian literature has framed the question of what Canadian national literature might be.

The generalized uneasiness with current academic traditions in the study of Canadian

national literature is not different from, nor an extension of the dissatisfaction that has been

expressed with the academic treatment of South Asian-Canadian literature. Instead, critical

concerns about the treatment of Canadian literature and South Asian-Canadian literature

represent different perspectives on the same concern. Traditionally the study of Canadian

literature has been framed by a vision of Canada that assumes the existence of an essential

Canadian cultural identity rooted in place which can be discovered (and validated) in the cultural

products of "authentic" Canadians As Daniel Coleman observes:

> [W]hat has come to be known as English Canada is and has been [. . .] a project
>
> of literary, among other forms of cultural, endeavor the formulation and
>
> elaboration of a specific form of whiteness based on a British model of civility.
>
> By means of this conflation of whiteness with civility, whiteness has been
>
> naturalized as the norm for English Canadian cultural identity. (*White* 5)

Rather than assuming that "authentic" Canadian authors express (and embody) an English

Canadian national cultural identity, Brydon argues we must transform the understanding of the

Canadian nation that we take as a starting point for our study of Canadian literature from one

grounded in nationalist ideology to one grounded in an understanding of the nation as a political

society. As Brydon observes, this reevaluation of the relationship between national literatures

and the nation as a political entity is not limited to the Canadian case but is a trans-national

phenomenon. The ways in which the institutions of the nation-state have been conceptualized

are being increasingly called attention to by the pressure of trans-national movements of capital

and populations. Increasingly, the idea of geographically bounded national identity is being

found to be insufficient to describe the cultural realities of the global (and globalizing) present.

Donna Palmateer Pennee and Lily Cho offer us suggestions as to how these forces of globalization and trans-nationalism can help us to reconfigure how we deploy the term "nation" in our analysis of Canadian national literature. As I examine below, both scholars, as they proposed in their position papers presented to the Trans-Canada Institute, suggest interrelated ways to "do the nation differently." They both argue that part of the effect of globalization and trans-national movements of capital and populations is to call our attention to the ways in which traditional conceptions and discourses of "the nation" have tacitly yoked together notions of race and place, even within the creation and elaboration of anticolonial nationalist movements. The "traditional" discourse of the nation, Paul Gilroy amongst others has argued, has always already been imbricated with racialized and racializing discourse, simultaneously inscribing the modern nation and its ontology. In his analysis *Against Race: Imaging Political Culture Beyond the Color Line*, Gilroy traces a discontinuous pattern of consolidations between discourses of "the human" and "the nation" that produces a complex discursive formation within the modern episteme that he labels *raciology*. Raciology, Gilroy proposes, synthesises logos and icon in the production of racial difference. Raciological thought categorizes and stratifies human beings, human societies and the value of human life on the basis of synechdocal readings of the material human body and quite literally grounds them in ontological understandings of "the human" and "the nation." By adopting a raciological perspective, a perspective that is conscious of the operation of ideas of "race" in structuring knowledge, we can begin to see that the "myths of Canadian innocence, deference, and goodwill" [5] inscribe a racialized notion of Canadian

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[5] In "Hu/Man Being: An Analysis of Paul Gilroy's Against Race as a Challenge to Postcolonial Research," I examined Gilroy's sociological analysis in terms of its trans-disciplinary implications for literary analysis. In that study, I made preliminary attempts to read Canadian literature generally and South Asian-Canadian literature specifically from the perspective of raciological analysis. This present study builds on that initial examination of the academic study of Canadian literature, its "traditional" implication in raciological discourse, and possible ways of reading South Asian-Canadian literature, to paraphrase Gilroy, beyond race.

identity. This perspective agrees with Coleman's arguments that the structure of English

Canadian literature naturalizes the assumption of a Canadian "whiteness" and extends Coleman's

observations to also argue that the "myths of Canadian innocence, deference, and goodwill"

implicitly create "minority" cultural identities, like South Asian-Canadian cultural identity, and

their literary expression as the other to a normative and unmarked "authentic" Canadian identity.

My analytical position builds on the analysis of the nation presented by Pennee and Cho by

situating itself within the tensions made visible not only through their problematization of the

term "nation" but also *within* their writing as they struggle with the lingering imbrication of the

traditional "terms of engagement" with Canadian literature in racializing discourse.

In terms of the traditional study of Canadian literature, the figure of the Anglo-Celtic

settler/invader creates a site where the "myths of Canadian innocence, deference, and goodwill"

can most obviously be seen to be implicated in racializing discourse, and where Canadian

cultural identity is clearly expressed in terms of an assumed, normative "whiteness." What I

propose is needed to change the terms of engagement with the academic study of Canadian

literature and South Asian-Canadian literature is to look at how the "settler/invader," separated

from its Anglo-Celtic racializing identity, is a particularly apt term for describing the society that

has emerged within the Canadian nation-state: a society where an indigenous population has

been confronted and colonized by successive waves of settler/invaders over an extended

temporal period. As a figure of nationalist mythology, the Anglo-Celtic settler/invader not only

provides the nation with a mythic past, it inscribes an ethnography that unites the "authentic"

people-as-one under the signs of "whiteness" and "Britishness." Considering that the myths of

nationalist discourse, like the figure of the Anglo-Celtic settler/invader, inscribe both the terms

of literary analysis and the terms of citizenship with a racializing discourse, it is essential to

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adopt a raciological perspective if we are to truly change the terms of our engagement with Canadian literature. By examining how racializing discourse shapes the terms of *both* "past" academic approaches to Canadian literature that privileged nationalism *and* potential "future" approaches that privilege the nation-state we can begin to achieve the shift in perspective that Brydon and others argue is needed in the institutional study of Canadian literature. I am suggesting that, to "renew the purpose and vision" of the study of Canadian literature, and to re-read the category of South Asian-Canadian literature, we must engage with the terms that shape that study, but do so from a raciological perspective — to consider how the terms of study are tacitly implicated in a racialized conception of "authentic" Canadian identity.

Applying a raciological analytical perspective to the figure of the Anglo-Celtic settler/invader is not simply a matter of pointing out that the figure is problematic. In the institutional study of Canadian literature, the authority of the figure of the Anglo-Celtic settler/invader and its centrality within conceptions of the canon of Canadian literature has been called into question for some time. In *Home-Work: Postcolonialism, Pedagogy and Canadian Literature*, Cynthia Sugars draws together a wide range of scholars who speak to a broad resistance to the figure of the Anglo-Celtic settler/invader within the institutional study of Canadian literature. The essays in *Home-Work* speak clearly to the insufficiency of the figure of the Anglo-Celtic settler/invader to describe the literature within a multicultural canon of Canadian writing and underscore the figure's implication in nationalist ideology. The approach I propose is also not to unpack the fictional history of the figure of the Anglo-Celtic settler/invader. Daniel Coleman in his book *White Civility: The Literary Project of English Canada*, persuasively maps out how the figure of the Anglo-Celtic settler/invader has been created not just as a fiction but *through* fiction in the literary production of English Canada and

English Canadian nationalist identity. Sugars, the scholars whose writings she collects in her anthology, and Coleman make visible the racializing implications of the figure of the Anglo-Celtic settler/invader as a figure within Canadian literature and within the academic study of Canadian literature. These scholars' works explain that the function of the "myths of Canadian innocence, deference, and goodwill," embodied in the Anglo-Celtic settler/invader, is to stabilize an ontology of the Canadian nation-state.

Although deconstructing the "whiteness" and "Britishness" of the Canadian nationalist imaginary and its implications for the study of Canadian literature are important aspects of assuming a raciological approach, a greater shift in perspective is required. If I were to propose reading the figure of the Anglo-Celtic settler/invader within the context of a multicultural canon of Canadian literature solely to challenge the centrality of that figure (and its implied ethnicity), I would not be achieving a raciological perspective. That strategy would solicit and reproduce the centrality of the Anglo-Celtic settler/invader even as I attempted to put it under erasure, simply by making the figure the object resistance. I would continue to tacitly participate in racializing thinking by continuing to read "the human" synecdochally in terms of skin colour, validating the "truth" of "whiteness" by resisting its supposed hegemonic authority. Instead what I propose is to make visible that the stability of Anglo-Celtic settler/invader identity is dependent on encoding acts of forgetting into the institutional study of Canadian literature, a forgetting that contains the threat that the histories and literatures of "Other" Canadian settler/invaders represent to the authority of a hegemonic, nationalist mythology.

The category of South Asian-Canadian literature offers a particularly useful vantage point to gain a different perspective on the figure of the Canadian settler/invader, one that separates the figure from its traditional nationalist ethnography. The label "South Asian" marks out a diverse

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geographic region and an extended and varied history of migration to and settlement of Canada. As I discussed in the introduction, the category of South Asian-Canadian is marked by extensive internal diversity in terms of ethno-cultural, social, regional and class identifications. This internal diversity works to disrupt attempts to read South Asian-Canadian as a racial marker. This diversity also marks the different moments of migration to Canada both in the South Asian cultural and historical moment and in the Canadian cultural and historical moment. But perhaps more importantly than its resistance to being reduced into a racial category, South Asian-Canadian cultural identity as expressed in literature disrupts not only the traditional Anglo-Celtic settler/invader's identification with "whiteness" but also its claim to "Britishness." South Asia's extensive and fraught history of British colonization has produced the phenomenon where members of the South Asian diaspora may have a strong, if not stronger, sense of "Britishness" than that ascribed to the Anglo-Celtic settler/invader, even in the postcolonial historical moment. As Klaus de Albuquerque observes in his essay "On Golliwogs and Flit Pumps: How the Empire Stays With Us in Strange Remembrances":

> [South Asians] were not exactly favoured sons and daughters of the British
> Empire [. . .] The colonial system of education, grudgingly extended through
> mission schools and other religious and racial/ethnic schools, had the insidious
> effect of transforming us into British school children steeped in British literature,
> history and geography, and drilled in the Queen's English. (para 1-2)

de Albuqurgue calls attention to the "last vestiges of Empire [. . .] that had embedded themselves in our psyches and made us such ambivalent post-colonials" (para 12), vestiges of Empire that, while they may be more significant to a particular socioeconomic class of the South

Asian disapora, do suggest that an imbrication of British subjectivity with the cultures of South Asia does need to be considered when we examine South Asian-Canadian literature.[6]

The sense of "Britishness" that South Asian-Canadian cultural production shares with the traditional figure of the Anglo-Celtic settler/invader makes visible a tension between the Canadian nationalist myth and the realities of the peoples who reside within the boundaries of the Canadian nation. To borrow from Homi K. Bhabha, what becomes visible is a moment of tension between the "pedagogical" and the "performative" narratives of the Canadian nation. In his essay "DissemiNation: Time, Narrative, and the Margins of the Modern Nation," Bhabha makes his intervention into the controversy surrounding the reception of Salman Rushdie's 1988 novel, *The Satanic Verses*. Bhabha's meditation on nation and national narrative is not a response to the 1989 *fatwa* issued by Iran's Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini but rather it is a response to the outrage of Britain's Islamic communities against the book's perceived blasphemous content, the debate on the value of freedom of speech engendered by the claim of the book's blasphemy, and the tensions this argument made visible within a post-Imperial British national identity. Bhabha proposes that within a national imaginary two narratives are in constant operation: the "pedagogical" and the "performative." The "pedagogical" narrative, which I argue could also be called the mythic or the nationalist narrative, seeks to unite the population into "the people": a united group with a sense of a single, shared collective identity rooted in shared ethnic identity. In their day-to-day lives, individuals negotiate between the myth of a unified national identity and the actual diversity of peoples they see around. However, at particular moments, the always already existing tension between the "pedagogical" and

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[6] While the degree of affinity with British cultural identity may vary with socio-economic class, as I will examine in Chapter 2 in my analysis of representations of the *Komagata Maru* incident in Canadian literature, a conviction of British subjectivity has historically been a phenomenon that transcends class boundaries within South Asian societies.

"performative" narratives of nation becomes visible. In this moment, the increasing pressures of

globalization on the disconnection between nationalism and national literature allows the

possibility of reading Canadian national literature as the literature of a political society within the

Canadian space, by reading it out of the tension that marks the narratives of the nation.

Opening up the site of the Canadian settler/invader is not only a case of attempting to

"make room in the cathedral" for South Asian-Canadian and other diasporic literatures, to

paraphrase Uma Parameswaran ("Dispelling" liii). To read the *South Asian* aspect of *South

Asian*-Canadian literature within the context of the Canadian cultural imaginary is only part of

what needs to happen to engage with the complexity of South Asian-Canadian literature. What

also needs to occur, in order to read South Asian-Canadian literature as Canadian settler/invader

literature is, to extend Parameswaran's argument, to make room to read the *Canadian* aspect of

South Asian-*Canadian* literature within the context of South Asian diasporic subjectivity. This

tactic allows for a reading of Canada as a specific node within the South Asian diasporic

network, where South Asian-Canadian cultural identity as represented in literature expresses an

ongoing process of cultural negotiation with the specific social, cultural, and historical realities

of this place. This performative narrative of South Asian-Canadian cultural production serves as

a useful corrective to the pedagogical ethnography of the Canadian nation that opposes

"whiteness" and "nonwhiteness" by interrupting the mythic Anglo-Celtic ethnography that

effaces Canada's pluri-racial past. It also interrupts the tendency of critics of diasporic literature

toward what Parameswaran has termed "self-ghettoization" (Parameswaran, "Dispelling" xlix):

a strategy that inadvertently contains the dangerous potential of "otherness" to expose the fiction

of national pedagogy. This strategy of self-ghettoization, Parameswaran persuasively argues,

reads South Asian-Canadian literature as a contained, exotic "other" to "mainstream" Canadian

literature rather than reading South Asian-Canadian literature as an interruption to the smooth

repetition of the notion of what constitutes the Canadian "mainstream." The risk of "self-

ghettoization" is that the disruptive potential of "South Asian" can be contained by

homogenizing "South Asian" into a marker of race that necessarily must bear the trace of

"authentic" South Asian culture in order to be recognized. By forcing South Asian-Canadian

literature into the mould of South Asian authenticity, this strategy not only surrenders South

Asian-Canadian literature's "place in the cathedral," it rejects that the "cathedral" is a necessary

context for reading this literature. The performative narrative of South Asian-Canadian diasporic

identity resolutely declares South Asian-Canadian literature as a distinctly "New World"

phenomenon complicating definitions of majoritized and minoritized "Canadian" literatures and

claims of Canadian or South Asian cultural authenticity.

In insisting on this "New World" context for reading South Asian-Canadian diasporic

literature, I echo Stuart Hall and his analysis of Caribbean diasporic identity. Hall proposes that

Caribbean identity must be read as a continuing negotiation between three vectors: *Présence*

Africaine, "the site of the repressed" (240) memory of the ancestral past; *Présence Européenne*,

"which belongs irrevocably to the 'play' of [colonial] power" (242) yet is never wholly external

to identity; and *Présence Américaine*, the "'New World' presence [which] is not so much power,

as ground, place territory [. . .] the juncture-point where the many cultural tributaries meet"

(243). Much like Hall's analysis of Caribbean diasporic identity, I argue that South Asian-

Canadian literature must be read not only in the context of the social, political and cultural

histories of the ancestral past, both the South Asian and the colonial, but also in the context of

the social, political and cultural histories of *this* place.[7] It must be read in the context of a *Présence Canadiénne*. To do otherwise would render the performative negotiation of South Asian-Canadian diasporic identity invisible and prevent it from confronting the pedagogical narrative of nation. Hall's identification of diasporic identity as a *process* where the fullness of meaning is always deferred is particularly relevant to the complex history of South Asian-Canadian diasporic literature. This notion prevents the construction South Asian-Canadian identity and its cultural production from foreclosing its disruptive potential and, in a gesture of "self-ghettoization," transforming from a performative into a pedagogical narrative and inscribing a "new" ethnography of the people-as-one.

Although the tactic of reading South Asian-Canadian literature as a diasporic literature is not a new tactic, the critical record shows little evidence of including within the readings of the literature what I am calling *Présence Canadiénne*. Uma Parameswaran is one of the few exceptions. She has consistently called for reading the history and context of *this* place as not just relevant to, but formative of South Asian-Canadian literature. While there has been little critical recognition of the need to recognize the Canadian influence in South Asian-Canadian literature, the evidence of the effect of South Asian-Canadian literature's performative disruption of national pedagogy can be seen in the critical record. Arun Mukherjee shifts from asserting evidence of discrete South Asian-Canadian identity to asserting the impossibility of reading a "monolithic" ("How" 261) South Asian-Canadian identity. Her later position is directly attributed to what she has been only able to learn about the South Asian diaspora in *this* place. Miriam Pirbhai speaks to the inadequacy of the terminology available to discuss "minority"

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[7] As I discuss more fully in Chapter 2, this "New World" location necessitates a reading of the figure of the Anglo-Celtic settler invader as part of rhetoric of anti-colonial resistance directed at the British "Old World" Empire *and* part of a rhetoric of anti-neo-colonial resistance directed at the American "New World" Empire.

Canadian writing — not just its inadequacy but its "absurdity" in the face of lived reality. These critics demonstrate the tension between the day-to-day reality of the peoples of Canada and the pedagogical ethnography of the nation.

This chapter strives to make visible the tension between the pedagogical and performative narratives of the nation that result from the critical practice of relegating South Asian-Canadian and "other" multicultural literatures to the role of exotic supplements to "authentic" Canadian-Canadian[8] literature. South Asian-Canadian and "other" multicultural literatures not only have something to add to our understanding of the literary production of *this* place, they also have something to gain: a more accurate understanding of the complex process of identity negotiation that they reflect.

1. Doing the Nation Differently: Literary Citizenship, Diasporic Citizenship, and the Time(s) of The Nation

Although the implications of globalization for the sustainability of the idea of the modern nation continue to be debated, the concept of "nation" as a way of naming and differentiating geo-political entities still influences how knowledge is organized. The study of literature within the Canadian university setting still tends to be organized in terms of national canons; tacitly (if unintentionally) validating the belief that cultural production can be categorized within an arbitrary mapping of the globe. The challenge for university literary studies then, to borrow

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[8] In her sociological study, *The House of Difference: Cultural Politics and National Identity in Canada*, Eva Mackey argues that one of the consequences of the implementation of official multiculturalism in Canada has been the emergence of the social concept of "Canadian-Canadian" identity in opposition to the ethnic and "other" hyphenated Canadian identities fostered by the policy. This implicitly raced, unmarked Canadian-Canadian identity, Mackey suggests, is best understood as a product of the "coherence between, and workings of, a wide body of discourses and practices" (xvii). This Canadian-Canadian identity, I argue, is analogous with what, in the terms of the study of Canadian literature is referred to as the Anglo-Celtic settler/invader.

from Donna Palmateer Pennee, is to "do the nation differently" — to do it in such a way as to engage the meaning making potential still resident (sic) in the concept of the "nation" but to disengage from the ontological implications of cultural nationalism. Pennee and Lily Cho offer two different but related models for "doing the nation differently." My question is: do they succeed in fulfilling that ambition and can they provide me with some direction in employing that tactic? Doing the nation differently is essential for the reading of the category of South Asian-Canadian literature. To read South Asian-Canadian literature as cultural production of a diasporic node that continues to form in *this* place, I need to be able to read the convergence of social, cultural, and historical vectors that coincide *here* in such a way as to "side-step" the influence of Canadian cultural nationalism. For my analysis, Canadian cultural nationalism must become one of the aspects of this node of the diasporic network that diasporic subjectivity and literature must negotiate with rather than a factor that determines the limits of that subjectivity and that literature. If my analysis is to escape the "multi-cul-de-sacs" (to borrow from Rohinton Mistry) of "immigrant" or "Other" Canadian literatures in English, my analysis must, on the one hand, avoid participating in a "victim" rhetoric and, on the other, avoid slipping into an "assimilationist" one. Diasporic subjectivity and diasporic literature are not primarily shaped by "loss" or "displacement." Neither are they primarily shaped by "gain" or the embrace of a new "home."

Repositioning the appeal of cultural nationalism is equally important to negotiating the influence of South Asian nationalisms on the continuing production of South Asian-Canadian diasporic subjectivity. As Kanishka Goonewardena argues, the South Asian diaspora, like many other diasporas, is subject to the appeal of what he calls, borrowing from Benedict Anderson, "long-distance nationalisms" originating from the ancestral homeland. Observing the influence

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of these "long-distance nationalisms" is necessary to foreground the heterogeneity of the politics of diaspora. Goonewardena points out that "we have *both* 'good' and 'bad' politics in most diasporas, even if there is more 'bad' than 'good' in many of them in the New World Order — owing to reasons that call for clarification, rather than obfuscation" (666). Diaspora can be a position from which to resist globalization and promote social justice. It can equally be a position from which it is possible to promote "virulently ethnocentric communalism or even neofascism" (665). Being oppressed by Canadian cultural nationalism provides South Asian-Canadian diasporic subjectivity with no magic charm against incorporating within itself participation in oppressive South Asian cultural nationalisms:

> All regressive forms of nationalist identity and historiography [. . .] — diasporic as much as indigenous — share one thing in common: they derive their undeniable appeal to the nationalist subject from strategic evasions of the historical record, based to some extent on "misrepresentations committed" by way of narrative schemes, but more often of "representations omitted." (682-83)

With the hazards and "undeniable appeal" of cultural nationalism on all sides, it is crucial to the success of my project to "do the nation differently."

Donna Palmateer Pennee, in her essay "Literary Citizenship: Culture (Un)Bounded, Culture (*Re*)Distributed," suggests that, while the forces of globalization may have pushed the category of the "national" to "its historical limits," it is necessary "to invest a little longer in the ongoing power of the nation as a referent and a concept in the literary domain" (78). Maintaining the category of the "national" within the structure of literary studies, Pennee suggests, is a valuable strategy because the "national" is a concept around which tensions *within* the idea of the "nation" become visible. Keeping the category of national literature as a location

around which the differences between interpretations of and relationships to the "nation" become

visible opens up the possibility of transforming literary studies from "a vehicle for expressing

and organizing a would-be homogenous social structure" into a means of bringing into being an

idea of "a heterogeneous but nevertheless shared social structure" (75). Reading the category of

national literature as itself a place of tension within literary studies is a tactic, Pennee proposes,

for not just *imagining* "doing the nation differently" (83) but also for exploiting the university's

position as an apparatus of the state to *enact* the nation differently. Proposing "literary culture as

a form of interventionist diplomacy" (79), the practice of teaching literary studies can move from

manufacturing the *ideal citizen-subject* of the state to manufacturing the citizen-subject of the

ideal state. By encouraging "citizenship to be critically acculturated in a university literature

classroom" (76), the pedagogical practice Pennee proposes seeks to disentangle cultural

production (and cultural criticism) from notions of cultural nationalism and embodied culture.

Citizenship becomes a social and political act rather than a marker of place of origin and

"proper" place of being, and "nation" becomes the site of political society rather than

ontologically predetermined nationalism.

Pennee's conception of "literary citizenship" allows literary studies to become part of the

process of transforming the national by exploiting the tensions that become visible at the site of

the "nation." However, as Pennee admits, "the national is a category that [. . .] produces

structures of majority and minority" (78) which are re-inscribed even as they are contested.

Unlike Pennee's analysis that simultaneously accepts and contests these structures of majority

and minority to read them from a critical comparative perspective *within* the category of nation,

Lily Cho's reading of "diasporic citizenship" takes the place of tension between these structures

as the site from which she proposes a different way of doing the nation. Cho argues that the

tensions between majority and minority structures cannot be reduced to "questions of inclusion or exclusion" ("Diasporic" 94). Instead, the tensions between majority and minority positions are more properly understood as the simultaneous "desire to be considered *both* within and without the nation" ("Diasporic" 93). To examine this space of tension, Cho proposes the strategy of "exploring the ways in which the subject of diaspora does not map easily onto the subject of citizenship" ("Diasporic" 94). In the spaces created by the "unfitness" or the incompatibility of the diasporic subject's simultaneous membership in multiple, trans-national communities and the claim of citizenship for membership of the subject in a single, national community, Cho identifies "minority literatures in Canada as contested sites of the uneasiness of diasporic citizenship" ("Diasporic" 94). While Pennee's analysis of the tensions inherent in the "nation" leads her to propose disentangling "citizenship" from "cultural nationalism," Cho's examination of the tensions between majority and minority structures leads her to propose disentangling "citizenship" from "nation." What become visible within the spaces of diasporic citizenship are forms of forgetting that stabilize the "nation" — forgetting of difference, forgetting of the "forms of civility that precede the imposition of European forms of citizenship" (106), forgetting "the losses that enable citizenship to flourish" ("Diasporic" 105). As a strategy for "doing the nation differently," the notion of diasporic citizenship challenges the idea of nation as unitary entity (and identity) by foregrounding what Cho argues the national imaginary has tried to forget: "the losses that enable citizenship" ("Diasporic" 108). Citizenship is both enmeshed with *and* in opposition to the diasporic subject and the "nation" becomes the site of complex negotiations between differences — in other words, the site of political society rather than ontologically predetermined nationalism.

Pennee and Cho's analyses are complementary but not contiguous. Certainly the same terms of reference circulate in both discussions. Both examine "citizenship," the "nation," and national structures of "majority" and "minority." Both ultimately argue that to "do the nation differently" it is necessary to envision/remember the nation as a political rather than an ontologically predetermined society. However, Cho argues that her intervention is intended as a supplement rather than antithesis to Pennee's arguments, a supplement that complicates (without negating) Pennee's claims by situating those claims "within the context of the untangling of citizenship from nation" ("Diasporic" 96). By looking at the tensions made visible both *within* and *between* Pennee's and Cho's analyses we are able to observe something that is not necessarily obvious: how these two positions are shaped by the tensions between what Bhabha calls the "pedagogical" and "performative" narratives of the nation.

The "pedagogical" and "performative" narratives of nation become visible when we shift the frame of our analysis. The tactic Bhabha suggests is to step back from the idea of "nation" shaping a shared identity for the "people" and instead observe how "the narrative of the imagined community is constructed from two incommensurable temporalities of meaning that threaten its coherence" (308). In Bhabha's analysis these "two incommensurable temporalities" are made visible in the "pedagogical" and "performative" narratives of nation:

> In the production of the nation as narration there is a split between the continuist, accumulative temporality of the pedagogical and the repetitious, recursive strategy of the performative. It is through this process of splitting that the conceptual ambivalence of modern society becomes the site of *writing the nation*. (297)

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Nationalist pedagogy organizes time as a smooth continuum where the modern nation is positioned as the logical evolutionary outcome of an *a priori* tradition. Bhabha observes that the implications for the "people" of this narrative strategy are that they are rhetorically objectified by the pedagogical narrative's claim to speak of them "based on the pre-given or constituted historical origin or event" (297). The "people" of the modern nation are narrated in terms of their relationship to tradition. Performative narrative, on the other hand, is resolutely presentist in its perspective; it "erase[s] any prior or originary presence of the nation-people" (297) to engage with the day-to-day reality of the peoples of the modern nation. The implication of this narrative for the people is that they are transformed from objects of "pedagogical" narrative into signifying subjects who participate in the daily process of creating national life: "The present of the people's history [. . .] is a practice that destroys the constant principles of the national culture that attempt to hark back to a 'true' national past" (303). The "people" continually recreate the nation in such a way as to deny the authority of tradition.

Shifting the "measure" of narratives of nation away from their participation in nationalist discourse and towards their differential management of time — inscribing the present as subject to the past or the past as subject to the present — Bhabha's tactic allows for the "pedagogical" and "performative" narratives of nation to avoid becoming trapped in an oppositional relationship to each other. This shift in analytical frame allows for the relationship between "majority" and "minority" structures within the national narratives to be similarly liberated from a solely and necessarily oppositional relationship:

> The minority does not simply confront the pedagogical or powerful master-
> discourse with a contradictory or negating referent. It does not turn contradiction
> into a dialectical process. [. . .] The questioning of the supplement is not a

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repetitive rhetoric of the 'end' of society but a meditation on the disposition of

space and time from which the narrative of the nation must begin. (306)

With this understanding of the supplementary relationship between "majority" and "minority"

structures, and the differential temporalities of pedagogical and performative narratives of

nation, I can return to the tensions within *and* between Pennee's and Cho's analyses.

As Pennee and Cho both write within the discipline of literary studies, it would seem

obvious to state that both analyses are grounded in readings of narratives, in particular the

relationship of narratives to the idea of the nation. Pennee's intervention is explicitly grounded in

the way literary narrative operates to create the possibility of acculturated citizenship:

> [C]ulture, and literary culture in particular, represents ourselves to ourselves: this
>
> inter-articulation, this coming together of both inter-national and intra-national
>
> representations, is crucial to arguments for the political productivity of the
>
> postcolonial literary, [. . .] because inter-national and intra-national
>
> representations are the substance of today's multifaceted practices of both
>
> speaking for and speaking to the people with whom we live, even when such
>
> speech may be unintended altogether. (79-80)

Literary citizenship is offered in recognition and rejection of the notion that literary studies can

succeed in producing "[*o*]*ut of many one*" (Bhabha 294). Proposing that literary citizenship

transforms the notion of citizenship "from a state of being to a process of being and of

becoming" (Pennee 80), the narrative of the nation is transformed as "[c]ultural difference

introduces into the process of cultural judgment and interpretation that sudden shock of the

successive, nonsynchronic time of signification, or the interruption of the supplementary

question" (Bhabha 313). Suggesting the necessity of "producing forms of communal knowledge

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of people different from yet similar to 'ourselves'" (Pennee 79), Pennee's argument would appear to suggest a way by which the performative interruption of the pedagogical narrative of nation can be made visible.

Looking at the implicit relationships to time embedded within Pennee's analysis, the time of the performative narrative of nation reveals the operation of the time of the pedagogical narrative of nation. Pedagogical time is implicitly encoded within Pennee's argument through her repetition of the figure of the Anglo-Celtic settler/invader:

> I work in a university that is fairly representative of Canada's white Anglophone mainstream: though my campus is less than 100 kilometers from Toronto, one of the world's most multiracial and multi-classed cities, the student and faculty population, though changing, is still predominantly *white, middle class, Anglo-Celtic, Protestant* (especially the faculty). (77; emphasis added)

I do not dispute her observation of the demographic represented in the student and faculty bodies of the University of Guelph's College of Arts. However, what is of interest in her observation is the application of rhetoric usually applied to the figure of the Anglo-Celtic settler/invader to read the implications of that demographic representation. As I discuss below, the figure of the "white, middle class, Anglo-Celtic, Protestant" settler/invader is explicitly implicated in the narrative transformation of "the people [into] historical objects of a nationalist pedagogy, giving the discourse an authority that is based on the pre-given or constituted historical origin or event" (Bhabha 297). In Pennee's construction, the Anglo-Celtic settler/invader "is still predominant." The status of the settler/invader is only "changing" in the moment of Pennee's writing (that is 2004), but even with this "change" it still clings to its "mainstream" authority. Repeating the figure of the white settler/invader, this "symptom of an ethnography" (Bhabha 298), reads the

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"people" through their relationship to an *a priori* historical presence and fixes temporality within Pennee's analysis, implicitly and in contradiction to her explicit arguments, within the framework of the pedagogical narrative of nation.

A similar internal tension between explicit participation in the performative narrative of nation and implicit participation in the pedagogical narrative of nation can be seen in Cho's argument. Cho's analysis is grounded in the dissonance that exists between (and within) the individual narratives of minority Canadian literatures and the idea of a majority Canadian national literature. The literary cultures of individual "minority" communities have a fraught relationship with the idea of the Canadian "nation" and of a national Canadian literature. Minority literatures are positioned as simultaneously inside the idea of "Canadianness" but distanced by a recognition that the national literary culture forgets to remember the differential histories of dislocation that shape the day-to-day realities of Canadian "minorities." Cho argues that this uneasy relationship to the "imagined community" of the Canadian nation embeds "trenchant critiques of Canadianness" ("Diasporic" 93) within the narratives of minority peoples. This need to recognize how specific histories of dislocation are remembered in and commemorated by minority literatures, Cho argues, must inflect pedagogical approaches to these literatures. It is not enough to assume that these literatures can be "graciously" ("Diasporic" 93) made space for within a Canadian national literature and that these literatures can be effectively taught without recognition of the everyday realities that shape their production. Instead, pedagogical practice must inflect instruction in literary studies with the everyday realities of minority displacements that challenge the notion of a coherent national literary culture. Cho's analysis explicitly argues that the idea of a communal identity reflected in literature is at odds

with the absences within that identity, absences made visible by the lived reality of the "minority" peoples of this place.

Temporality within Cho's arguments is organized much as it is within Pennee's analysis and a similar tension between the pedagogical and performative times of nation can be observed. The relationship that Cho proposes between diasporic citizenship and the nation positions her analysis within the performative time of nation. Located within the contested sites of minority literatures in Canada, Cho's construction of diasporic citizenship functions "as a perpetual reminder of the losses that enable citizenship to flourish" ("Diasporic" 105). The work of diasporic citizenship, Cho argues, is to interrupt the pedagogical narrative of nation with the dangerous supplement of the performative narrative of the peoples — to "tear away at the coherence of national forgetting" ("Diasporic" 109). As a narrative strategy, diasporic citizenship interrupts the pedagogical narrative of majority cultures "whose claims to autochthony attempt to elide histories of difference" ("Diasporic" 98). As a "dangerous supplement" to the pedagogical narrative of nation, diasporic citizenship represents "an instance of iteration, in the minority discourse, of the time of the arbitrary sign — 'the minus in the origin' — through which all forms of cultural meaning are open to translation because their enunciation resists totalization" (Bhabha 314). Bhabha's argument suggests that the discourse of the "minority" needs to be read as no more and no less motivated than the discourse of the "majority." As supplement to the pedagogical narrative of nation, diasporic citizenship underscores that *all* cultural enunciation is always iterative and cannot be grounded in or represent totalization. Diasporic citizenship creates the possibility for minority Canadian literatures to be read as "arguably, even unquestionably, Canadian" and also read as "trenchant critiques of Canadianness" (Cho, "Diasporic" 93), that is, both within and without the nation.

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The time of diasporic citizenship is the present of the performative narrative of nation — the daily negotiations of the peoples of this place as they (re)construct their cultural reality again and again.

The time of the performative narrative of nation is not, however, the only temporality marked out in Cho's analysis. Looking closely at how Cho discursively constructs the structures of "majority" and "minority" within Canadian literature, it becomes apparent how the time of pedagogical narrative becomes incorporated within her analysis. In Cho's analysis "[m]inority marks a relation defined by racialization" ("Diasporic" 98). While I do not dispute her observation, the location of racialization within the structure of minority begs the question of how "majority" is constructed. Cho's discussion of "what does it mean to teach a course or do research in Asian Canadian literature, as opposed to Canadian literature with an emphasis on Asian Canadian" ("Diasporic" 93) provides some insight into the structure of the unmarked or majority category. Cho argues:

> 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 Canadianist. These are not simply questions of inclusion or exclusion. They are questions that point to the unresolved relation between minority and majority literatures in Canada. ("Diasporic" 94)

Aside from the pragmatic limitation of the ability of an individual scholar to have available the whole of the differential histories of the peoples of this place, Cho's construction appears to argue that citizenship is culturated rather than acculturated by literary studies. So what separates the "Canadianist" from the "Asian Canadianist," or the "Black Canadian" or "Native Canadian" literature scholar — the other figures that circulate through Cho's discussion? I would argue that

what marks the unmarked "Canadianist" (or mainstream or majority) is that critic's implicit status as unracialized — which in the Canadian context implies a normative "whiteness." To assess the temporality embedded within Cho's argument through the unmarked "whiteness" that marks the majority Canadian (or the Canadian assimilated into the majority) it is useful to examine Cho's deployment of Fred Wah's *Diamond Grill* within her analysis.

Cho selects from *Diamond Grill* the narrative of Wah's discovery that his sudden and unnamed hunger is for *lo bok*, "Chinese Turnip" ("Diasporic" 106). While this scenario has specific implications within the context of Wah's writing, what is of interest here is that Cho chooses to repeat this section of Wah's narrative as part of her narrative of "the processes of memory, which bind vertically through generation and horizontally across individuals" within diasporic communities ("Diasporic" 106). In this conjunction of narratives, diasporic subjectivity shifts from the frame of social and cultural construction and instead becomes a mark of embodied "otherness." Her quotation from Wah's text emphasizes the rooting of cultural identity in the body: it is a "craving," "[a]n absence that gnaws," it is "an undefined taste" (Wah qtd. in Cho, "Diasporic" 106). While Cho, through Wah, locates this absence, this craving, in "some blind alley of the mind" rather than "in the mouth" (Wah qtd. in Cho, "Diasporic" 106), this "memory" of loss is narrated in terms of bodily sensation and grounds "the geography of longing" not in the mind but in the flesh of the diasporic subject. Through the narrative choices of Cho (via her deployment of Wah), the line between memory and physicality, political culture and embodied culture, is blurred if not erased.

What happens to the structures of "majority" and "minority" if the racialized difference of diasporic subjectivity becomes a function of the body of the individual rather than a function of cultural and social negotiation? If minority literature is discursively positioned as narrating an

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embodied "otherness," the differential histories that are marked out by diasporic citizenship cease to be relevant as reminders that "majority" subjectivities are narrative objects rather than realities: "otherness" becomes fixed in the body by "obscure, miraculous connections" (106) that are uncomfortably similar to a confirmation of the validity of racial difference. While Cho draws on Paul Gilroy's notion of "living memory" as the ground from which to argue for the shared memories that bind together diasporic subjectivities, it is Gilroy who warns against the dangers of blurring the difference between political culture and embodied culture:

> We have already had to appreciate that it may coincide with the political desires
> of some people inside the imagined community of a racialized group to proceed
> on the basis of given or automatic unanimity and to approach their own "race" as
> a single, undifferentiated magnitude bound together not by the superficialities of
> history of language, religion or conquest, but some underlying, essential similarity
> coded in their bodies. Here, of course, science and the everyday world of racial, I
> would prefer to say *racializing*, talk, part company and mysticism and occultism
> take over. (Gilroy 38)

The temporality of this embodied "otherness" is not the temporality of the performative narrative of nation. If racialized, minoritized "otherness" is encoded in the body of the diasporic subject, the implication is that there is a subject whose body does not encode this "otherness" – the majoritized, mainstream subject. In terms of the narrative of nation, if "minority" subjectivity is physically embodied, it follows that "majority" subjectivity may be, too. This discursive construction implicitly grants to the "mainstream" subject an *a priori* presence, an unmarked Canadian identity, that the minoritized subject must always already be the hyphenated "other" to. When this embodied "majority" position intersects with the implied "whiteness" of unmarked

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Canadian citizenship, I argue the figure of the Anglo-Celtic settler/invader is incorporated into, and tacitly validated by, Cho's analysis. As in Pennee's analysis, the figure of the Anglo-Celtic settler/invader encodes within Cho's analysis the time of the pedagogical narrative of nation in contradiction of the performative time that is overtly visible within her arguments. The iterative time of diasporic citizenship coexists with the "homogenous empty time" (Bhabha 306) of the Anglo-Celtic settler/invader.

Reading Pennee's and Cho's analyses as sites where it is possible to see the tensions that exist between the differential times of the pedagogical and performative narratives of nation, I do find, as both authors suggest, a way to "do the nation differently," though perhaps not as the authors originally intended. Stepping back from nationalist discourse, in other words, from the "nation" (or its majority or minority structures or even its citizenship) as the starting point of my analysis, I begin to focus on the differential time encoded within the narratives of the nation. With this shift in perspective I can try to overtly write out of the "*instability* of cultural signification [from which] the national culture comes to be articulated as a dialectic of various temporalities — modern, colonial, postcolonial, 'native' — that cannot be a knowledge that is stabilized in its enunciation" (Bhabha 303). It is possible to "do the nation differently" not just by remembering that nations are made and can therefore be remade in more politically desirable forms, nor just by remembering that nations are constructed on the grounds of collective amnesia. Both of these things are needed. However, if I am to do the nation differently I must also remember that the "nation" is always already in the process of being written and rewritten by the peoples of that place. The "writing of the nation" does not exist in either the pedagogical or the performative narratives of the nation, but rather in the perpetual tension between the two narratives. Bhabha observes this space of tension does not represent equilibrium between the

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two narratives but rather a space of liminality that points to the limits of both the nation and nationalist discourse. In this space of liminality not only can we "do the nation differently," but the possibility also exists to read South Asian-Canadian diasporic literature differently. In this liminal space between the pedagogical and performative narratives of nation the possibility exists to read the specificities that shape the writing produced at *this* node of the South Asian diasporic network.

2. A Nation of Mythic Proportions: Challenging the figure of the Anglo-Celtic Settler/Invader

While I have argued that the operation of the pedagogical narrative of nation can be read in both Pennee's and Cho's analyses, the overt subject matter of their texts deals with a much more literal pedagogy: literary studies in Canadian universities. If we pause to consider that elementary and secondary schoolteachers inhabit the university literature classroom, what becomes apparent is that the university literature classroom is implicated in the education of the general population of Canada and not just the education of the national elite. University based teacher training has existed in Canada since 1857, a time even before the formalization of an independent Canadian state,[9] and if university literary studies teaches the nation's teachers, we need to be conscious of what (and how) we are teaching to "do the nation differently," and, as Pennee suggests is possible, make the "nation" differently.

The works collected together in Cynthia Sugars' expressly pedagogical collection *Unhomely States: Theorizing English-Canadian Postcolonialism* provide an instructive example

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[9] McGill Normal School was established by McGill University in Québec in 1857. The Normal School was renamed the School for Teachers in 1907 and incorporated within Macdonald College. At this time a Department of Education was established within the Faculty of Arts and Science to prepare secondary school teachers for certification (McGill). Both the University of Toronto and Queen's University in Ontario opened Faculties of Education in 1907 (OISE, Queen's).

of how literal pedagogy and abstract national pedagogy can become (unintentionally) conflated. This 2004 collection of what are described as the "foundational essays of Canadian postcolonial theory," brings together writings from 1965 to 2000 that explore the question of Canadian postcolonial national identity from perspectives as diverse as Canadian anticolonial (and anti-neo-colonial) nationalism, First Nation subjectivity, multicultural critique, and pedagogical theorization. Between the sheets of Sugar's *Unhomely States*, Stephen Slemon, Margery Fee, Smaro Kamboureli, and Arun Mukherjee (to cite only a few of the authors collected in this volume) can be found with a trio of what might seem to be strange bedfellows: George Grant, Northop Frye, and Margaret Atwood. However, this trio of anticolonial nationalists literally found Sugar's collection in her attempt to answer the question that she, in her introduction, borrows from Himani Bannerji, "*whose* imagination is advanced as the national imaginary" (Bannerji qtd. in Sugars, *Unhomely* xiv). Of particular interest here is the content of the "foundational essays of Canadian postcolonialism" (*Unhomely* xvi). As I discuss below, the troubling rhetorical figure of the white, Anglo-Celtic settler/invader finds an untroubled home in the essays that Sugars validates as the foundations of Canadian national literary debates.

The critical conversation that circulates around the question of Canadian literature's claim to postcolonial status in the "foundational" debates suggests that Canadian literature is a postcolonial literature, but a special case: a settler/invader literature. Like the writing being created in the former colonies of Australia, New Zealand, and South Africa, Canadian writing is seen to represent "a place of radical ambivalence" and to narrate a society that "has always been complicit in colonialism's territorial appropriation of land, and voice, and agency" (Slemon 148-50). This complicity in the colonial project has led some international critics to question whether a "rich, white and complicit" (Brydon "Reading" 173) Canada can be seen to have been an

authentic colony of an imperial power. Even those within the Canadian academic tradition who

argue for reading Canadian literature within a postcolonial framework are uneasy with a simple

equation of Canada's experience of colonialism with those nations that critics of a postcolonial

Canadian literature identify as the "poor, nonwhite, and resistant" and, perhaps, more authentic

colonies:

> I cannot help feeling that there is something in [equating Canadian and Third
>
> World writers] that is both trivializing of the Third World experience and
>
> exaggerated regarding the (white) Canadian. Of course Canada was politically a
>
> colony, but the consequences for white (not Native) writers of that past are
>
> different from those for writers of Africa, India, or the Caribbean. (Hutcheon 76)

While recognizing that the Canadian experience as invaders and settlers leads to a different

negotiation of both colonialism and postcolonialism, Canadian proponents of a postcolonial

Canadian literature argue that it is the very ambiguity of Canada's relationship to Empire that

makes Canadian literature "an ideal laboratory for the study of postcolonial writing" (Bennett

113). Canadian writers, the argument runs, must negotiate the transition from invader to settler

to postcolonial citizen, from Canada as "imperial subject to autonomous state" (Bennett 109). In

doing so, Canadian writers provide us with insights into the actual processes of colonization and

the continuing implications "of the entangled agency of one's history as a subject with that of the

displaced Native/colonized subject" (Lawson 151). For many of the Canadian critics, the

importance of reading Canadian literature as a postcolonial literature is that this strategy

foregrounds "the unresolved contradictions of Canada's invader-settler inheritance" (Brydon,

"Reading" 171) by pointedly arguing that the process of decolonization within the Canadian

colony is incomplete. The "colonial habits of mind" (Brydon, "Reading" 174) that maintain First

Nations people as colonized subjects within a postcolonial Canada necessitate this reading of Canadian literatures to "investigate the range of historical relations of colonies to colonialism [to gain] a full perspective on colonialism and how to counter its negative effects" (Brydon, "Reading" 173). Read as a postcolonial literature, Canadian writing is not simply positioned as a reflection on a Canadian past, but also as an intervention in a present and ongoing transformation of the society that it narrates.

That Canadian literature can be read as a postcolonial settler/invader literature is, in these early years of the twenty-first century, a critical commonplace. However, I have included this brief précis of the critical conversation that establishes that commonplace in order to point out how central the identity of the settler/invader is to the definition of Canadian literary postcoloniality. The definition of settler/invader identity traditionally used in the academic study of Canadian literature, as the discussion above clearly implies, is raced and the critical conversation forthrightly acknowledges this racial (and cultural) identity. Linda Hutcheon in her 1989 essay "Circling the Downspout of Empire: Post-Colonialism and Postmodernism" provides a particularly succinct definition of Canadian settler/invader identity: "Canada's colonial culture [. . .] still define[s] itself in terms of values which can, today, be seen as British, white, middle-class, heterosexual, and male" (78). While this definition fits the colonial authority that dominated Canada for the last phase of its colonial period, I am unsure that this definition of settler/invader matches the social reality of life in colonial and postcolonial Canada. Settler/invader identity does serve a purpose. Within the argument for placing Canadian literature within the framework of postcolonial literature it foregrounds the incompleteness of decolonization within the Canadian geographic space. However, is it accurate to describe postcolonial Canada as only "multicultural" (Huggan 126) in its beginnings (because of the

political and legislative recognition of both French and English linguistic groups) and only "lately more multiracial" (Hutcheon 79) after the political and legislative recognition of multiculturalism? When does migration into the geographic space of Canada stop being settlement and become immigration?

These are questions that circulate within the discourse of the debate about the applicability of postcolonial criticism to Canadian literature that Sugars incorporates within her explicitly pedagogical text. The "foundational" critics reaffirm the conflation of settler/invader identity with "British, white, middle-class, heterosexual, and male" but struggle to bring both Canadian official and counter-histories to bear on their readings of the national literature. This struggle results in a continuing instability within the discourse that centers on the category of "settler/invader." As Bennett points out, the sign of "settler" is a particularly slippery term within the muddy historical context of the decolonization of Canada:

> *Postcolonial* suggests a historical period, but in current use the term lacks a clear terminus a quo and terminus ad quem. Since most postcolonial critics make assumptions about resistance to the inherited discourse, is what we are now calling the postcolonial condition something built into the first moment of colonization — brought about by the colonists' inherent resistance to thinking of their land, and themselves, as ruled by a distant other? Or does a country become postcolonial only at the moment of political independence? Indeed, can a country or a people ever completely throw off past coloniality and claim to have become — or to have recovered — an authentic and essential self? And if so, when? (109)

This question of the "when" of transition from colony to nation allows Bennett, within her

contemplations on the complexities of English Canadian postcolonial literature, to stretch the

period of Canadian settlement. She is able to include within the identity of the "settler,"

immigrants from its "founding history" (114), "individuals of *non-British* origins who came from

their [continental European] homelands into English Canada between Confederation and World

War II" (117; emphasis added), and, since the 1960's, "recent [non-European] immigrants to

Canada [. . .] because these individuals are both *settlers* full of hope and refugees in an alien

environment" (121; emphasis added). However, even while stretching the temporal frame of

settlement, Bennett's chronology of settlement reaffirms (as other critics do by reserving the

term "settler") the previous claim on this place and its culture by an English and white settler

identity that all late-comers must negotiate with.

The challenge to the homogeneous whiteness of a founding (and authentic) Anglo-Celtic

settler identity, within this body of critical writing, comes from recognition of the ongoing

Chinese- and Japanese-Canadian presence in the Canadian nation. However, where and when

this recognition occurs, these "Other" settlers are discursively positioned as separate from the

conventional definition of their more readily recognized "Anglo-Celtic" counterparts *and* from

the development of what is read as postcolonial English-Canadian literature. In comparing the

Canadian and Caribbean experiences of European colonialism, Linda Hutcheon, in "Circling the

Downspout of Empire," cites the historical presence of the "usually ignored Chinese railway

workers in Canada"(76) as a "close approximation" of the indentured Indian and Chinese

workers brought into the Caribbean after the end of chattel slavery (77). However, while

recognizing this presence of a non-white, non-British population within the space of Canada and

placing them within the context of an almost mythical nation building project, the building of the

trans-continental rail link, Hutcheon immediately distances these "Chinese railway workers" from any claim to the status of Canadian settler. Equating the Chinese railway workers with indentured labourers allows Hutcheon to dismiss their potential challenge to the established identity of the settler/invader: "Indentured labourers, *unlike slaves or settlers*, were always considered itinerant; they never belonged to where they worked and lived." (77; emphasis added). Hutcheon's discursive maneuvers contain the potential challenge to the "whiteness" of settler/invader identity by reading the Chinese workers as unable to settle — as itinerants (actual or approximate) the potential to claim this place as home is effectively barred to them.

A similar pattern of recognizing the long standing presence of East Asian-Canadians, on the one hand, while holding them separate from the claim of settler status, on the other, can be seen in Donna Bennett's essay "English Canada's Postcolonial Complexities." Within the framework of her essay, her discussion of the presence of East-Asian Canadian migrants to Canada occurs only *after* she has established her chronology of settlement. After having established a chronology of immigration into the space of Canada with each individual wave of migration entitled to claim the identity of "settler," Bennett turns her discussion to "the emergence [in the last twenty years] of other groups of writers who, though they are not immigrants, are not of British origin" (122). The "emergence" of these "other writers," Bennett quite accurately argues, is a function of Canada's multiculturalism policy. The policy of multiculturalism promotes the expression of cultural realities "other" to those of Canada's perceived "founding nations" both by recent immigrants and by "Canadians whose cultures have long been present, though relatively silent" (122) — I would add that *silenced* rather than *silent* is perhaps more accurate.

It would appear that the stability of Anglo-Celtic settler/invader identity can be maintained only by discursive work, in the case of distancing East Asian-Canadian settlers, "amnesia" in the case of black Canadian settlers, as George Elliot Clarke points out in his introduction to *Odysseys Home: Mapping African-Canadian Literature* (7),[10] and an apparent complete ignorance of the presence of South Asian-Canadian settlers. While the long term presence of South Asians within the place of Canada has been, since the early 1970's,[11] the subject of the work of social historians and anti-racist South Asian-Canadian activists, the identification of the history of South Asians in Canada as a source of creative cultural production has been rare.[12] One of the few exceptions is the 1993 special issue of *RUNGH* (*From the Roots*, Vol. 2, 1-2) that sought "to provide the reader with an historical and contemporary framework within which the South Asian community on the West Coast of Canada has evolved and established itself" (8). A journal published from 1992 to 2000 by The Rungh Cultural Society, a

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[10] The critical arguments that surround the place of Canada within postcolonial criticism have a disturbing tendency to displace blackness away from Canada and into the United States or the Caribbean. Hutcheon may be accurate in her claim that Canada did not actively import chattel slaves from Africa into the colony or the country; however, she omits mention of the presence of slaves that crossed into Canada with their United Empire Loyalist masters. Sarah Anne Curzon's 1876 play *Laura Secord, The Heroine of 1812* lists two "American" slaves of the Secord Family within the dramatis personae which suggests that a black presence, and a slave presence, were well recognized within the Canadian colony. It is unlikely that Curzon would have portrayed her "heroine" as a slave owner if the reality of slaves within the colony were not perceived as an acceptable social reality during the time the play is set. It is telling, however, and in keeping with the current critical discourse of Canadian postcolonialism, that Curzon identifies those slaves as "American" rather than "Canadian," and certainly not "British" which is the identification Curzon reserves for the Secords and other colonials in her dramatis personae.

[11] Norman Buchignani's *Continuous Journey: A Social History of South Asians in Canada* (1985) is just one example of this genre of historical writing. Part of the series *Generations: A History of Canada's Peoples*, edited by Jean Burnet and Howard Palmer and published jointly by McClelland Stewart and the Multiculturalism Directorate, Buchignani's text is a practical example of Bennett's argument that the Canadian policy of multiculturalism has resulted in the counter-histories of Canada being brought into contact with the official history of Canada. The editors of the *Generations* series, which was commissioned by the Multiculturalism Directorate in response to Book IV of the *Report of the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism*, do not, however, perceive their project as potentially pushing the idea of Canada from the frame of the postcolonial into the frame of the postnational, as Bennett suggests. Their intent for the series is instead to "understand fully the contours and nature of Canadian society and identity" (Buchignani vii). In other words, rather than seeing their project as postnational, they see their project as explicitly national in nature.

[12] As the majority of essays in Sugars' collection post-date 1975 and the group I have examined in detail here post-date 1989, that is four or more years after the publication of not only Buchignani's text but the other texts in the series, the complete erasure of South Asian-Canadian settler presence from their discussion of settler/invader identity is particularly disturbing.

non-profit organization based in British Columbia and "dedicated to the development, documentation and exhibition of contemporary South Asian arts and cultural work" (*Rungh*), this special double issue of *RUNGH* was intended to "strike [. . .] a blow in the battle of memories" (3) by foregrounding the roots of South Asians in Canada. The issue begins by reprinting two articles from a yet earlier South Asian-Canadian publication, the *Indo-Canadian*, that provide a chronology of the South Asian presence in Canada. Looking specifically at the presence of "East Indians in BC" (9), the chronology suggests that evidence of an "East Indian" presence can be found as early as the period from 1870 to 1905; however, East Indian "settlers" (9) and active settlement does not begin until 1900. The period from 1900 to World War I was marked by an increasing fury of anti-Asiatic sentiment on the West Coast of Canada and continuing concessions by the Canadian Federal government to that fury. These concessions included the enactment of the so-called "continuous journey" requirement that effectively banned immigration from British India by requiring that all potential immigrants travel directly to Canada from their country of origin, this during a time when there were no direct shipping routes between India and Canada. This period culminates with the *Komagata Maru* Incident, the refusal of a chartered ship "carrying 351 Sikhs and 21 Punjabi Muslims" (12) into the harbour at Vancouver on the grounds that its passengers were ineligible to enter Canada under the current conditions of the Canadian Immigration Act.

As I will discuss in the next chapter, the *Komagata Maru* Incident is a continuing site of historical interrogation by playwrights, poets, and authors. However, the implications that this early phase of South Asian settlement in general, and the *Komagata Maru* Incident in particular, have for understanding Canada as a postcolonial nation cannot be overlooked. At the time of early South Asian settlement, residents of British India (which included modern India, Pakistan,

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and Bangladesh) were deemed British subjects with the right to free movement within the Empire — which included the Dominion of Canada. This right of free movement within the Empire, guaranteed by the Imperial government, sets the Canadian government's actions to bar South Asian immigration apart from its legislative actions against Chinese and Japanese would-be immigrants. To bar the entry of South Asians into Canada required that the emerging nation assert the needs of its citizens (as ugly and as racist as those needs might be) against the needs of the Imperial centre.

The early period of South Asian migration into Canada was accompanied by extended negotiations between the Canadian nation and the British Empire. While the Canadian federal government sought to bar immigration in order to appease the racist Anti-Asian sentiments of its "white" (and voting) populace, the British authority feared an overt and outright ban because of "the possibility of generating resentment against British rule in India" (Buchignani 23). What was at stake in these negotiations was the right of Canada, as an autonomous nation, to establish and enforce its own immigration policy in response to its own needs and separate from the needs of the greater Empire. The results of these negotiations are not only important to the study of the literature of South Asian-Canadians; they are equally important to any attempt to read Canadian writing as a postcolonial literature. Canada won the right to determine its own immigration policy but only by conceding to the Imperial demand, made at the Imperial War Conference of 1918, to permit the wives and children of existing South Asian-Canadians into Canada (Buchignani 66). While not a particularly proud moment in Canadian national history (from an early twenty-first century perspective), this part of Canada's relationship to its South Asian settlers is particularly relevant to a study of the nation's transition from "imperial subject to autonomous state."

Given that challenges to the historic accuracy of the accepted settler/invader identity as British and white are so readily available, how are we to read the persistence of this myth in the discourse that surrounds Canada's place in postcolonial literature? How can the continuing critical commitment to what Graham Huggan observes is the "problematically conflated 'Anglo-Celtic' strand" of settler/invader identity (134) be understood? George Elliott Clarke's argument that "those who do not research history are condemned to falsify it" (*Odysseys* 7) does not "fit" as the source of this phenomenon. Certainly, there can be no question that the identity of Anglo-Celtic settler/invader as the "authentic" Canadian settler falsifies the history of Canadian settlement, but it is not accurate to state that this falsification occurs within the study of postcolonial Canadian literature as a result of a failure to research history. Hutcheon, Brydon, and Bennett in particular ground their arguments in detailed and nuanced understandings of not just Canadian history but the history of the arguments within which they attempt to intervene. The explanation suggested within postcolonial Canadian literary criticism also does not provide a sufficient response to this question. The persistence of the myth of the Anglo-Celtic settler invader does, in some respects resemble the "colonial habits of mind" that Brydon observes maintain the continuing colonization of First Nations peoples. It does inscribe an *a priori* claim to the land for the last European colonial power while establishing an implicit authority to rule that can be seen as part of the colonial project. However, to recognize it as a colonial habit of mind does not answer the question of why this "colonial" habit has become so central to the *post*colonial sense of national identity. Bennett's definitions of the terms "postcolonial" and "colonial" further complicates the ability to read the persistence of this identity within the critical discourse as evidence of "colonial habits of mind":

> *Colonial* denotes a way of seeing that accepts the imperial point of view, while
>
> *postcolonial* is a viewpoint that resists imperialism – or relationships that seem
>
> imperialistic. The people of a colony (or even a former colony) are the mother
>
> country's possessions so long as they are colonials; the system for appropriating
>
> and maintaining the colony is colonialism. (110)

Reading the idea of the "authentic" settler/invader as Anglo-Celtic as evidence of the persistence of "colonial habits of mind" and recognizing the centrality of this idea to "Canadian-Canadian" identity leaves what, for me, is an almost insurmountable paradox: Canadian national identity based on what would appear to be an imperial point of view shifts that identity, according to Bennett's definition, from the *postcolonial* to the *colonial*. To accept the imperial point of view is to *be colonial*, even in a *former* colony, like Canada. Since I find Bennett's definition credible and I am persuaded of her (and her fellow critics') claims that the *process* of decolonization in Canada is incomplete, my quandary is this: if Bennett's definition is correct, the persistence of the identification of the "authentic" settler/invader as Anglo-Celtic suggests that Canada is *not* postcolonial at all but resolutely colonial, and I find it difficult to believe that that would be an assertion that any of the critics involved in this debate, including Sugars, would support.

As Bhabha observes, the writing of the nation is continually split between the pedagogical and the performative. The pedagogical impulse seeks to legitimate the cultural autonomy of the nation by "signifying the people as an *a priori* historical presence" (298-9). This ahistorical claim upon the past seeks to unify the people within a coherent nationalist imaginary and to validate not just their shared and collective identity but the political authority of the government:

> For the political unity of the nation consists in a continual displacement of its
>
> irredeemably plural modern space, bounded by different, even hostile nations,
>
> into a signifying space that is archaic and mythical, paradoxically representing the
>
> nation's modern territoriality, in the patriotic, atavistic temporality of
>
> Traditionalism. (300)

Reading the persistence of the Anglo-Celtic settler/invader against this context suggests this identity is implicated in a pedagogical move of the national narrative. It serves the national narrative by consolidating the "people" against the presence of its overwhelming neighbour, the United States, by giving them a distinct difference by which to judge the American as "other." The continuing "Britishness" of Canadian identity allows for a clear boundary to be established between a postcolonial, autonomous Canada and "another de facto colonial or postcolonial relationship: Canada's interaction with the United States" (Bennett 114). The continuing "whiteness" of Canadian identity allows for management of the threat of difference within the "people." With the *a priori* claim of British whiteness on the place of Canada, the "question of the otherness of the people-as-one" is shifted away from the dubious nature of *any* settler's claim to sovereignty of this place onto questions of management of contemporary, ongoing immigration and the negotiation of "race" relations. While the persistence of the identity of the Anglo-Celtic settler/invader in the face of historical reality may serve a pedagogical purpose in the ideology of nation, it simultaneously opens up the possibility of its own critique. As Bhabha observes, "[t]he nation reveals, in its ambivalent and vacillating representation, the ethnography of its own historicity and opens up the possibility of other narratives of the people and their difference" (200). It is in this space of possibility that the performative is able to challenge the authority of the pedagogical narrative of nation.

It is the performative, the present day-to-day reality of the *peoples* rather than the *people,* which proves that the pedagogical refers to a mythic rather than an actual national past. As Bhabha observes:

> The present of the people's history, then, is a practice that destroys the attempt to hark back to a 'true' national past, which is often represented in the reified forms of realism and stereotype. Such pedagogical knowledges and continuist national narratives miss the 'zone of occult instability where the people dwell' (Fanon's phrase). It is from this *instability* of cultural signification that the national culture comes to be articulated as a dialectic of various temporalities — modern, colonial, postcolonial, 'native' — that cannot be a knowledge that is stabilized in its enunciation. (303)

South Asian-Canadian cultural identity inscribed in prose, poetry and drama provides us with an opportunity to observe one of the moments of tension that occur between the Canadian national pedagogical narrative and the "zone of occult instability where the people dwell." This space of tension between the a "true" national past and "present of the people's history" not only calls attention to the temporal instability in the articulation of a Canadian nationalist culture, but also calls attention to the temporal instability in the articulation of a unified and homogenous South Asian-Canadian cultural identity.

3. Risking Sameness, Gaining Difference: Examining the potential of South Asian-Canadian diasporic literature

As Bennett has observed, the ability to recognize and interrogate the "zones of instability" (Szeman) in Canadian national culture created by the performative are a direct

function of the official policy of multiculturalism. The official policy of multiculturalism has "encouraged the literary expression" of "old identities within the Canadian milieu," allowing the performative "today" of the people to interrupt the authority of the pedagogical narrative of nation over the past (Bennett 122-3). While the policy of multiculturalism may in effect allow for the smooth repetition of pedagogical ethnography to be interrupted by the day-to-day reality of the people-as-not-one (to paraphrase Bhabha), the policy of multiculturalism may also operate as a mechanism to contain this potential threat to the "will that unifies historical memory and secures present-day consent" to the myth of national identity (Bhabha 310). As Graham Huggan points out, the implications of the policy of multiculturalism for the instantiation of cultural pluralism within Canada are a subject of heated debate. Indeed, even the question of what cultural pluralism is, as envisioned under the policy of multiculturalism, is not something that can be readily determined:

> This question still remains moot, despite significant increases in government aid
> to ethnic minority groups and projects in the 1980s and 1990s, and despite
> concerted attempts on both federal and provincial levels to counteract what some
> critics have seen as the systematic racial discrimination built into Canadian
> society. Indeed, the ambiguity of state-sanctioned multiculturalism, as evidenced
> in the remarkable opacity of the rhetoric that surrounds it, has led some sceptics to
> see it as little more than a device for the maintenance of the white Anglophone
> *status quo*. (127)

While I agree with Huggan's assessment that the policy of multiculturalism is, at best, an ambivalent tool, I would argue that it is still the tool that allows counter-histories and counter-narratives of the Canadian nation to become visible. It creates the possibility of those counter-

histories and narratives coming into contact with their officially sanctioned counter-parts. Buchignani's social history of South Asians in Canada and the other contributions to the *Generations* series are a case in point. Commissioned and funded by the Multiculturalism Directorate, these works write into being and give authority to the counter-histories of the nation, validating the presence of the performative. While the official intent of these histories may have been to contain the threat of difference by interpellating that difference within "an overarching Canadian identity" (Daryn David qtd. in Huggan 127), the official intent cannot control these histories' eventual influence once they circulate within "the general reading public, as well as [among] students at the senior high school and the college and university levels, and teachers in the elementary schools" (Buchignani vi). The intent of introducing state-sanctioned multiculturalism may indeed be moot; however, the possibilities that it opens up for seeing the tension between the pedagogical and the performative in the narration of Canada are not.

If we read the figure of the settler/invader as it circulates within postcolonial literary criticism as a site at which the tension between the pedagogical and performative narratives of nation becomes readily visible, two important questions are raised: what are the potential pitfalls of this rhetorical move? What is to be gained by doing this? The most obvious risk is that rather than *displacing* the pedagogical ethnography inscribed in the figure of the Anglo-Celtic settler/invader, this rhetorical move only succeeds in *replacing* it with the figure of another pedagogical ethnography. Much like the official policy of multiculturalism, this rhetorical strategy may be perceived "as the new road to an overarching Canadian identity" (Daryn David qtd. in Huggan 127). In fact, two examples of this mode of containment of the disruptive potential of the performative stand out in the critical engagement with Canadian literature:

66

Margaret Atwood's *Survival: A Thematic Guide to Canadian Literature* and Neil Bissondath's *Selling Illusions: The Cult of Multiculturalism in Canada*.

Where Atwood's *Survival* engages with the pedagogical narrative of nation by intervening in the reading and teaching of Canadian national literature, Bissoondath's *Selling Illusions* intervenes in the debates surrounding the official policy of multiculturalism. Bissoondath critiques the official policy of multiculturalism on the grounds that it does not function as a vehicle for the interrogation of certain norms and practices within Canadian society and has instead been revealed as a new "orthodoxy": "Orthodoxy is itself a form of tyranny, with ideology — political, social, racial, financial — as its angry deity" (6). Against this orthodoxy, what might equally be called a pedagogical narrative that articulates the people-as-one under the banner of multiculturalism, Bissoondath opposes the day-to-day reality of an individual, himself. He offers his own resistance to the "orthodoxy" of multiculturalism as a performative narrative that seeks to disrupt the pedagogical narrative of the nation. The performance of his critique draws attention to the tension between the unifying Canadian preference for "regulation, the imposition of legal barriers, in our pursuit of peace, order and good government" and the differential "self-knowledge" of the individual that "comes from a knowledge of history, from self-examination and from open and vigorous debate, a candid exchange of opposing points of view" (3). Bissoondath's narrative indicates that his performative challenge to the pedagogy of nation is met with immediate attempts to foreclose and contain the threat his day-to-day reality represents to the ideal of the people-as-one:

> My own attempts to contribute to public discourse have been met with nervous
>
> silence, a certain vilification and, finally, the explicit demand at one conference
>
> that I *Shut up!*, since criticism of multicultural policy, I was told, served only "to

encourage racists like the Reform Party." The cumulative effect of such an

attitude is to put what is essentially government public policy out of bounds; it is

to afford an exclusivity extended not even to the country's security apparatus,

which is itself subject to constant scrutiny. (4-5)

His performance of individual dissent challenges and disrupts the pedagogy of multiculturalism

and, in the tension that is produced between the two narratives, reveals the "cult"-like nature of

Canadian multicultural discourse: he enacts his argument that blind adherence to the principle of

multiculturalism within Canadian society is antirational. However, once Bissoondath's

challenge reveals the pedagogical centre at the heart of what he calls "the psychology of the True

Believer, who sees Canada's present multiculturalism policy — generous and laudable,

prompted by an inclusive vision of humanity – as the only possible one" (5) he forecloses that

opening where debate can occur by trying to supplant the "cult of multiculturalism" with the

"cult" of the "People" (Bissoondath 185). On the one hand challenging the idea that faith in

multiculturalism can bind together the people-as-one, Bissoondath reconstitutes the people-as-

one through "the inalienable commonalities of human experience" (Huggan 139). While

Bissoondath presents an interesting perspective on the application of multiculturalism within

Canadian society, this aspect of his text is disturbing. *Selling Illusions* is a "manipulative work

that also questions manipulation" (Huggan 142); it seeks to displace one pedagogical narrative of

nation only to instantiate its own. Much like Atwood's *Survival*, Bissoondath's *Selling Illusions*

seeks to persuade its readers to accept yet another "new" ethnography of the Canadian nation.

If opening up the site of the settler/invader to examine the tension between the

pedagogical and performative narratives of nation risks displacing one ethnography of the

people-as-one with another, equally prescriptive ethnology, then what is to be gained by

proceeding with the course of action I propose? What is to be gained is the opportunity to challenge the role of ethnography in organizing and stratifying literatures and cultural production.[13] It allows for a broader range of comparisons to be made between works that were previously relegated to ethnic ghettos within the Canadian canon and to provide broader contexts within which to read and compare those works. The goal of these broader comparisons and broader contexts is to read and assess the literature produced within Canada as a geographic space rather than reading this literature in terms of its relationship with Canadian national*ism*. What can be read by holding open the site of the settler/invader is the cultural, political and social history of this place as a performance of the many peoples who coexist (sometimes uneasily) within the arbitrary, geographic framework of the nation. It is the possibility to read Canadian literature as the literature of the diverse peoples of this place rather than as the cultural production of a "founding" people and the "late-comers" they tolerate, as prescribed by pedagogical myths, which makes this course of action worthwhile.

4. "I AM [a kind of] CANADIAN": Describing South Asian-Canadian literature as a "New World" Phenomenon

South Asian-Canadian cultural identity is well suited to the task of levering open the site of settler/invader identity, in large part because it cannot of itself be consolidated into a single, stable definition. South Asian-Canadian identity can "refer [. . .] to people who trace their

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[13] I discuss the broader implications of a post-ethnographic approach for the critique of cultural production in "Hu/Man Being: An Analysis of Paul Gilroy's *Against Race* as a Challenge to Postcolonial Research." While this fuller contemplation of reading cultural production in a utopian post-racial, political society continues to shape my thinking about the methods of literary critique, it would be an unnecessary distraction from the discussion at hand to repeat that argument here.

ancestry to the Indian subcontinent. It includes, besides those who come to North America

immediately from the countries of South Asia, the 'East Indians' of the Caribbean and the 'Asians'

of East and South Africa" (Vassanji 4), not to mention those South Asians who have emigrated

from South America, Europe, the United States and Oceania. While this definition demonstrates

the complex routes that South Asians have travelled to settle in Canada, the further complication

of the time of settlement needs to be considered in attempting to grasp the difference-within of

South Asian-Canadian identity. Since 1900, different waves of immigration have come from

different regions throughout the South Asian diaspora and settled in different areas of the

Canadian nation. After the initial period of settlement in the early 1900's by predominantly

Sikh, agrarian labourers in British Columbia, governmental restrictions on the immigration of

South Asians to Canada remained in force until the post-World War II economic boom. This

next wave of immigrants arriving in the 1950's, professional-class immigrants rather than

labourers, tended to settle in "across the industrial heartland of Ontario" (Buchignani 100).

Buchignani points out that this wave of South Asian immigrants had a very different experience

of settlement that the earlier waves experienced in British Columbia:

> [T]he Westernized middle-class background of these later immigrants and
>
> relatively easy access to jobs made adapting to Canadian life fairly
>
> straightforward. [. . .] Moreover, long association with the British had resulted in
>
> the [South Asian] middle classes taking up many elements of British culture. In a
>
> certain sense, many new immigrants were "pre-adapted" to life in Canada. (112)

The removal of almost all racial and national limitations on immigration in 1962 resulted in

another wave of South Asian immigration, one which added much greater complexity to South

Asian-Canadian identity. This wave of immigrants settled throughout the geographic space of

Canada rather than settling only in the previously established settlement areas of British

Columbia and Southern Ontario. In addition to broader dissemination of South Asian-Canadians

within Canada, this wave brought with it an increased diversity of ethno-cultural identities:

> Between 1965 and 1982 over a quarter of a million people of South Asian origin
>
> experienced the risks and rewards of making Canada their new home. They were
>
> drawn from a wide range of cultural, national, and ethnic backgrounds. Instead of
>
> one group with a single culture there were first a few groups, then half a dozen,
>
> then a dozen, then more. (119)

The arrival in the Canadian geographic space of South Asian-Canadian settlers is a continuing

phenomenon. According to the results of the 2001 Canadian census,[14] individual Canadians

claiming South Asian origin represented "one of the largest *non-European* ethnic origin groups"

in the Canadian population, with 68% indicating birth outside of Canada (Stats Can; emphasis

added).[15] Representing over a million individuals, South Asian-Canadians represented 3% of the

Canadian population in 2001, and their numbers were expanding at a rate of 33% since the last

census, a rate that far outstripped the 4% rate of growth of the Canadian population (Stats Can).

However, while enumerated as a single group, Statistics Canada points out that within this group

are individuals with a diversity of religious and ethnic affiliations, mother-tongues, education

and economic levels, and ages. This incredible difference-within is the aspect of South Asian-

Canadian identity that makes it such an effective lever against not just the ethnography of

settler/invader identity but also against the pedagogical narrative of the Anglo-Celtic settlers' *a*

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[14] The results of the 2001 census are the most current results available at the time of writing.

[15] This construction in official discourse that implies the opposition European - Non-European, I would argue can also be read as implying the opposition White - Non-White. As I will argue in my analysis of the official discourse surrounding the apology for the *Komagata Maru* Incident, we must be conscious that it is not only the discourse of nationalism that must be read from a raciological perspective but also the discourse of the nation-state. Both discourses are imbricated with racializing thought and encode an ontology of the Canadian.

priori claim to this place. However, this difference-within carries with it specific challenges in terms of the discourse used to discuss it: how are we to foreground the ambivalence and instability of group identity without resorting to an unwieldy nomenclature?

In this *Terra Incognita* of the "New World," the past, present, and future of identity coexist in a negotiation between the ancestral past, the past of colonialism, and the past of this place. The present performance of identity exists in a constant deferral into the future of the full meaning of that identity. The "New World," Hall suggests, marks out "not so much power, as ground, place, territory" (243) where diasporic identity is not just enacted but also created:

> The "New World" presence — America, *Terra Incognita* — is therefore the
> beginning of diversity, of hybridity and difference [. . .] I use this term here
> metaphorically, not literally: diaspora does not refer us to those scattered tribes
> whose identity can only be secured in relation to some sacred homeland to which
> they must at all costs return, even if it means pushing other people into the sea.
> This is the old, the imperializing, the hegemonizing, form of "ethnicity." [. . .]
> The diaspora experience as I intend it here is defined, not by essence or purity, but
> by the recognition of a necessary heterogeneity and diversity; by a conception of
> 'identity' which lives with and through, not despite difference; by *hybridity*.
> Diaspora identities are those which are constantly producing themselves anew,
> through transformation and difference. (244)

This notion of *Présence Canadiénne* parallels Clarke's concept of *African-Canadianité* in that difference-within is central to the identities proposed by both. However, Clarke's concept makes "difference" the general rule of the land whereas *Présence Canadiénne* implies an unending process of transformation from difference to difference which effectively disrupts the possibility

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of South Asian-Canadian diasporic identity consolidating into a stable meaning. While this radical instability built into the concept of South Asian-Canadian diasporic identity does make that identity more useful for destabilizing the site of settler/invader identity, my deployment of it here is not simply a rhetorical strategy. What Hall calls the *Présence Américaine* does seem to provide an accurate, yet flexible, framework for engaging with the performative complexity of the South Asian *Présence Canadiénne*.

5. Performance Reviews: Academic Critique and South Asian-Canadian Diasporic Literature

Uma Parameswaran has strongly advocated for reading South Asian-Canadian diasporic identity and its literature as distinctly "New World" phenomena. To read South Asian-*Canadian* diasporic literature without taking into account *Canadian* social, political and cultural history, she argues, is to misread the literature. Of even more concern to Parameswaran, is that readings that eschew a consideration of the way in which *this* place has shaped the cultural identity of South Asian-Canadians risks repeating "the oppression of the Western hegemonic order" and containing diaspora consciousness's ability to disrupt the pedagogical narratives that keep that order in place ("Dispelling" xlii). By reading South Asian-Canadian literature as solely an expression of exilic longing for "there" rather than as expressions of the multiple negotiations that must take place "here," critics risk "ghettoizing" diasporic consciousness:

> The dangers of this literary bonding are as deep as social bonding is in everyday
> life: namely that a diaspora could end up ghettoizing itself [. . .] Such self-
> ghettoization is unhealthy, in life and in literary studies. I see ghettoization as a
> pothole that just might throw the much vaunted Canadian policy of
> multiculturalism off the road. Ghettoization comes from two sources — from

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within and from beyond the diasporic community. [. . .] This phenomenon has

to be considered in any formulation of diaspora theory. Both exile and home are

here, within the new homeland. ("Dispelling" xlviii – xlix)

To counteract this pressure towards ghettoization "critics need to read Canada into the setting of

diaspora writings" ("Dispelling" lxi) and both "critics and writers need to retrieve and record our

diasporic history with a focus not on exile from the original country but on archival memories in

the new country" ("Dispelling" lvi). This insistence on what I call the *Présence Canadiénne*, the

performative narrative of South Asian-Canadian diasporic consciousness, leads Parameswaran to

emphasize literary expression that speaks explicitly to the negotiation of South Asian-Canadian

identity.

Parameswaran's call to read the *Canadian* in South Asian-Canadian literature is

becoming increasingly relevant as critics struggle with both the complexity of South Asian-

Canadian diasporic culture and the inadequacy of national pedagogy to describe its day-to-day

realities. As critics engage with South Asian-Canadian literature it becomes increasingly clear

that this body of literature cannot be assigned to a single, consolidated cultural identity. The

struggle to read the texts requires critics engage with the complexity of South Asian *Présence*

Canadiénne, and as a result, their critical positions change over time. The differences between

Arun Mukherjee's "South Asian Poetry in Canada: In Search of Place," originally published in

1986, and her essay "How Shall We Read South Asian Canadian Texts," published in 1998,

demonstrate how the performance of South Asian-Canadian identity has forced a rethinking in

critical positions. In her 1986 writing, Mukherjee argues that South Asians are "relatively new

to Canada" ("Poetry" 81) and proposes a "number of links" that consolidate the writers of South

Asian-Canadian poetry into a coherent identity:

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Although these poets admittedly come from different parts of the globe — for example, Guyana, India, the Philippines and Sri Lanka — a number of links tie them to one another. There is the ancestral link to the Indian subcontinent that gives common racial features to South Asians and makes them recognizable as a visible minority. Also, there are several cultural practices that South Asians continue to share, however distant their connection to the Indian subcontinent may be. Finally, there is the colonial experience that originally scattered South Asians to all parts of the world. ("Poetry" 81)

The links that Mukherjee proposes are specific: "South Asian poets write less about man's response to nature, the woes of age and death, the joys and pains of sexual love, and other staples of poets through the ages, and more about racism, poverty, discrimination, colonial exploitation, imperialism and ideological domination"("Poetry" 82); "the South Asian poet does not remain confined by national boundaries but seems to identify with the entire Third World" ("Poetry" 83); "South Asian poetry abounds in images of violence, suffering and death" ("Poetry" 83); "the South Asian poetic mode is one of ironic relationships" ("Poetry" 85); "[t]he South Asian poet, of necessity, writes about his treatment at the hands of landlords and immigration officials, racist graffiti in public washrooms and his experiences in the workplace" ("Poetry" 87); "[m]uch of South Asian Canadian poetry [. . .] bears the character of a rhetorical appeal" ("Poetry" 89). This extensive list of identifying features suggests that, in 1986, at least, Mukherjee finds that, not only does a coherent South Asian-Canadian identity exist, that identity is readily apparent in South Asian-Canadian literature.

After almost a decade of reading, writing about, and teaching South Asian-Canadian literature, Mukherjee's position shifts dramatically. Firstly, her vision of the South Asian diaspora and the many routes that South Asians have taken to this place is radically altered:

> For an immigrant from India like myself, the value of South Asian Canadian writing lies in learning about the historic migrations of South Asian during colonial times. Although I spent the first twenty-five years of my life in various academic settings in India, I had never been made aware of the indentured workers who went to the Caribbean, Mauritius, Fiji and Africa. Reading the works of Indo-Caribbean writers like Cyril Dabydeen and Arnold Itwaru and Asian African writer M G Vassanji has filled huge gaps in my knowledge of the world. ("How" 260)

This particularly brave admission on the part of an academic critic of what she does not know is evidence of the performative ability of South Asian-Canadian literature to disrupt pedagogical narratives not just of *here* but also *there*. As Mukherjee articulates, the pedagogical narrative of a *Indian* nationalist imaginary suppresses the performative reality of South Asian diaspora, a reality that become visible not *there* but *here*.

Secondly, though perhaps more importantly than Mukherjee's re-visioning of the shape of South Asian diaspora as a whole, is the change in her claim of a recognizable and coherent South Asian-Canadian identity. Where in 1986, her analysis of South Asian poets sublimated the difference-within into a conception of the people-as-one, her 1998 analysis not only mediates that position, it explicitly rejects it:

> The reality is that the South Asian Canadian community does not have a monolithic perspective, and nor do its writers [. . .] Given such a diversity of

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ideological perspectives among South Asian Canadian writers, I do not see how a

"collective" consciousness can be ascribed to them [. . .] Nor can I agree that

"marginalization" and "resistance" as the main themes of all South Asian

Canadian writers. Insofar as South Asian Canadian writers trace their origins to

the Indian subcontinent, their work, if studied together, may yield certain

recurring themes. [. . .] The fact remains that South Asians are a people divided

along class, caste, religious, ideological and national lines ("How" 261)

This transformation of Mukherjee's critical perspective is evidence of the ability of the

performative narrative of South Asian-Canadians to transform not just the pedagogy of *there*, as

her re-imagining of the shape of diaspora suggests, but the pedagogy of *here*. If Mukherjee's

1986 analysis is evidence of what Parameswaran calls the tendency towards "self-ghettoization"

of diasporic literature, her 1998 analysis is evidence of what can happen when the performative

narrative disrupts and displays its tensions with the pedagogical narrative of nation that seeks to

contain difference-within in coherent, manageable collectives.

Mukherjee is not alone in recognizing that the pedagogy of the Canadian nation creates a

discourse inadequate to the task of describing South Asian-Canadian literature. Mariam Pirbhai

points to the pedagogical re-inscription of terms like *minority*, *immigrant*, and *diaspora*, terms

critically intended to promote engagement with the performative narratives of the peoples of

Canada. These terms distance the performance of multicultural literatures by implicitly

implicating them as "other" to a normative Canadian whiteness:

each of the above categories is defined by a yardstick of comparison that is

strictly posited in relation to North American constructions of difference, which

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are themselves the lingering vestiges of Eurocentric cultural and racial norms

(Pirbhai 387).

The tension in the idea of the "whiteness" of the authentic Canadian settler/invader and its corresponding notion of "racial" difference becomes visible, when terms like "minority" are confronted by the day-to-reality of the Canadian peoples. Pirbhai points to the "arguably absurd" labeling of South Asian-Canadians, in Canadian urban centers like Toronto, "as an 'ethnic majority-minority'" (387).

Although the critical readings of South Asian-Canadian literature tend to be marked by a tendency toward "self-ghettoization," these examples demonstrate the ability of the performative narrative of the peoples of the South Asian-Canadian node of the South Asian diaspora to call into question the pedagogical strategy of containment of difference-within the Canadian population. In this chapter I have laid out the theoretical groundwork for reading South Asian-Canadian literature as not only an immigrant literature, but equally as a unique part of Canadian literature. In the following chapter I map out different expressions of *Présence Canadiénne* that are visible in the ongoing Canadian engagement with the *Komagata Maru* Incident, both in "official" discourse and in creative literature and drama. These multiple representations of the *Komagata Maru* Incident underscore the need to recognize that the temporalities of both the pedagogical and the performative narratives of the Canadian nation are part of the vector of Canadian influence and that South Asian-Canadian literature must negotiate with both as well as the tension between them, what I call the "conceit of deceit."

Chapter II: A Bit More Than Just a *Heritage Minute*: *Présence Canadiénne* and Representations of the *Komagata Maru* Incident

In this chapter, I begin the process of mapping the "New World" vector that is part of the ongoing negotiation of South Asian-Canadian cultural identity. This focus on the "New World" vector — the "Canadian" in South Asian-Canadian cultural identity as it is expressed in literature — is part of changing the terms of engagement with Canadian literature by engaging with the existing terms from a raciological perspective. The starting points for this map are the "official" and creative discursive engagements with the *Komagata Maru* Incident. The approach to the creative texts through an examination of the "official" responses to the incident is necessary to demonstrate, as I have argued earlier, that to change the engagement with Canadian literature from the terms of literary nationalism to the terms of citizenship, nation, and the state is not as straightforward as it may first appear to be. Instead, as the official discourse of the Conservative Harper government's 2008 apology for the Incident (and the parliamentary debate that preceded that apology) demonstrate, the terms that structure the discourse of citizenship, nation, and the state are as imbricated with racializing discourse, and as implicated in the power structure of racial hierarchy, as are the terms of literary nationalism.

On May 23rd, 1914, the rusty and aged Japanese cargo ship, the *Komagata Maru*, captained by T. Yamamoto, made anchor in Burrard Inlet, in the Port of Vancouver. On board, Captain Yamamoto had a cargo of coal for sale in Vancouver, a Japanese crew of fourteen, and three hundred and seventy six passengers. These "24 Muslims, 23 Hindus, and 340 Sikhs" (Johnston 33) had been accompanied to Canada from Hong Kong by Gurdit Singh, the Sikh businessman, residing in Hong Kong, who had chartered the *Komagata Maru*, recruited the

passengers, and arranged the voyage. Why had these farmers — many veterans of the British

military — come to Canada? Quite simply, they had come seeking new farmland, because their

own farmland, primarily in the Punjab region of India, had been destroyed by the increasing

demands put on the land by agricultural practices imposed by the colonial authorities of India.

And why not come to Canada, as Gurdit Singh said to the press at William's Head: "We are

British citizens and we consider we have a right to visit any part of the Empire" (Singh qtd. in

Johnston 37).

It was this *British* citizenship that created for the government of the Dominion of Canada

a particularly thorny problem. Unlike Japanese or Chinese immigrants or indentured workers,

this third element of the "Asian menace" to a White Canada, held *with* Canada a shared

subjectivity to the British Imperial Crown. Below I will examine the crisis that this created

within the construction of a Canadian national identity that attempted to equate "Britishness" and

"whiteness" and "Canadianness;" however, it is important to remember that the arrival of the

Komagata Maru and her passengers in Vancouver harbour also created a crisis in the stability of

Canadian governance. The *British North America Act* of 1867 may have created the Dominion

of Canada but it did not create Canada as a fully independent nation. Instead, the British Crown

retained control over some aspects of domestic legislation and all aspects of Canadian foreign

policy, even, by the *Colonial Laws Validity Act* of 1865, effectively prohibiting the colony from

making "laws that were 'repugnant' to (i.e.: contradict or have the effect of acting against) British

laws that extended to the colonies" ("Constitutional"). The "difficulty" created by the arrival of

the *Komagata Maru* was that Gurdit Singh was correct: the free movement of subjects within the

British Empire was guaranteed by the Crown. Like India, the Dominion of Canada was part of

the British Empire and the Canadian government had no legal or legislative authority to bar the entry of other British subjects into the lands of the Dominion.

As Gurdit Singh was also well aware, the Dominion government under Prime Minister Laurier had, in 1908, attempted to side-step the "difficulty" this shared subjectivity presented to the popular and political determination to keep Canada "white":

> The Viceroy [of India] and his Council did not question Canada's right to close the door [to Indian immigration]. In fact they hoped she would because they could see that an Indian community in North America would always be a source of disquieting ideas at home. All they asked was that discrimination be disguised, and, respecting this wish, Laurier's government drafted two ingenious orders-in-council, one requiring that all Asian immigrants entering Canada possess at least $200, and the other prohibiting the landing of any immigrant who came other than by a continuous passage. The former constituted a substantial barrier to men who might earn with difficulty ten or twenty cents a day in their own country; the latter was made effective by pressuring steamship companies not to provide a Canada-India service or to sell through tickets from Indian ports. Both were designed only against Indians. (Johnston 4-5).

However, this "ingenious" solution began to unravel in the autumn of 1913, when the Japanese vessel, the *Panama Maru*, docked at Victoria harbour with fifty-six Indians seeking entry to Canada. Represented by the socialist activist and lawyer J. Edward Bird, the passengers of the

Panama Maru succeeded in a legal challenge to the "continuous journey" regulation that resulted in the regulation being overturned – if only on a technicality.[16]

Hoping to exploit this legal loophole, the *Komagata Maru* and her passengers had come to Canada only to be greeted by a "tidied up [. . .] order-in-council" (Johnston 25) and the gatekeepers of Canadian Immigration. One such gatekeeper was William Charles Hopkinson, secret service officer reporting to the Deputy Minister of the Interior in Ottawa (and the British India Office, and the American immigration service), exclusively concerned with the control of Indians on the Pacific coast of North America. Hopkinson was born in Delhi and was formerly of the Calcutta police department. His "own colleagues [took him] for a half-caste, although if they had asked him, he would have said he was English" (Johnston 37). The other gatekeeper was Malcolm R. J. Reid, Hopkinson's superior and "the Vancouver immigration agent, a political appointee like most immigration officers at that time," a Conservative party hack who "owed his job to the local Conservative M. P., H.H. Stevens, a rabid opponent of Indian immigration" (Johnston 19). For two months the *Komagata Maru* and her passengers sat stranded in Vancouver harbour while the passengers (supported by the Vancouver *Khalsa Diwan* Society — a society of Sikh-Canadians — and represented by Bird) waged a legal battle against the Canadian Immigration Department and the Dominion of Canada, a battle they eventually lost. Re-provisioned under the authority of Martin Burrell, the Minister of Agriculture, who had been sent by Ottawa to intervene between the passengers of the *Komagata Maru* and Reid, the *Komagata Maru* was "escorted" out of Vancouver harbour and back out to sea by the HMCS

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[16] Johnston points out that the legal challenge to the Continuous Journey regulation hung on the difference in meaning between "Asiatic origin," which is the phrase that appears in the order-in-council, and "Asiatic race," which was the effective object of the order-in-council — "Asiatic origin," Bird argued, was too broad a term as it potentially included Europeans born in India as well as Indians born in any place within the Empire within the category. Chief Justice Hunter, who heard the case of the *Panama Maru*, agreed with Bird that the language of the order-in-council was faulty and he over-turned the order as a result.

Rainbow, the first military action of the ship following its transfer from the British to the Canadian navy.

On July 23rd, 1914, the *Komagata Maru*, her crew, her coal, and her passengers sailed out of Vancouver harbour. Some of her passengers were to die in a battle with colonial troops when the ship returned to India. The survivors of what has come to be known as the Budge Budge riots, including Gurdit Singh, were pursued, arrested, and imprisoned by the British colonial authorities as potential insurrectionists.   In Canada, there were no riots and no mass arrests, but the aftermath of the *Komagata Maru* Incident was bloody. Men within the Vancouver Sikh community suspected of collaborating with the Canadian Immigration officers were found murdered. In reprisal, Hopkinson's chief spy, Bela Singh, opened fire during a funeral for one of his associates at the Vancouver *gurdwara* — the Sikh temple — wounding several and killing two. And on October 24th, 1914, William Charles Hopkinson was assassinated in the corridors of the provincial courthouse in Vancouver by Mewa Singh, a member of the Vancouver Sikh community who either "had shot Hopkinson to atone" for his own betrayal of his community as one of Hopkinson's spies or "had acted as [Hopkinson's] informer so that he could get a chance to take revenge" on Hopkinson for his role in the *Komagata Maru* Incident (Johnston 130).

After a round of official inquiries in Canada, England, and India in which the ruling authorities reassured themselves and their publics that the *Komagata Maru* Incident had been properly handled, the Incident essentially disappears from official discourse, at least in Canada.[17] For most of the twentieth century, public commemoration of the *Komagata Maru* Incident has taken the form of an unlikely pair of annual ceremonies: the memorialization of Hopkinson as a

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[17] In the discourse of first the Indian Independence movement and later the national narratives of India and Pakistan, the *Komagata Maru* Incident becomes one more symbol of the injustice of British rule. In these narratives the Dominion of Canada does not function as an independent nation or even as a synecdoche of Empire but is seen as one with the Imperial authority.

peace officer who died in the line of duty,[18] and Mewa Singh Martyr Day, the January 11th

anniversary of his death by execution for the murder of Hopkinson, a date which is

commemorated by "Indians around the world" (Forbes.com).[19] But, in the last decade of the

20th century, this forgetting of the *Komagata Maru* Incident was challenged by Sikh members of

the Canadian parliament.[20] Representing their British Columbia constituents, these duly elected

members of the Canadian House of Commons began to call on the Canadian federal government

to not just commemorate the *Komagata Maru* Incident but also to apologize for the part that it

had played in creating the circumstances of the Incident. In 2008 that apology was offered by

the Conservative government of Stephen Harper, not in the House of Commons, but offered

none-the-less.

In the official discourse of the 2008 apology for the *Komagata Maru* Incident, and the

parliamentary debate that preceded that apology, the struggle to incorporate the reality of the

Komagata Maru Incident into the narrative of the Canadian nation makes visible what I call *a*

conceit of deceit operating within official discourse. Through lies of omission and commission,

official discourse around the *Komagata Maru* Incident attempts to solicit *and* authorize the

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[18] Hopkinson's name has been included, since 1977, in the national memorial service that takes place every September on Parliament Hill in Ottawa. In 1994, Hopkinson's name was included on an engraved monument erected on Parliament Hill to honour peace officers killed in the line of duty. In 1996, Hopkinson was further memorialized (and internationalized) with his inclusion in *The Officer Down Memorial Page, Inc.* website, the website of a not-for-profit American organization "dedicated to honoring America's fallen law enforcement heroes" (The Officer Down Memorial Page).

[19] That Mewa Singh is seen as a "hero and martyr" by a broad spectrum of South Asian society and not just the Sikh community is demonstrated by the international attention that surrounded the announcement of the casting of the part of Mewa Singh in Deepa Mehta's proposed film adaptation of the *Komagata Maru* Incident into a historical drama. Mehta's selection of Vinay Virmani for the role was reported not just by western media like *Forbes* and *Reuters* but also by media that targets a South Asian audience, like *New Reel India*, *The Thai Indian*, and *Bollywood World*.

[20] In the 2008 parliamentary debates on the Liberal motion to force the government to apologize for the *Komagata Maru* Incident, Mrs. Nina Grewal (Fleetwood-PortKells, CPC) observes that "the issue of a *Komagata Maru* apology was first brought to the floor of the House in October 1997 and many times after by then MP Gurmant Grewal. He also tabled a petition in 2002 asking for the government to apologize. The petition was signed by thousands at the Gadri Babiyian Da Mela and organized by Sahib Thind, president of the Professor Mohan Singh Memorial Foundation" (May 15th, 2008) .

national act of "forgetting to remember"[21] to stabilize the myths of the Anglo-Celtic settler/invader.

While official discourse may have only recently "remembered to remember" the *Komagata Maru* Incident, creative discourse in Canada began to remember the Incident some time earlier. The creative works that iteratively engage with the historic moment of the *Komagata Maru* Incident demonstrate *Présence Canadiénne*, the "New World" vector of influence. Through their negotiation with the conceit of deceit, each work engages with the deceptions that create and foster what Eva Mackey identifies as the unmarked "Canadian-Canadian" identity. In each of the creative works examined in this chapter — Sharon Pollock's play, Sadhu Binning's book of poetry, Surghit Varughese's radio drama, and Jessi Thind's youth fiction — the negotiation between ethnic identity and "official" deception (and solicitation to participate in the "official" acts of deception) form a motif that structures the individual works and transforms the individual works into a collective examination of the conceit of deceit that solicits and stabilizes Canadian national identity.

The route I have taken to map out the shape of *Présence Canadiénne* begs some obvious questions: why insist on the operation of a specifically Canadian "New World" vector in place of Stuart Hall's broader notion of a collective, "New World" *Présence Américaine*? Why focus on official and creative engagements with a (seemingly) minor event in Canadian national history as a starting point for mapping out *Présence Canadiénne*? The answer to both of these questions lies in what is not captured in Hall's deployment of *Présence Américaine*: the social, political,

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[21] In "DissemiNation," Bhabha suggests that "forgetting to remember" is a trick of mind that allows the individual citizen to overlook the tension between the myth of the nation as a unified people and the reality of the diversity that he/she sees in the society around him or her. What I am suggesting becomes visible in the tensions within "official" discourse surrounding the apology for the *Komagata Maru* Incident is not simply a bracketing of the tensions between the performative and pedagogical narrative of the Canadian nation, but a more deliberate attempt to obscure those tensions in order to reinforce the pedagogical narrative, the ethnography, and the racial hierarchy it inscribes.

cultural and historical differences within that produce regional "topographic" variation within the "New World." What the *Komagata Maru* Incident disturbs, in its official and creative discursive treatments, is specific to the Canadian "topography" rather than to a "New World" collective space. It disturbs the very foundations of the notion of Canadianness, past and present – not just the claimed Anglo-Celtic roots of Canadian ethnic identity but also the claim to tolerance, the notion of "immigrant," and the idea that Canadianness is somehow different from (if not superior to) Americanness.

Hall, in his meditation on Caribbean cultural identity, envisions *Présence Américaine* as a means of expressing "not so much power, as ground, place, territory [. . .] the juncture-point where the many cultural tributaries meet" (243). This "New World," for Hall emptied not just through the narratives of conquest and colonization but quite literally through the extermination of the indigenous peoples of the Caribbean, is the ground on which different cultures are forced to engage and interact: it is ground on which no one culture can claim to "belong." However, although Hall positions the "New World" as a vector that creates a location with the potential for creolization and engagement between cultural traditions, I argue that it cannot be taken as *tabula rasa.* The indigenous peoples of the "New World," despite colonial attempts at genocide, were not "erased" creating a blank sheet on which later comers would play out creolization. To claim otherwise is only to reenact the colonial denial of First Nations' continuing cultural relevance. Perhaps more troubling, if a consideration of the "New World" as a space of creolization does not begin with the engagement with and creolization of First Nations and colonial cultures, it would appear to confirm "New World" nationalists' claims to autochthonous culture — claims to be cultures uniquely formed where they are found.

While I agree with Hall that, from its "discovery" by European colonial forces, the "New

World" has created unique opportunities for cultural creolization, we must also be aware that a

potential for creolization has always been regionally inflected. Both the various indigenous

cultures resident in the "New World" and the diverse and localized European colonial strategies

of suppression and colonization have created regionally specific variations in the networks of

social, political and cultural interactions already operating in the "Americas." *Présence*

Européenne affects the negotiation of culture within the "New World" as well as affecting the

continuing negotiation of diasporic cultural identity. Successive waves of immigrants and

diasporic subjects who have entered the "New World" sphere have encountered an already

ongoing negotiation of culture and processes of creolization. This encounter is regionally

specific, both in terms of the existing cultural matrix and in terms of how permeable to diasporic

subjects that existing matrix allows the regional boundaries to be. The historic difference of the

experience of South Asians (primarily lower caste Hindus) under the program of indentured

servitude in the Caribbean is a difference of type rather than a difference of kind in relation to the

experience of South Asians (primarily Punjabi Sikh agrarian labourers) who immigrated to North

America at the beginning of the 20th Century. These experiences differ from those of South

Asians (primarily upper caste, upper class, and Anglo-Indian) who immigrated to North America

in the 1950's and 60's after the independence of South Asian countries from their European

Imperial centres. Again, these experiences differ from those of the Asian-Africans who fled to

the west following independence in the post-Imperial African nations. These different waves of

South Asian immigration to the "New World" do not simply mark the difference within South

Asian cultural identity but they also mark a difference within the composite cultures that South

Asian immigrants encountered in the "New World." The social, political, and cultural matrices of

Canada are not the same as the matrices of the United States, the Caribbean, Meso-America, South America, or Oceania. Each regional matrix has been subject to different social, cultural, and political pressures that, over time, have shaped cultures that, while they share an affinity with each other, still represent unique socio-cultural "terrains."

The *Komagata Maru* Incident demonstrates the need to be conscious of such differences within the "New World." The Incident indicates that, although the "New World" represents the potential ground on which creolization may occur, the boundaries of this terrain are not equally permeable to the cultural tributaries that flow towards it. The immigration barriers that the South Asians faced in 1914 were overtly racist and have been recognized as reflecting the policies of a white supremacist state,[22] a not uncommon attribute of "New World" nations at that time. However, the simple statement of the Incident does not reveal the complex regional negotiation of identity that makes the *Komagata Maru* Incident symbolic of the uneven "terrain" of the "New World" and the specificity of Canadian cultural "topography." To find that, it is necessary to look at why the *Komagata Maru* sailed from Hong Kong to Canada and to examine the assumptions on the part of its passengers of a British subjectivity shared by the Indian *and* Canadian subjects of Empire.

Unlike the passengers of the Komagata Maru, the Dominion of Canada (and its citizens) were not as willing to value "Britishness" as a shared and unraced sign of subjectivity to the British Crown. The notion (and value) of "Britishness" has long been part of the ongoing negotiation of Canadian cultural identity as has the notion (and value) of "whiteness." As Carl Berger points out in his seminal 1970 study of the Canadian Imperial movement, *The Sense of*

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[22] The titles of the Canadian produced histories of the *Komagata Maru* Incident are revealing: Ted Ferguson's *White Man's Country: An Exercise in Canadian Prejudice*; Hugh Johnston's *Voyage of the Komagata Maru: The Sikh Challenge to Canada's Colour Bar*.

Power, the nationalist assessment of Canadian "character," or at the very least, the influential

Canadian Imperialist Movement's assessment of Canadian "character," attempted to mediate

between a claim to British cultural identity and a sense of Canadian "nordicity." The claim to

British cultural identity was grounded in the view that "Canadians were British in their historical

associations, political ideals, their preference for law and order, and their capacity for self-

government" (152). Alongside this cultural explanation of Canadian identity, the nationalist

movements at the time of Canadian Confederation sought to ground the Canadian "character" in

the land and its climate: they "stopped apologizing for their climate and extolled the influence of

the snow and cold upon their character" (129). Nordicity becomes in this context, not just a way

of distinguishing the "Canadian" from its southern "American" neighbour, but also a way of

establishing which "cultural tributaries" would be welcomed into this part of the "New World"

as nature itself would establish which cultures could thrive in this place: cultures that were

encoded in the "whiteness" of their bearer's skins.

Although the insistence on Britishness *and* whiteness as the foundations of Canadian

cultural identity may have been specific to what Berger calls the Canadian Imperialist

movement, the incorporation of this conjunction within popular literature transforms this image

of the "authentic" Canadian from the property of a marginal group into a national ideology. As

Daniel Coleman observes in his study *White Civility: The Literary Project of English Canada*,

Canadian culture was imagined and created in literature as a distinctly "New World"

phenomenon — "New World" both in the sense of creating a ground for creolization and in the

sense of being a departure from the culture of the "Old World." Under this ideology, Canada

was written as the site of a cultural "pan-ethnic Britishness" (*White* 19) where "Britishness" had

been refined by Canadian nordicity into a "moral-ethical foundation that ensured the nation's

superiority [both to Great Britain and to the United States] was not based on material advantages alone but, more importantly, upon spiritual or ideal principles" (*White* 25). The Anglo-*Celtic* rather than Anglo-*Saxon* "civil norm to which non-British Canadians should assimilate" (*White* 19), establishes the "whiteness" of the unmarked Canadian-Canadian as a unique product of the settler-colonial project that has been fostered and disseminated through Canadian literature.

The success of the literary project of English Canada in establishing a fictive ethnicity for Canadian cultural identity can be seen in its stubborn longevity. As I pointed out earlier, the myth of the Anglo-Celtic settler/invader continues to act as a distraction within the study of Canadian literature. As Coleman also points out, on a personal level "[w]e may be troubled by the history of White dominance [in Canadian social history] but still attracted (or distracted) by the ideal of Canadian civility" (*White* 9). In Coleman's analysis, "civility purveys the time-space metaphor of the race of civilizations" (*White* 11). The "*real project*" of Canadian civility as opposed to the "*myth* of its civility" marks out a moment in the nationalist imaginary of English Canada where the discourse of "the nation" and "the human" connect to produce an ontology of the Canadian people (*White* 9). Coleman's intervention in the academic study of Canadian literature is to call our attention to "the central organizing problematic of English Canadian whiteness [which] is a specific form of civility modelled upon the gentlemanly code of Britishness" (*White* 10). My analysis complements Coleman's by continuing to explore (and expose) "the White supremacy embedded in the real project of civility" (*White* 9). As this chapter argues, the claim to "Britishness" that the South Asian-Canadian settler/invader shares with its Anglo-Celtic counterpart throws into sharp relief the White supremacist underpinnings of English Canadian nationalist identity.

The official policy of multiculturalism may seem to disrupt and resolve the "monoculturalism" (Coleman, *White* 7) of Canada's past literary visions of itself. However, as Eva Mackey argues in *The House of Difference: Cultural Politics and National Identity in Canada*, the policy of multiculturalism may also be seen as reinforcing rather than dismantling the boundaries around the notion of inherent Canadian "whiteness." As Mackey proposes, we must ask ourselves "[h]ow [. . .] 'tolerance' for 'others' work[s] in the construction of an unmarked and yet dominant national identity" (3). How can a cultural politics that fosters the notion of "difference" disrupt the stability of "sameness"? The answer, I would argue, is that it does not; it simply makes it easier to "forget to remember" that the unmarked "norm" exists in a particular fictive (raced) ethnicity.

This vision of "authentic" Canadian national ethnicity as a uniquely "New World" improvement on the ideals of the British Empire is unable to smoothly incorporate the *Komagata Maru* Incident into a coherent national narrative because the details of the Incident underscore how entirely fictive Canadian national ethnicity is. The Incident challenges the Canadian claim to be the cultural heirs to the British Empire by pointing to the shared relationship of Canada and India (and their respective inhabitants) to British cultural authority. However, the falsity of past mono-racial inventions of Canadian national character is not the only aspect of the Incident that makes it difficult to incorporate in the present Canadian national narrative. The claim to the "pastness" of Canadian White supremacist attitudes in contrast to the "presentness" of Canadian multicultural tolerance has made way for other historical racist tragedies, like the Japanese Canadian interment and the Chinese Head Tax, to be successfully incorporated within the myth of Canadian civility. However, the *Komagata Maru* Incident still resists easy incorporation into the Canadian national narrative.

The *Komagata Maru* Incident also undermines the assumption of difference (and superiority) that is the foundation of the popular negative definition of "Canadian" as "not American." As a committed Imperialist[23] who valued and advocated the enhancement of what was *British* in Canadian cultural development, Stephen Leacock's observations on the "continuous journey" regulation, made in his 1941 history *Canada: The Foundations of Its Future*, are particularly telling. Unlike "the traditional doctrines of liberty, of the open-door, the traditional *British* privilege of refuge for exiles of all complexion and colour" (Leacock 213; emphasis added), the "continuous journey" requirement brought Canadian civil society into agreement with "the United States [which] had long since realized the danger to American civilization of the influx of the Asiatic races" (Leacock 209). It was "as smart a piece of legislation as any that ever disfranchised negroes in the South" (Leacock 213). If the "continuous journey" regulation makes visible the fictiveness of Canadian ethnicity, then at the moment of the regulation's historic climax, the *Komagata Maru* Incident, the "[t]he fat was [indeed] in the fire" (Leacock 209). The *Komagata Maru* Incident negates the Canadian claim to be an improved form of the ideal British culture. It does not demonstrate a civilization that "represents[s] a unique achievement of liberty and equality" (Coleman, *White* 2). Instead, it demonstrates how little difference existed between Canadian and American civil society — both in terms of their White supremacist perspectives and in their departure from the ideals of *Pax Britannia*.

I would argue that it is not the brutality of the Incident — confining the passengers onboard a converted tanker for a period of two months while restricting their access to food and water — nor the brutality of the aftermath of the Incident — the violent colonial oppression that

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[23] Carl Berger, in *The Sense of Power*, maps Stephen Leacock's relationship to and participation in the Imperialist and Canada First Movements in the development of early Canadian nationalism.

greeted the passengers when they were forcibly returned to India — that leads Leacock to record the Incident as the moment when the proverbial fat was thrown in the fire. Canada's fictive ethnicity has proved remarkably resilient even when confronted with "the brutal histories that our fictive ethnicity would disavow" (Coleman, *White* 9). What is so incendiary about the *Komagata Maru* Incident is that it demonstrates that there is no intellectual, moral or ethical foundation for the ethnic identity of English Canada and the future of that identity can only be secured by lies.

1. Talking About The Elephant In The Room: Official Discourse, The Komagata Maru Incident and The Conceit of Deceit:

On August 3rd, 2008, the Prime Minister of Canada, the Right Honourable Stephen Harper, apologized on behalf of the nation (but not the Canadian Federal Government) to all South Asian-Canadians for the *Komagata Maru* Incident. Speaking in Punjabi to an audience of eight thousand predominantly Sikh-Canadians, the Prime Minister delivered his apology in Surrey, British Columbia's Bear Creek Park. The site of the apology was chosen as symbolic of the gesture of reconciliation with the South Asian-Canadian community that Harper was attempting: Harper's apology was offered at the location where, in November 2006, two elderly Canadian Sikh men were beaten, one to death, in racially motivated attacks.

Harper's 2008 apology followed a promise made earlier in the year, in Vancouver, British Columbia, by the Secretary of State for Multiculturalism and Canadian Identity, Jason Kenney, and accompanied by the offer of "$2.5 million in grants to commemorate the two-month standoff with the *Komagata Maru*" ("Ottawa Promises"). It also followed the government's "official" recognition of the *Komagata Maru* Incident two years earlier. Speaking at that time in Burnaby, British Columbia, Prime Minister Harper stated "the Government of Canada

acknowledges the *Komagata Maru* incident and [. . .] will soon undertake consultations with the Indo-Canadian community on how best to recognize this sad moment in our history" (Canadian Heritage "Speeches"). The shift in official discourse from "the Government of Canada" to the Canadian nation that occurs over the two-year process of creating the apology for the *Komagata Maru* Incident is not accidental or simply for rhetorical effect. It has profound implications for the location of legal liability. By apologizing on behalf of the Canadian *nation* rather than officially apologizing in the House of Commons for the Canadian *government*, the government at the time of the apology is able to recognize the injustices committed by a past government without accepting responsibility for those actions. Structuring the apology in this way obliges the Canadian government to make no offer of compensation to those affected by the *Komagata Maru* Incident as it refuses the possibility that the present government has any liability for past government's misdeeds.

While Harper's apology may have been intended to publicly recognize past injustices faced by the South Asian-Canadian community and to gesture to a present willingness to incorporate South Asian-Canadians within "a pluralist society that includes citizens from more than 200 ethnic backgrounds" (Kenney), this was not how the Prime Minister's apology was received. After Prime Minister Harper's speech, the stage was stormed by a group claiming to represent the descendants of the *Komagata Maru* passengers. These "Sikh community leaders" ("Harper Apologizes") denounced and refused Harper's apology on behalf of not only their ancestors but also on behalf of all South Asian-Canadians. The apology, they declared, was not a full or official apology given in the House of Commons, as had been offered to the Chinese-Canadian community for the Chinese Head Tax; therefore, according to Jaswinder Singh Toor,

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president of *The Descendants of Komagata Maru Society*, it was "unacceptable" ("Harper Apologizes").

How do we read this fraught exchange over a marginally commemorated moment in Canadian national history, a moment that the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation refers to as one the "embarrassing parts of Canada's past" ("Harper Apologizes")? How do we read this exchange within the context of Canadian narratives of nation and within the context of what I am calling *Présence Canadiénne*? For the moment, I propose that we put aside the dubious question of the racist overtones of Harper's homogenization of South Asian-Canadian identity into a single, uniform ethnic group of either only Sikhs or only Punjabis (or only residents of British Columbia) and that we also put aside the equally dubious question of the possible financial motivation behind the descendants group's insistence on a formal apology from the Federal government. Instead of becoming distracted by these "dubious questions, I propose that we look at the implications of the "apology" and the parliamentary debate initiated on April 2nd, 2008 that resulted in the House of Commons issuing its own apology for the incident on May 15th, 2008. In these moments of "official" discourse we are able to trace the tensions the *Komagata Maru* Incident creates within the narrative of the Canadian nation and assess their implications for *Présence Canadiénne*.

In official discourse, the *Komagata Maru* Incident functions as a sign of systemic racism that is positioned as unacceptable within the context of present Canadian social organization and an understanding of Canadian national identity that values the notions of tolerance and multiculturalism as cardinal aspects of Canadianness. However, there are two distinct temporal organizations of the relationship between the "unacceptable" racist attitudes and the history of the Canadian nation: 1) the racist attitudes that are marked by the sign of the *Komagata Maru*

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Incident are part of a past (originary) moment which the nation has evolved beyond; 2) the racist

attitudes marked by the sign of the *Komagata Maru* Incident continue to iterate from the moment

of the historical event through to the present. An interesting tension exists between the modern

incarnations of the two political parties that existed at the time of the *Komagata Maru* Incident:

the Conservatives and the Liberals. The Conservatives, the government at both the time of the

Incident and the time of the apology, advocate position one. The Liberals, the opposition party at

the time of the Incident and at the time of the apology, but the government that brought into

being the "continuous journey" regulation in the first place, advocate position two.

In the parliamentary debates surrounding the proposed apology, the *Komagata Maru*

Incident is positioned by the (currently governing) Conservatives as part of a Canadian past — a

past out of which the present has organically evolved. The *Komagata Maru* Incident is

interpellated as part of a Canadian history that "includes dark moments;" however, it is a history

that has always demonstrated a respect for order and good government: "Actions related to

immigration restrictions and wartime measures, *which although legal at the time*, are inconsistent

with the values that Canadians hold today" (Mrs. Lynne Yelich, Canada "*Komagata Maru*";

emphasis added). Canada, it would seem, according to contemporary Conservative party

parliamentarians, has outgrown its "juvenile" racist attitudes, but not its "political ideals, [. . .]

preference for law and order, and [. . .] capacity for self-government" (Berger 152).

The Liberal party parliamentarians, however, locate the *Komagata Maru* Incident as part

of a continuum of Canadian racist attitudes that persists in the present moment. This political

perspective on Canadian racism reads the *Komagata Maru* Incident as symbolic of a state-

sanctioned intolerance of some of the "cultural streams" that wish to engage with the space of

creolization represented by the "New World":

Mrs. Ruby Dhalla, Brampton-Springdale, Lib: It is ironic that 90 years [after the *Komagata Maru* Incident] we have another Conservative government that is once again deciding to overhaul our immigration system, which would perhaps provide the minister with discretionary powers to pick and choose who comes to our nation. (Canada *Komagata Maru*)

By explicitly linking the *Komagata Maru* Incident with the Federal government's attempt to include revisions to the *Immigration and Refugee Protection Act* within *Bill C-50*, a budget implementation bill, the opposition Liberals argue that the "dark period of racism" symbolized by the *Komagata Maru* Incident is not part of Canada's past but something that continues into the present. The call by the Liberals for the Federal government to apologize for the *Komagata Maru* Incident is indeed "ironic," in the literary sense: it is a call to recognize that Canada has a state-sponsored racist past *and* that it continues to sponsor racism in the present.

Both the contemporary governing and opposition parties prioritise the *Komagata Maru* Incident and marginalize the "continuous journey" regulation that causes the incident. Regardless of *when* the politicians locate Canadian racism, in the Canadian past or continuing into the Canadian present, official discourse writes into the past an originary moment of the nation. This is not the origin of a tolerant and multicultural Canada, but an independent and autonomous Canadian nation that the present Canada has evolved from. The *Komagata Maru* Incident is defined and identified by its relationship to the signs of an autonomous nation: an independent military force — "the *Canadian* navy used a ship for aggression for the first time. The *Canadian* government of [1914] brought in the cruiser HMCS *Rainbow*" to escort the *Komagata Maru* out of Canadian waters (Hon. Jim Karygiannis, Canada "Debates"; emphasis added); an independent press — "the *local* media [at the time of the *Komagata Maru* Incident] [. . .] often whipped up

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racist sentiments against those who were on the *Komagata Maru* and they sensationalized the situation." (Mr. Bill Siksay, Canada "Debates"; emphasis added); and *Canadian* politicians in remarks made in 1914 to a *Canadian* parliament that affirmed the *Canadian state*'s implication in systemic racism — "Canada's policy at the time was designed to prevent Asian immigration [. . .] Debate in the House of Commons made it clear that the intent was explicitly racist" (Mr. Bill Siskay, Canada "Debates"). Considerable rhetorical work is done in the debates in the 2008 Canadian House of Parliament to locate sole responsibility for the *Komagata Maru* Incident in a *Canadian* systemic racism that not only affected potential immigration from India, but also immigration from Japan and China — a "primitive" systemic racism that may or may not still operate within the nation-state. This rhetorical work distracts from the location of the "continuous journey" regulation as a specific response to a specific set of circumstances.

While an autonomous Canadian nation may be deemed responsible for the racist attitudes fostered by its citizens and its state, the "continuous journey" regulations and the *Komagata Maru* Incident are indicative of the reality that in 1914 Canada was not a fully independent nation. Obliged through the *British North America Act* of 1867 to negotiate with the Imperial centre for the right to set its own immigration policy, the historic realities of the "continuous journey" regulations point to the absence of an autochthonic past for an autonomous Canadian nation and foregrounds the novelty of an independent Canadian national identity. Canada, at the time of the "continuous journey" regulation and the *Komagata Maru* Incident was not an equal partner with Britain, much less an "improvement" on the model of British civility, as both Berger and Coleman suggest was a central component of the development of Canadian national identity. Instead, these two aspects of Canadian history underscore that, much like the South Asians on board the *Komagata Maru*, Canadians in 1914, almost sixty years after flag independence, were

still subordinate subjects of the British Crown. Forgetting the "continuous journey" regulation while remembering the *Komagata Maru* Incident undermines the illusion of "fraternal" cooperation put forward by the socially powerful "Canada First" or Imperialist movements and its cultural expression of "white civility." The Anglo-Celtic settler/invader is revealed to be not an autonomous, agential partner with Britain in Empire, but an equal with the potential South Asian-Canadian settler/invader: a subject of the Imperial centre.

As late as 1914, Canada did not function as (nor was it viewed as) a nation autonomous from Britain, nor was this relationship with Britain developed as a mutual one: the needs of the British Empire took precedence over the needs of the Canadian nation. It follows that the model of what Coleman calls "white civility" as a North American improvement on the model of British civility is called into question: "civility" in Canada is always already subject to British Imperial authority rather than independent or different. Assuming authority to apologize for the *Komagata Maru* Incident rhetorically invests and invents an autonomous, postcolonial Canadian nation that the complex historical roots/routes of the *Komagata Maru* Incident deny. This rhetorical act, however, suggests that those who undertake this intervention are either unaware of history or deliberately choose to omit certain aspects of history to write into the past an independent Canada. The circumstances of the apology argue that rather than ignorance of history, deliberate lies of omission are in operation. Prime Minister Harper makes his (unofficial) apology in Punjabi, the language spoken by the Sikh passengers of the *Komagata Maru*, rather than in Gujarati, Bengali, Urdu, Parsi, Senghalese, Portuguese, English or French, languages spoken by the present diverse population of the South Asian-Canadian community. The apology is made in Surrey, British Columbia, in the province where the *Komagata Maru*

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Incident occurred, rather than in St. Johns, Montreal, Toronto or Winnipeg, where today large populations of South Asian-Canadians reside.

The Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Human Resources and Social Development, Lynne Yelich, reports that, in its consultations in preparation for the apology, the government recognized the "linguistic diversity of the Indo-Canadian community," offering the consultation documents in English, French, Punjabi, Hindu and Urdu at their public meetings (April 2 1845). Jim Abbott, Parliamentary Secretary for Canadian Heritage, makes extensive reference to parliamentary debates that took place at the time of the *Komagata Maru* Incident and at the time of the passing of the "continuous journey" regulation, under the Liberal government of Sir Wilfrid Laurier; however, he makes no mention of the Senate debates that took place at the time of the incident, debates in which the Britishness of the *Komagata Maru* passengers specifically and South Asians in general was argued to make them better candidates for Canadian immigration than Eastern Europeans. At the time of the *Komagata Maru* Incident, while the then Conservative Prime Minister Borden was confirming that the "Hindus" would be excluded under the "continuous journey" regulation, the Honourable Mr. Casgrain, in the Senate was arguing for the necessity of their admission to Canada:

> Hon'ble Mr. Casgrain: I know the present is a poor time for labouring men to come to this country, but when we see men from all parts entering at the Port of Québec [sic], Ruthenians, Poles, Galician, Doukhobors, Assyrians, Greeks, Italians and almost every nationality not living under the British flag – is seems very strange to refuse admittance to the Sikhs and Sepoys. [. . .] I am not in favour of bringing any more labourers into this country than we have employment for, *but if any selection is to be made surely we should give a preference to our*

own in this country. (The Senate Debates, Ottawa, Tuesday, 26th May (1914) qtd. in Waraich and Sidhu; emphasis added)

From the Harper government's own research, the government was well aware that South Asian-Canadians do not all, or even predominantly speak Punjabi, or are Sikhs or live in British Columbia.[24] The Honourable Jim Abbot's remarks in parliament on April 2nd, 2008 suggest that he has extensive knowledge not only of the historical details of the ""continuous journey"" regulations and the *Komagata Maru* Incident but also of the political rhetoric that surrounded both events.[25] If the main proponents of a perspective that argues for the pastness of Canadian racism have such extensive understanding of the historical details of the *Komagata Maru* Incident, why is the Incident's main "bone of contention," the "continuous journey" regulation, omitted? Why minimize the detail that the passengers on board the *Komagata Maru* were subjects of the British Crown and therefore entitled to free movement within the Empire? This point would seem to support the "official" position that a past Canadian white supremacy was the culprit, and it would appear to solidify the claim to sole responsibility for the incident within a Canadian national identity that is different from colonial identity. In the "continuous journey" regulations and the *Komagata Maru* Incident, it becomes apparent that obligations to the values of the Dominion can and have been made subject to the will of the Canadian populace and the state. Why would the pedagogical narrative of nation not take advantage of these moments in Canadian history to underscore the independence of Canadian national will from the will of the Imperial Centre?

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[24] Jim Abbot's report to The Honourable Beverly J. Oda, Minister of Canadian Heritage and Status of Women on "Historical recognition with respect to the 'Continuous Journey' regulation and the *Komagata Maru* incident of 1914" includes extensive demographic data on South Asian-Canadians including their national distribution, ethnicities and, interestingly, distribution (both by province and by city) based on religious affiliation.
[25] Abbot's presentation in parliament makes extensive use of direct quotation from the parliamentary debates of the times in question.

In the narrative of the Canadian nation engaged by official discourse, the "continuous journey" regulations are offered as an example of a now unacceptable white supremacy, but the need for the "deception" and the underhandedness of the regulations are underplayed. Why? I fear that these apparent gaps in what should reasonably be known, given the demonstrated historical awareness of official discourse, constitute lies of omission. These lies of omission in official discourse support the validity of the popular fictions of Canadian national identity – not just the figure of the Anglo-Celtic settler/invader but also what Coleman calls "white civility," what Mackey calls "the myth of Canadian tolerance," and that which Berger ascribes to the Canada First nationalist. As recorded in Wariach's and Sidhu's collection of the key documents related to the *Komagata Maru* Incident, the Canadian Senate, in 1914, explicitly pointed to the British values potential South Asian immigrants to Canada shared with the existing Canadian society – values and cultural traditions established through their *mutual* subjugation to the British Crown. In other words, history shows that official Canadian discourse was well aware that Britishness could not be easily equated with whiteness. Rather than demonstrating "white civility" – a North American improvement of the British model – the "continuous journey" regulations and the response to the *Komagata Maru* Incident demonstrate that Canadian social/racial hierarchy had (and has) much more affinity with the culture south of the border, that it defines itself against, rather than with, the British "motherland."

2. *Plotting a Vector: Présence Canadiénne and the Conceit of Deceit*

The levels and visibility of deceit that mark "official" discourse around the *Komagata Maru* Incident provide a viable explanation of why not only the members of the descendents "committee" but also the majority of the eight thousand member audience in Bear Creek Park,

polled by a "show of hands" ("Harper Apologizes") immediately after Harper's August 3rd "apology," rejected the government's overture of reconciliation. A feeling of being "duped" and "used by Ottawa politicians for purposes they [did] not understand" was certainly expressed by Jasbir Sandhu, a spokesman for the Professor Mohan Singh Memorial Foundation of Canada, the organization that had invited Prime Minister Harper to speak on August 3rd and that had been an active participant in the community consultations undertaken by the government in the two years between the recognition of the Incident and the actual "apology" (Matas "Duped"). Recognizing "official" deception — the reality that "order and good government" is not benign — and the need to integrate both of these realities into a sense of identity that continues to operate and negotiate in this place are real-world examples of what I am calling *Présence Canadiénne*.

Présence Canadiénne, the uniquely "New World" vector in the ongoing construction of individual and collective identities that are created in *this* place, is a reflection of the attempts to negotiate between the reality of lived experience and the conceit of deceit that marks the narratives of the Canadian nation. As the *Komagata Maru* Incident provides an obvious opportunity to examine the operation of the conceit of deceit in "official" discourse that solicits and validates Canadian fictive identity, the *Komagata Maru* Incident also provides an opportunity to examine creative texts where *Présence Canadiénne* becomes obvious.

Aside from their engagement with some aspect of the *Komagata Maru* Incident, Sharon Pollock's play, *The Komagata Maru Incident*, Sadhu Binning's book of poetry, *No More Watno Dur*, Sugith Varghese's radio drama *Entry Denied*, and Jessi Thind's novella of youth fiction, *Lions of the Sea* would appear to have little in common in terms of their material production. Sharon Pollock is esteemed as "Canada's best-known woman playwright" (Zimmerman 1).

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Pollock has earned numerous awards and both national and international recognition for her writing and for her contributions to Canadian theatre. *The Komagata Maru Incident*, first performed in 1976, is considered a significant enough work within Pollock's oeuvre to be included in Cynthia Zimmerman's *Sharon Pollock: Collected Works*; however, it is not as well known or frequently performed as *Blood Relations* (1981) and *Doc* (1986), works for which she won Governor General's Awards.

Sadhu Binning, a sessional instructor in Punjabi at the Asian Studies Department of the University of British Columbia, has published collections of poetry and short stories, edited journals and founded theatre collectives. The majority of his published literary works have been in Punjabi. English has been, for the most part, reserved for his nonfiction writing on social justice issues. The poetry collection *No More Watno Dur* (which can be literally translated as "No more far away from the mother land") is printed in both English and Punjabi. Some of the poems included were originally "written in Punjabi [but] a significant number [were] originally conceived in English. They cover a period of twenty years, roughly between 1973 and 1993" (Binning, *No More* 6). Unlike Pollock's collection, which is published by Playwrights Canada Press, a publisher that promotes itself as "Canada's foremost publisher of theatre books" and publishes "roughly 32 books of plays, theatre history, and criticism [. . .] every year" (Publishers), *No More Watno Dur* is published by the much smaller TSAR publications, who "publish 6-8 titles of fiction, poetry, and nonfiction (literary criticism, history) per year" with a "focus [. . .] on works that can loosely be termed "multicultural" and particularly those that pertain to Asia and Africa" (TSAR).

Surghit Varughese's creative career consists of acting, writing and directing in Canadian theatre, television and radio productions. His *Entry Denied*, a radio drama submitted in response

to "a proposal call issued by CBC Radio's Sunday Showcase for plays dealing with an immigration theme" is published by the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation in an anthology of the "four English language plays and two French language play [. . .] chosen to be commissioned, translated and broadcast in both official languages" (Where).

Jessi Thind is an eclectic figure. Thind is a private Tae Kwan Do instructor, a free-lance game designer, and script consultant based in Montreal. *Lions of The Sea,* his first novel, is published through Trafford Publishing, an on-demand, self-publishing company. His second novel, *Saragarhi*, also published through Trafford Publishing, deals with the 1897 Battle of Saragarhi in which twenty-one Sikh soldiers of the British India army fought to the death against ten thousand Afghan tribesmen. Thind has also co-written a screenplay, *Sweet Amerika*, which follows the life of a Sikh shop owner in New York City after the bombing of the World Trade Centre.

All four works engage with the vector of *Présence Canadiénne* in relation to the presence of South Asians in Canada. *Présence Canadiénne* is not a uni-directional vector that transforms South Asian culture into a "New World" culture. *Présence Canadiénne* is instead an attempt to articulate the cultural transformations both in and of this place that inflect South Asian-Canadian diasporic identity. Collectively, these texts engage with the issue of "official" deception and the ways in which the recognition of this deception inflects the ongoing negotiation of identity. From the multitude of historical figures associated with the Incident, these creative engagements focus on two ambiguous individuals: William Charles Hopkinson and Mewa Singh. Hugh Johnston, in his book *The Voyage of the Komagata Maru: The Sikh Challenge to Canada's Colour Bar*, argues that the historical William Charles Hopkinson was, and continues to be, an enigma. Hopkinson "drew an annual salary from the Canadian government, a stipend and

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expenses from the India Office, and a retainer from the American immigration office" (Johnston 2). But who was his actual employer? Whose interests was he pursuing or protecting as he spied on the Indian community in North America? He was hired by the Canadian government "as an immigration officer and interpreter" (2); however, he had difficulty speaking and reading the language of the Sikh-Canadian population that he investigated: "he was fluent in Hindi but less certain in Panjabi and the Gurmukhi script of the Sikhs" (8). If he could not actually understand the people he was hired to watch, what was he communicating to his employers, whoever they might be? Although "he was born in Delhi as the baptismal records of the India Office show," Hopkinson misrepresented his birthplace "on his personal data sheet for the Department of the Interior [claiming] his place and date of birth as Hull, Yorkshire, England, 16 June 1880" (Johnston 142, n. 3). Why would he attempt this deception, especially when his employment (with Canadian Immigration at least) was dependent on his "insider" knowledge of Indian cultures, languages and traditions? Was he trying to hide an Indian mother who had adopted the European name "Agnes"?

The historic Mewa Singh is an equally difficult figure to understand. Mewa Singh was part of Hopkinson's spy network within the Vancouver Sikh community, but why had he collaborated with Hopkinson? Was he blackmailed? Was he simply interested in payment? Was he trying to get close to Hopkinson and win his trust? Was Mewa Singh a counter-informant for the Vancouver Sikh community? Why did he assassinate Hopkinson? Was it guilt for his past collaboration with Hopkinson? Was it out of a sense of justice for Hopkinson's crimes against the Vancouver Sikh community and the passengers of the *Komagata Maru*? Was the decision to assassinate Hopkinson his own or, as some suspected at the time, something the "pliant and fearful" (Johnston 129) Mewa Singh had been manipulated to do?

Hopkinson and Mewa Singh died without explaining the contradictions within or resolving the questions about their characters, creating open sites that creative authors have exploited to examine the ways in which the individual, the collective, and the audience must of necessity incorporate the conceit of deceit within the process of identity formation. They have become the vehicles through which these texts map the shape of *Présence Canadiénne*. Each of the texts examined below represents an individual (and individual's) interpretation of the character and motivation of each man, and the dynamic of the relationship between them. Given the mystery that surrounds the characters of Hopkinson and Mewa Singh, the authors are able to manipulate and transform the characters' personae without opening the texts to the challenge that they violate historical accuracy in the name of narrative. Pollock's focuses on the disintegration of Hopkinson as he discovers the incompatibility of racist ideology and his own basic human affiliation. Pollock positions Mewa Singh as a mysterious figure who circulates on the fringes of the action, eventually revealing him as the force of moral justice within the work. Binning effaces the character of Hopkinson, subsuming him within a generalized White supremacist Canadian nationalist identity. Binning creates Mewa Singh as a martyr and heroic icon of social justice. Varughese focuses on Mewa Singh, his vulnerability to corruption and his descent into guilt-induced revenge. Varghese positions Hopkinson as a man with his own vulnerabilities, neither a villain nor a hero but just a man, like Mewa Singh, trying to protect and support his family. Thind effaces the particularity of Mewa Singh, subsuming him within a generalized sense of Sikh outrage and the workings of universal justice. Thind positions Hopkinson as the emblem of a corrupt and racist political order operating in Canada. Through their representations of the characters of Hopkinson and Mewa Singh, the authors shape individual representations of South Asian-Canadian cultural identity, no one of which can be read as

representative or "authentic." Instead, these individual representations must be read cumulatively to define a range of possibilities, a range of possibilities that, in the case of the *Komagata Maru* Incident, succeeds in maintaining the status of "official" rather than "counter" histories of the Canadian nation.

The body of Sharon Pollock's work demonstrates a sustained interest, on the part of the author, in the ways that truth can and has been manipulated in order to sustain structures of power and to sanction social injustice. However, the focus of Pollock's work is not to simply reveal the historicity of truth or its vulnerability to ideological manipulation; the focus of Pollock's work is also on "the high price of both surrender and resistance" (Zimmerman 3) that the individual faces in negotiating his or her identity in this reality. As Robert C. Nunn observes, within Pollock's plays a moment of personal crisis iterates. In the moment of personal crisis the individual confronts the reality, rather than the ideological truth, of the world and must renegotiate his or her identity to incorporate that revelation: "After slamming the door so finally, or finding it slammed shut, on the way you have lived up to that moment, even on the very principles you have lived by, how do you go on from there?" (Nunn, "Pollock" 29). This scene of identity (re)negotiation may iterate through Pollock's work, as Zimmerman proposes, because these questions of identity negotiation are deeply personal to the playwright:

> From a deep, personal core come Sharon Pollock's sustained preoccupation with justice, authority, betrayal, self-sacrifice, the marginalised, the silenced, and the high price of both surrender and resistance. These are personal issues which have wide application. (3)

The "Playwright's Introduction" to *The Komagata Maru Incident* demonstrates Pollock's personal engagement with the subject of this particular work. After a brief historical sketch of

the Incident, Pollock's preface turns to what may be seen as her "deep personal connection" (Zimmerman 3) to the issues that the play explores: "As a Canadian, I feel that much of our history has been misrepresented and even hidden from us. Until we recognise our past, we cannot change our future" (Pollock 98). Pollock's declaration situates her personal negotiation with national belonging as the context for the play's action. Pollock shapes her preface to become a stage upon which she can express her concern that, through deceit, what are better presented as ideological myths have instead been misrepresented as "our history."

The Komagata Maru Incident provides Pollock with the ground upon which to confront the figure of the unmarked Canadian-Canadian. Challenging "the myth of racial superiority" by contrasting official rhetoric with "the dirty work involved in acting [state racism] out on real people" (Zimmerman 30), Pollock points our attention to the question of whose history is *our* history. To do the "dirty work" in *The Komagata Maru Incident*, Pollock re-imagines the historical figure of William Hopkinson. Hopkinson, Head of Intelligence for the Canadian Department of Immigration, enacts the continual process of identity negotiation. He espouses racist rhetoric yet he himself is not exactly "white." He recognizes the Sikhs onboard the *Komagata Maru* as "British subjects [with] right of entry to Canada" and "veterans of the British Army" (105); however, he finds his work rewarding — his work being to ensure that the passengers of the *Komagata Maru* find "no entry" (106). These internal tensions within the character of Hopkinson are worked by Pollock into an unstable identity that is continually shored up by displays of power over those close to him. Evy, Hopkinson's mistress in the play, is a frequent object of these displays. He controls her, not so much by manipulating her affections for him, but by threatening her business — her brothel:

Hopkinson: I'll do just as I please in your house! It's me that keeps you open,

and don't you forget it! A nod from me, and you'd be buried

under warrants. Oh Evy, Evy, Evy…what's good for me is good

for you, eh?...Eh Evy? (1.104-6).

Hopkinson's unstable sense of self eventually is forced into a moment of crisis, not through

confrontation and action, but through empathy and inaction. Hopkinson is undone by his ability

to feel the thirst and the hunger of the fictional woman and child whom Pollock creates to

metonymically represent the passengers of the *Komagata Maru*. His epiphany of the humanity,

rather than the Britishness, of the *Komagata Maru* passengers, the humanity he himself has

repressed in pursuit of the ideal of his father — "a big man [with] blond curly hair" who had the

power to transform "little beige people" into slaves (1.193-5) — transforms his identity without

transforming his course of action. Hopkinson continues to do the government's dirty work;

however, "he suffers the slow return to life of his buried self" (Nunn, "Pollock" 32). He

becomes aware not of "his betrayal of his heritage" (Nothof 90), but of his betrayal of his

humanity, the price he has paid for his willing submission to the misrepresentations of official

lies. Hopkinson comes to a growing awareness of his own participation in this dehumanization of

the Sikh people aboard the ship and he ceases to be an agent in his own life. He surrenders

himself to fate and embraces his assassination by the man who refused to join him in self-

corruption: Mewa Singh.

      As the collapse of Hopkinson's identity is performed on the stage, the audience becomes

increasingly aware of the official voice that exploits his self-corruption, T. S., "The Master of

Ceremonies, who plays many roles" (100). The character of T. S. represents "a kind of generic

officialdom" (Nothof 107). Like the Judeo-Christian demon, Legion, T. S. is many: the

multifaceted face of official, state-sanctioned racism; but he is also the distinct face within the structure of the play that calls the audience's attention to itself. He is Hopkinson's unnamed superior in the Immigration department who gives Hopkinson the official "word is no entry" (1.126) for the *Komagata Maru* passengers despite the fact that they are "British subjects, and as such they do have right of entry to Canada" (1.124-5). He is the unnamed bureaucrat who parses for the audience the legislative manipulation of "Catch 22, Regulation 23, Paragraph 4" (1.225) in the Canadian *Immigration Act* that makes the decisions of the Department of Immigration immune to legal challenge. He is the nameless politician who announces in the Canadian Parliament his fears for "our British legacy, our traditions, those things that we hold dear, that we have fought and died for, [that] is placed in jeopardy today by a massive influx of coloured foreigners!" (1.390-2). He is the nameless force of "officialdom" within the play who convinces Hopkinson to place his duty to the idea of Canada as a "white man's country" (1.389) ahead of his ability to empathize with the passengers of the *Komagata Maru*.

However, T. S. not only manipulates and corrupts Hopkinson but he insists that the audience remain aware that it too is but another face of state-sanctioned White supremacism. *The Komagata Maru Incident* working "in the spirit of documentary [theatre] because it is based on documented facts, and because it effects a significant meeting of the actual event and the theatrical event" (Nunn, "Performing" 51), works to make the audience aware of itself and of its implication in the events taking place on the stage. The play opens with T. S. "surveying the audience" (101) as it enters the performance space. When directly addressed by T. S., "Do you like the suit?" (101), the audience is made aware that it is "a component of the theatrical event that is rarely singled out as an object of attention" (Nunn, "Performing" 56). As T. S.

discomforts the audience by collapsing the distance between actor and observer, he similarly

discomforts the audience by collapsing the distance between past and present:

> T. S.: Will Canadians step on a tram next week to ride from home to work and
> never hear a word of English spoken? And once at work, if they still have
> a job, who will they eat their lunch with? Men, honest and true like
> ourselves, whose fathers made this country what it is today – or will they
> be surrounded by coloured men with foreign food? Canadians have
> rights! Our fathers died for them! (1.402-7)

T. S.'s address could be as easily heard in a contemporary "Tim Horton's" as in the 1914 House

of Parliament, as the audience is all too well aware. While the audience is a passive observer of

the disintegration of Hopkinson's identity, the figure of T. S. forces the audience to actively

engage with its own participation in the myths of racial superiority and the "whiteness" of

Canadian civility. Do its individual members negotiate their identity as Canadians in terms of

racial superiority, or in spite of it, or both? These are questions that Pollock's play leaves the

audience unable to avoid.

Binning's *No More Watno Dur* affords its readers an opportunity to observe the struggles

of an individual identity, Binning's speaker, to "define his relationship to this new land" (*No*

More 7). In his "Author's Note," Binning encourages the reader to see the collection as the

working out of the identity of a single observing consciousness, which he identifies as himself.

The collection follows the speaker's negotiations with identity as "a non-white immigrant" (7) to

Canada. Covering "a period of twenty years, roughly 1973 and 1993" (7), the poems in the

collection represent not just the speaker's observations of his own negotiations with identity but

also his observations of the identity negotiations of "the larger Punjabi community, which has

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gone through dramatic change from a small group to a well-established part of Canadian society during this period" (7). The reflections on the ongoing process of identity negotiation, as the title of the volume signals, cannot be captured by a monolingual discourse. Instead, much as the title hybridizes the English "no more" with the Punjabi "*watno dur*" to reflect the integration of the "New World" into the poet's conception of "the mother land," the text of the individual poems suggests the ground on which the speaker negotiates his identity is a similarly hybrid location. Each poem in the collection is printed on facing pages in Gurmukhī and Roman script and the reader is given no indication as to whether Punjabi or English, or the script "from the mouth of the Guru," or the script that reaches back to the perceived foundations of Western thought, is the language and form of the "original" composition. Instead, the reader is confronted by the simultaneous coexistence of these two streams of knowledge in the expression and negotiation of a single consciousness.

Although the volume itself is dedicated to the memory of the passengers of the *Komagata Maru*, the *Komagata Maru* Incident does not form a unifying theme for the poems collected within the text. Instead the Incident, the ship, its passengers and the members of the shore committee form a framework of historical contexts on which the speaker stages his negotiations with identity. The "New World" vector is engaged with as the speaker negotiates with the myths of Canadian nordicity and Canadian Britishness. The Canadian climate is not unwelcoming to the speaker. In fact the climate and the natural world are where the poetic speaker finds "ਜੀ

ਆਇਆਂ ਨੂੰ/*Welcome"* (10-1). The "wind" (11.7) never speaks with "a note of hatred," (11.9) "the rain and the snow/ touch [him] on his shoulder/as many other friends do" (11.10-12). The land, the climate, even "the birds" (11.13) do not reject the speaker; indeed he suspects that if they had

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been "consulted/when the decision was made/ to send my *Komagata Maru* away" (11.17-19), the *Komagata Maru* would have been welcomed, like him, to stay. The falsity of the Canadian claim to Britishness initially "pissed [him] off" (23.29) but "almost against [his] own will/ he began to adore" (85. 43-44) the "hidden humanity" (85.36) behind the absurd claim to Canadianness spoken in a "deep British accent" (85.52).

While Binning's poetry engages with the myths of Canadian national identity, the scope of subjects treated in this volume points out that *Présence Canadiénne* is not limited to confrontations with the "Canadian-Canadian." *Présence Canadiénne* also incorporates adapting to changing expectations of gender roles in North America ("Washing Dishes"), dealing with the reality of economic class distinctions in a supposedly classless society ("Riding the Elevator"), coping with the effects of American neo-imperialism ("My Thirteenth Year in Canada"), and facing the challenges of being one of the "sandwich generation" ("Father and Son").

No More Watno Dur demonstrates that the negotiation of identity in *this* place requires a realization that identity formation, for Binning's speaker, is a function of *Présence Canadiénne* and *Présence Européenne* and *Présence Asiénne*. Much like the figure of the *Komagata Maru* Incident, the figure of Bhagat Singh iterates throughout the collection. Bhagat Singh, an Indian revolutionary, is a figure that hybridizes *Présence Européenne* and *Présence Asiénne* within Binning's texts. Only twenty-three when he was executed in 1931 by the British Colonial authority, Bhagat Singh represents the radical element of the Indian freedom movement. Considered by "British intelligence to be as popular a figure nationwide as Mahatma Gandhi," Bhagat Singh differed from Gandhi in his "advocacy of revolutionary violence and armed struggle" ("Singh"). Influenced "by the Russian revolution and Leninist ideas," Bhagat Singh is still considered to be an icon of the Indian Communist movement for reshaping Marxist and

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Leninist principles in the pursuit of ending social exploitation in India, a necessary part, he believed, in creating complete national liberation ("Singh").

The figure of Bhagat Singh represents a nexus of vectors, in particular the influence of and resistance to colonial oppression and the already creolized identity of the ancestral homeland. In Binning's verse, Bhagat Singh functions as a role model, one of the "heroes" (47.22) of *there* who tries to communicate to the next generation *here*. But what makes Bhagat Singh a significant figure to Binning's speaker is not his Indianness, but, rather, his willingness to sacrifice himself in the pursuit of social justice. In Binning's verse Bhagat Singh is esteemed amongst a trans-national pantheon of revolutionaries who have dedicated their lives to "loving and serving [their] people" (107.16): "Mandela" (107.16), "Che Guevera and Steve Biko" (111.57), and "Mewa Singh" (47.20). Much like the simultaneity of languages that marks the material object of the text, the figure of Bhagat Singh becomes a site where the negotiation between *Présence Canadiénne*, *Présence Européenne* and *Présence Asiénne* is foregrounded. For Binning's speaker, the model of this Indian revolutionary is still valid. It is still valid in this place and it is valid in reference to the social injustices that take place *here* rather than *there*. Twinning Bhagat Singh and Mewa Singh as heroes of virtue and sacrifice ("Father and Son"), Binning's speaker demonstrates the ways in which, within the individual identity negotiation being performed throughout the collection, the three vectors of influence can be successfully integrated. In Binning's speaker's negotiation with identity, William Charles Hopkinson is irrelevant – an unnamed presence of racial bigotry. The speaker has brought from the ancestral homeland an ideal of how to resist colonial oppression, found an equal ideal in the history of South Asian encounters with the "New World," place, and renegotiated and reinterpreted both to resist new oppressions in this place that is *No More Watno Dur*.

For Pollock, Mewa Singh is the figure of incorruptible avenger to whom Hopkinson willingly surrenders. For Binning, Mewa Singh is an ideal of a revolutionary martyr. However, Sugith Varughese's *Entry Denied* recasts Mewa Singh as a more troubled figure, a figure doomed by his negotiation with *Présence Canadiénne*. As the protagonist of the drama, Mewa Singh is depicted as negotiating through a sea of personal deception, much as the *Komagata Maru* and its passengers are forced to negotiate not just the literal sea that divides India and Canada, but also a sea of bureaucratic deceit. Mewa Singh's journey to Canada begins with his brother's attempt to cheat fate. With only one ticket for the journey, Mewa and the elder brother Varghese invents, Munshi Singh, flip an "anna" (170) to allow fate to decide which brother will make the journey to the "New World." While Munshi wins the coin toss, he slips away in the night, leaving his brother the ticket to what both men consider the opportunity of a new life. Mewa's fellow members of the Indian colony in the "New World" do not seek to deceive him, but to encourage him to join them in their acts of deception. Balwant Singh, the revolutionary, seeks to recruit Mewa to join him in the Indian independence movement; Bela Singh, the informer, seeks to recruit Mewa to join him in Hopkinson's information network. Balwant and Bela meet with mixed success in their attempts to have Mewa join them: Mewa joins Balwant only to inform on him, and Mewa joins Hopkinson's spies only to eventually kill Hopkinson. What is particularly interesting about the way that Varghese creates these two representatives of the Indian community of British Columbia is that, for both characters, their location in the "New World" seems to be irrelevant to their identities. Balwant's revolutionary fervour is not directed at improving the lives of Indians in Canada but instead at gaining independence for India. Bela is an informer for the Immigration Department, not because he has any commitment to the

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Canadian state, but because they pay well. As Bela declares, the location of Canada has no bearing on the practice of his "trade":

> Bela: There is a Hopkinson everywhere I go. His name may have been different. Different voice, different body. But they all have the same eyes. I will tell you something, Mewa Singh. Once you find the man with those eyes, you can have anything you want. (1.685-91)

Mewa, unlike Balwant and Bela, is committed to this place and the future that he wants to build here. His equivocal participation in their schemes is undertaken for the sole purpose of securing part of that future: a Canadian reunion with his brother Munshi.

Mewa's commitment to his Canadian future leads him to make an unlikely alliance with Hopkinson. Varghese's characterization of Hopkinson is a departure from the internally conflicted Hopkinson of Pollock's *The Komagata Maru Incident*. This Hopkinson engages in no racist rhetoric. In fact he actively distances himself from the racism openly expressed by other characters: "We immigration chaps aren't all like Mr. Reid, there" (168). He treats not just Mewa Singh but Gurdit Singh, the organizer of the *Komagata Maru*'s journey, with civility and respect, welcoming both to the "New World" with the traditional Sikh greeting/blessing "Sat Sri Akaal" (1.43-4, 1.315-6). He even rejects the offer to see himself as master over "little beige people" (Pollock 1.194-5). He is no "sahib" (Varughese 1.19). This Hopkinson, like Pollock's Hopkinson, does attempt to mask his mixed heritage, but not out of an idolization of his father's "whiteness" and a disdain for his mother's "brownness." Varughese's invention of a son[26] for Hopkinson and Hopkinson's attempts to disguise his ethnic background can be read as an alternate to Mewa Singh's negotiation with *Présence Canadiénne*. Mewa Singh attempts to

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[26] The historic Hopkinson had no son but did have two daughters.

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secure a home for himself and his brother in this "New World," much as Hopkinson attempts to secure a home for himself and his son. Unlike Mewa, Hopkinson, through his access to power in this place, his "white" appearance, and his traffic in deception, is better able to navigate the treacherous waters of Canadian racial politics to secure that home. Employed to control and contain South Asian immigration to Canada, Hopkinson is well aware of the racial prejudice that would deny him, and his child, a secure future in the "New World." Hopkinson sees that a "New World" future for his son can be secured by making "Simon" a Boy Scout under the control of men like Reid (1.141-51) rather than allowing him to play with the sons of would-be-immigrants like Gurdit Singh (1.322-6). However, to ease his son's negotiation with *Présence Canadiénne*, Hopkinson must undertake a "racial" sleight of hand: to protect his son he must disguise his own questionable claim to "whiteness."

In Varughese's radio drama, Hopkinson's recruitment of Mewa to his network of spies is simply a part of his job that he undertakes without malice. However, for Mewa, collaborating with Hopkinson requires him to compromise his sense of self, an act that he undertakes in pursuit of his dream of a future for himself and his family in the "New World." As the elements of Mewa's dream dissolve before his eyes — his brother is not allowed to disembark from the *Komagata Maru*; he does not receive his book-keeping certificate; his brother is killed in the Budge Budge riots that greet the *Komagata Maru*'s return to India — Mewa does not abandon his association with Hopkinson. He does not blame Hopkinson, nor does he blame himself. Instead he blames the loss of his dreams on Bela Singh, an accusation Bela denies: "No, I took away your illusions. Now you can see the world clearly. And that makes you a free man" (211). But without his dreams or his illusions Mewa cannot continue to function and, surrendering

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himself to "fate" (213), he ends his "freedom" by hunting down and murdering Hopkinson in the Vancouver Provincial Courthouse.

In Pollock's *The Komagata Maru Incident*, the collapse of Hopkinson's identity culminates with his surrender to the almost divine retribution meted out by Mewa Singh. However, in Varughese's *Entry Denied* it is the collapse of Mewa Singh's identity that creates the opportunity to examine the effects of *Présence Canadiénne*. Mewa, in his attempts to make a space for himself in Canada inadvertently makes a space within himself for Canada. He internalizes the patterns of deceit and treachery that circulate around him into his negotiation of his identity. The "friendship" (1.907) that he creates with Hopkinson, a friendship that even Mewa refers to in parentheses, has encouraged him to recreate himself in the "Canadian" mould, Hopkinson's mould. Mewa's sense of his own identity collapses when he is forced into a confrontation with his implication in the atrocities occurring around him. Killing Hopkinson becomes not an act of divine retribution, as Pollock describes it, or an act of heroic martyrdom, as Binning implies, but an act of suicide. Mewa kills not his corruptor but the model of corruption after which he has patterned himself, and, by doing so publicly, ensures that he will not survive.

Jessi Thind's *Lions of the Sea* shifts perspective on the *Komagata Maru* Incident. Instead of standing on the shore of Vancouver harbour looking out at the ship, the reader is relocated to the decks of the *Komagata Maru*, or the *Nanak Jahaz* (12) as the passengers rename the ship. Renamed after the first Sikh guru, the *Nanak Jahaz/Komagata Maru* becomes a physical manifestation of *Présence Asiénne*, carrying not just "Asian" peoples but "Asian" cultural values and traditions to the "New World." The narrative is presented as the journal of an unnamed passenger of the *Nanak Jahaz*. The premise of the journal is that it allows the passenger to

explain to his infant son the reason for his absence: his pursuit of a better life for the family in the "New World." The journal is recovered, in the *Preface*, after the Budge Budge riots by one of the native soldiers, who reads the journal along with us, the actual readers. Unlike Binning's or Varughese's texts, Thind's text does not perform for the reader the place of *Présence Canadiénne* within the negotiation of identity. For the passengers, the opportunity to engage with *Présence Canadiénne* is always deferred as they are never able to attain the shore. Instead, like Pollock's text, Thind places the reader (or the audience) in the position of having to become aware of *Présence Canadiénne* in his or her process of identity development. The reader is asked to identify with the soldier who intercepts the message between father and son, and stand in the place between the Incident and the future generations that will have to integrate it into their identities. Like the sergeant, the reader has the opportunity to hold the journal "to his heart" (111), and integrate its contents and implications into his negotiation of identity. Will the reader, like the sergeant, be transformed by his or her encounter with the text, or will the reader, like the sergeant's English "superiors" (111), develop a "cold indifference" (111) to the pain, suffering, and death that the journal has revealed? Thind does not attempt to answer these questions, instead leaving the "ending" of his narrative, the effect of *Présence Canadiénne* within the identity of the individual reader, as a story that has yet to be told.

While the structure of the novel leaves the negotiation with *Présence Canadiénne* in the minds of the individual reader, the characterization of Hopkinson within the text points the reader to the conceit of deceit he or she will have to engage in his or her negotiation of identity in this place. This Hopkinson is not Pollock's fragile identity that comes undone through his sudden awareness of his own dehumanization. This Hopkinson is not Binning's Hopkinson who is beneath mention. Nor is he Varughese's Hopkinson who is able to maintain his humanity

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while doing the "dirty deeds" of the British Empire and Canadian racism. Instead, in Thind's text Hopkinson becomes the incarnation of deceit and "whiteness." The narrating journalist assures his readers that there is no possibility that Hopkinson shares in the "brownness" of the passengers, and this lack of pigmentation is tied to a lack within his character: "He's as pale as his sense of truth and justice" (39-40). The journalist fears that Hopkinson has "convinced his superiors he can speak our language" (40) even though the language he speaks, "poor mingled Hindi-Punjabi" (84), is unintelligible to the passengers on the ship. This Hopkinson works through "manipulation and treachery" (49). He solicits bribes from the passengers "to somehow provide them with an opportunity to disembark" (49). With his "malicious smile" (87) and his abuse of power, Hopkinson stands in sharp contrast to the community of the passengers: a community of compassion, tolerance, strength and endurance. Like Pollock's Hopkinson, Thind's Hopkinson has been dehumanized, but, unlike in Pollock's incarnation, from the perspective of the passengers, this Hopkinson appears to relish his descent into bestiality:

> "Not an animal! Worse! Animals don't do these things to their own." He shook
> his head and repeated in a whisper, "Animals don't do these things to their own,"
> He fell silent; then, as an afterthought, he looked up at me and said, "You write
> about him and how he starved us and laughed at our suffering." (87)

Lions of the Sea does not include within its narrative Hopkinson's assassination by Mewa Singh but it does suggest that to be assassinated is this Hopkinson's unavoidable destiny: a destiny he has brought upon himself through his cruelty, abuse of power, and deceit.

These four works I have discussed in this chapter engage with the historic *Komagata Maru* Incident from the perspective of their individual authors. These texts differ in terms of the material conditions of their production, their authors' position within the Canadian literary

establishment, and even the genres of literature they represent. However, each of these works, from their very different perspectives, provides us with an insight into the shape of *Présence Canadiénne,* the cultural, social, and historical influence of *this* place in the negotiation of South Asian-Canadian diasporic subjectivity. *Présence Canadiénne* needs to be considered when approaching all works of "Canadian" literature, both the hyphenated and the not hyphenated. If we do not accept the reality of Canada's fictive ethnicity, then we must accept that *Présence Canadiénne* is a vector that influences the ongoing negotiation of all cultural identity created in relation to this place, including the ongoing negotiation of identity undertaken by the unmarked "Canadian-Canadian." However, that being said, *Présence Canadiénne* may take on particular historic resonances when it is engaged from the position of different diasporic positions and literary modes of expression. South Asian engagement with *Présence Canadiénne* has a different historical path than Japanese engagement with *Présence Canadiénne*, or Ukrainian, or Jewish or any of the other diasporic communities that negotiate identity in this place.

Chapter III: Stage Directions: Canadian Theatrical Nationhood and South Asian-Canadian Theatre

South Asian-Canadian theatre is a particularly useful field for examining the ongoing negotiation between *Présence Asiénne*, *Présence Européenne* and *Présence Canadiénne*. What becomes obvious in examining South Asian-Canadian theatre is the caution that must be taken in attempting to identify the influence of both *Présence Asiénne* and *Présence Européenne*. *Présence Asiénne*, the vector of influence representing the connection to the ancestral homeland(s), needs to be historically situated. *Présence Asiénne* is never pure — this vector cannot be understood as representing an "authentic," pre-colonial South Asian cultural influence. It is always already hybridized with *Présence Européenne*, which itself needs to be historicized in terms of what aspects (and moments) of European culture can be seen to interact with South Asian cultural realities. This need to be conscious of the implication of *Présence Asiénne* in *Présence Européenne* (and *Présence Européenne* in *Présence Asiénne*) is not the only complex dynamic of identity negotiation that is made visible in South Asian-Canadian theatre. At the site of South Asian-Canadian theatre we can see that not only does *Présence Canadiénne* participate in the negotiation of South Asian-Canadian cultural identity but it also, in that process, is transformed and creolized.

This process of identity negotiation at work in South Asian-Canadian theatre cannot be seen as something operating only internally within an individual play text, a performance event, or the structure of a theatre company. The place of South Asian-Canadian theatre in the literary negotiation of South Asian-Canadian cultural identity is equally visible in how South Asian-

Canadian theatre engages with what Loren Kruger calls "theatrical nationhood" — which in this case I am specifying as Canadian theatrical nationhood — either becoming institutionalized within Canadian national theatre or evading institutionalization. Theatrical nationhood is the space of tension between national theatre and populist theatre. It is the "battlefield [. . .] on which representations of the ruling bloc confront the (counter) hegemonic claims of emergent groups, classes and class fractions and attempt to contain them" (*National* 6). The stakes on this battlefield are social authority. National theatre seeks to establish the aesthetic tastes and values of the dominant minority within a society while dismissing populist theatre as "merely entertainment or potentially unruly behavio[u]r" (Kruger, *National* 10).

While the opposition of "national" and "populist" theatres may appear to name a thesis and antithesis, Kruger argues that the relationship between the two positions is not so straightforward. Instead of mapping a relationship that works towards the synthesis of the two binary poles, the relationship between legitimate and populist theatre maps out a field of tensions and possibilities: the field of theatrical nationhood. This field is shaped by a complex set of cultural variables that extends beyond the play text. A particular text may address the issues of the multiple peoples within a society and their claims to political authority but may be perceived as part of "national" rather than "populist" theatre because of the specific occasion of its performance. The example Kruger gives of this phenomenon is that "Clifford Odets's *Waiting for Lefty*[27] merited critical attention as a *play* (as opposed to a locally interesting piece of agit-prop) only once it transferred to Broadway" (*National* 13). A particular text that is considered

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[27] Odets's 1935 script "was an hour-long episodic play which used the flashback technique to dramatize reasons behind the New York cab drivers' strike of 1934" (Fearnow). The play was originally written for and performed by New York's The Group Theatre, a politically committed, leftist, professional theatre company in which Odets was a minor actor. Initially performed in a series of special matinees, "this play was one of the most effective *propaganda pieces* for the left" ("Waiting" emphasis added) during a time when the American public was becoming politically polarized. A critical and commercial success, the play was quickly transferred to Broadway, and, as Kruger observes, transformed from propaganda into theatrical art by its change in venue.

part of the traditional canon of "legitimate" theatre may also, because of the specific occasion of its performance, be considered "populist" theatre. To borrow Kruger's example and resituate it within a Canadian context: Shakespeare's plays performed by the professional company at the Stratford Festival are "legitimate" art but the same plays, if performed in the same city by the amateur Stratford Community Players, "however skillfully and originally," are "populist" entertainment (*National* 13). These examples argue that in addition to dramatic literature, examination of the map of theatrical nationhood in a particular location must also consider the location of performance, the organization of the company undertaking the performance, and the professional standing of the actors and directors associated with the performance. In other words, the institution of the theatre must be read alongside the dramatic text to position a particular theatrical event within the field of theatrical nationhood: to determine if it is recognized as "art" or dismissed as rabble-rousing entertainment.

Alan Filewod gives us particular insight into the operation of theatrical nationhood within the Canadian context through his ongoing engagement with the question of how the process of institutionalization has unfolded (and continues to unfold) within the field of Canadian theatre history. From Filewod's analysis of the history of Canadian national theatre, we can extrapolate some signposts to help us situate South Asian-Canadian theatre (that is: individual companies, performances, and texts) within the dynamic field of Canadian theatrical nationhood — this with the goal of tracing out the reciprocal relationship between *Présence Canadiénne* and negotiations of South Asian-Canadian cultural identity as reflected in literature. Firstly, Filewod proposes that Canadian national theatre attempts to legitimate its cultural authority and the validity of the

national narrative by creating a fictional narrative of progress for its own history.[28] The "history" of successive theatrical movements replacing each other, rather than as evidence of a progressive development of Canadian theatre from its "immature" beginnings as closet dramas to its "mature" present, is better understood as evidence of the constant tension between national and populist theatres within theatrical nationhood. With this observation in mind, to situate South Asian-Canadian theatre within the field of Canadian theatrical nationhood, it is important to try to gauge the relationship of individual theatre companies with respect to the "official" history of Canadian national theatre. Filewod argues that the "official" history of Canadian national theatre has been imagined as a series of successive "movements":

> The canon of Canadian theatre history progresses through a sequence in which the popular theatre movement [beginning in the 1970s] follows a narrative sequence that begins with the Little Theatre movement and its antithesis, the Workers' Theatre Movement in the 1930s, to the regional theatre movement of the 1950s and 1960s, and the alternative theatre movement of the 1970s (Filewod, "Naming" 227)

Against this timeline of "official" history, it becomes necessary to ask: do different South Asian-Canadian theatre companies appear to operate anachronistically with respect to Canadian national theatre's "history" of progressive development? How does the perception of being

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[28] Filewod's writing on Canadian theatre history, in general, expresses his suspicions with reading that history as a series of discrete theatrical "movements." However his concern that there is an unspoken narrative of progress that has underscored the understanding of Canadian theatre history specifically and Canadian national culture in general is perhaps most explicitly articulated in his 2002 monograph *Performing Canada: The Nation Enacted in the Imagined Theatre*. In his introduction, Filewod announces that his argument "that Canadian nationhood is a constantly changing historical performance enacted in an imagined theatre [is an argument that] repudiates the popular understanding of nationhood as an evolutionary progression made evident by the 'growth' of national culture and the structures of cultural production" (x). The mutually co-constructive relationship between nation and national theatre, Filewod argues, is better understood as a recursive process of "historical citation and recitation" (101) than as a smooth, progressively developing narrative.

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anachronistic affect a company's relationship to Canadian national theatre? If a particular theatre company appears to operate in (or out of) sync with the "official" history, does that affect how or if that theatre company becomes institutionalised within Canadian national theatre?

From Filewod's analysis of Canadian theatre history, we can identify a second signpost for mapping the place(s) of South Asian-Canadian theatrical institutions within the field of Canadian theatrical nationhood. In *Performing Canada: The Nation Enacted in the Imagined Theatre*, Filewod analyzes the Mummer's Troupe of Newfoundland and their production and national tour of *They Club Seals, Don't They?* as a way in which to make visible the tensions between national and populist theatrical institutions within Canadian theatrical nationhood. In that analysis Filewod calls our attention to something that should be obvious but is, perhaps, too often forgotten: the actual audience of a given performance (or tour) of a given play by a given theatrical company is, relative to the population of the nation as a whole, quite small. It is too small to allow the engagement with the actual audience to constitute an intervention in the field of theatrical nationhood. What instead allows a particular theatrical institution to reach beyond a limited audience and into the sphere of national negotiation(s) of identity is the attention paid to that institution by critique in popular — and I would argue also academic and professional arts — media. As Filewod observes, if the Mummer's Troupe's production and tour of *They Club Seals, Don't They?* was able to "contribute to a change in public opinion" on the issue of the seal hunt, "it was because of the coverage [the national tour of the play] generated as cultural event, not because of its actual stage performance" (81). It is only through the intervention and attention of the media that *They Club Seals, Don't They?* becomes "a performance in an imagined theatre, playing to a national audience that 'saw' the play through the headlines it generated" (81).

While the Mummer's Troupe garnered national headlines, the theatrical institutions of South Asian-Canadian theatre tend to receive more regionally based attention within the popular press, attention generally limited to the urban centres in which the theatrical institutions have their performance bases. Instead of through the attention of the popular media, South Asian-Canadian theatrical institutions are brought into contact with Canadian theatrical nationhood through the attention of academics and arts professionals — attention that can originate both within and without the Canadian national space. When we consider the academic writing that places original South Asian-Canadian theatre written in English within the context of Canadian writing,[29] we find that a single academic has come to be seen as the authoritative voice on analyses of this literature — an authority referred to both by Canadian academics and, perhaps more significantly, by trans-national academics examining the place of South Asian-Canadian theatre within the Canadian literary context. This brings us to a thorny issue: the influence ascribed to a single academic perspective, in this case, Uma Parameswaran, in shaping perceptions of how South Asian-Canadian theatre can be seen as engaging with the field of Canadian theatrical nationhood[30]. The issue of Uma Parameswaran and her influence on the

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[29] Original South Asian-Canadian literature written in Punjabi complicates this particular observation, as I will demonstrate when I focus on the place of *Vancouver Sath* within Canadian theatrical nationhood.

[30] Parameswaran in her role as playwright is often cited by other academics studying the theatre and literature of the South Asian diaspora. However, while these authors refer to her creative texts, particularly interesting are those that refer to her in her role as academic theatre critic. These references are not just trans-national but also trans-disciplinary. In Canada, Parameswaran's writings as theatre critic are cited in widely diverse contexts: from government briefs prepared for the Department of Canadian Heritage (Curtis, Gupta, and Straw's *Culture and Identity: Ideas and Overviews* commissioned for the November 2001 seminar *Ethnocultural, Racial, Religious, and Linguistic Diversity and Identity*) to meditations on the pedagogical use of theatre in teaching morality (Basourakos's "Exploring the Moral Sphere Through Dramatic Art: The Role of Contemporary Canadian Plays in Moral Pedagogy", in the 1998 volume of the *Canadian Journal of Education*). In the context of literary and theatre studies, tracing citations to Parameswaran's writing points out an interesting conversation between Parameswaran, Anne Nothof, and Rahul Varma. In her 1995 article for *Contemporary Issues in Canadian Drama*, "Protest For a Better Future: South Asian Canadian Theatre's March To the Centre," Parameswaran labels South Asian-Canadian theatre as "protest theatre." Nothoff, in her 2001 contribution to *Siting the Other: Revisions of Marginality in Australian and English-Canadian Drama*, "Canadian 'Ethnic' Theatre: Fracturing the Mosaic," references Parameswaran and repeats the earlier assertion that South Asian-Canadian theatre is best understood as "protest theatre." In 2009, Rahul Varma, whose company Teesri Duniya Theatre is one of the recipients of the label "protest

critical study of South Asian-Canadian theatre is thorny because any critique that I might offer of her work cannot be read as an attempt to dismiss or "correct" her observations. My critique is instead intended to call attention to an alternative analytical perspective on the same body of works — an attempt to bring diversity to the critical analysis of South Asian-Canadian theatre and dramatic literature. As I demonstrated earlier with the range of possible interpretations of the *Komagata Maru* Incident in negotiations of South Asian-Canadian cultural identity reflected in literature, there is too much difference within the category of South Asian-Canadian literature for a single model to effectively describe the cultural processes reflected in this body of writing. There is too much variation within the South Asian diaspora (in terms of historical movement, cultural, ethnic, sectarian, and regional difference) and too much variation within South Asian-Canadianness (historical movement into Canada, cultural, ethnic, sectarian, and regional difference) for a single model for examining the literary artifact of the process of cultural negotiation to be helpful.

Regardless of any analytical differences I may have with Parameswaran's work on what she has termed "SACLIT," [31] her importance to the study of South Asian-Canadian literature in general and South Asian-Canadian theatre in particular is undeniable. My concern is that, beyond Parameswaran's control, her perspective on "SACLIT" drama has become *the* academic critical perspective on this body of literature. Parameswaran has consistently written of the need to pay

theatre," responds in "Teesri Duniya Theatre: Diversifying Diversity With Relevant Works of Theatre" published in *South Asian Popular Culture*. Making explicit reference to Parameswaran and Nothof, Varma rejects the label, which, as I argue below, is an assessment with which I agree. In trans-national writing, citations of Parameswaran's critical writing ranges not so much in terms of disciplinary boundaries as in the place of theatre in national affiliation: from assessments of the role of theatre and Canadian multiculturalism to assessments of the role of theatre in the Indian diaspora. Caroline de Wagter, a Belgian doctoral student, in her December, 2007 article "Debunking the Multicultural Dream: Diasporic Identities on the Contemporary Multi-Ethnic Canadian Stage" published in the Estonia based *Interlitteraria*, would appear to be in the first camp. In the second camp would also be Aparna Dharwadker's "Diaspora and the Theatre of Nation" that appears in a special section of 2003's volume of *Theatre Research International*, which I discuss below. Interestingly Loren Kruger, in her introduction to this special section, also cites Parameswaran to position Dharwadker's writing in relation to hers.

[31] SACLIT is the neologism that Parameswaran has coined for "South Asian Canadian Literature."

attention to the function and operation of drama within South Asian-Canadian literature: "In

SACLIT, I am drawn to drama because, unlike their counterparts in fiction, these writers deal

with 'here' Canada, and not with 'there,' halfway across the world" ("Drumming" 3). Taking a

diasporic perspective, Parameswaran tries to read the confluence of the different cultural streams

within the writing, as is suggested by not just the content but also the title of her essay "Ganga[32]

in the Assiniboine": "the title — Ganga in the Assiniboine — epitomizes my thesis [. . .] not

Ganga *as* the Assiniboine or the Assiniboine as the Ganga, both of which imply a simple

transference or substitution, but Ganga *in* the Assiniboine, which implies a flowing into, a

merger that enriches the river" ("Ganga" 79-80). Writing not just for a national but an

international and transnational audience,[33] Parameswaran has tried to sketch out methods of

analysis for reading South Asian-Canadian theatre as cultural artifacts of the individual's

negotiation with South Asian-Canadian identity. Most critical writing on South Asian-Canadian

theatre either explicitly references Parameswaran or borrows her pattern of analysis: focusing on

Vancouver Sath, *Teesri Duniya*, and *Montreal Serai* and minimizing or omitting reference to

Toronto theatre events, for example, festival *Desh Pardesh* in the 1990's and Rogers' *Masala!*

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[32] Ganga is the Hindi name for what in English is called the Ganges River, one of the major rivers of India. The Assiniboine River runs through the Canadian prairie provinces.

[33] Parameswaran has published articles on South Asian-Canadian theatre in several Canadian journals, including editing the Spring 1998 issue of *Canadian Theatre Review* which focussed specifically on South Asian-Canadian theatre. Parameswaran has also had chapters included in national and international publications: a chapter on South Asian Theatre in Ginny Rastoy's 2006 *Theatre in British Columbia* published by Playwrights Canada Press, and with Vasanti Ram, "India's Street Theatre in Delhi and Montreal" in *Major Minorities: English Literatures in Transit*, 1993's volume 11 of Rodopi's *Cross/Cultures* series. She has also published extensively for an inter- and trans-national academic audience on the issue of "SACLIT," launching a series of texts published in India on the topic, as well as submitting chapters to several international publications on the topics of identity negotiation within a diasporic context and its influence on drama. Her international presence, perhaps even more than her national presence, has given her a significant influence on how South Asian-Canadian theatre is perceived in relationship to what I am calling Canadian theatrical nationhood.

Mehndi! Masti! South Asian Festival in the 2000's, that offer venues for South Asian-Canadian theatre in the centre of the largest population of South Asians in Canada.[34]

Parameswaran's analytical approach presupposes the operation of a coherent and authentic cultural identity within the literature that is validated by the authority of experience. In her critical writing, Parameswaran has a marked habit of offering her personal experiences as a South Asian-Canadian woman and writer as evidence of the larger social phenomena she examines and the position she takes on these phenomena. "Ganga in the Assiniboine" concludes with two of Parameswaran's poems that "express where *we* are now and where *I* hope we will eventually be" ("Ganga" 91; emphasis added). In "Drumming Towards a Better Future," her editorial introduction to the Spring 1998 special issue of *Canadian Theatre Review*, Parameswaran equates the lack of attention within Canada given to South Asian-Canadian drama to the lack of attention paid by Canadian publishers to her anthologies:

> For ten years I have been researching SACLIT (South Asian Canadian Literature) [. . .] When I went "there" to my first conference of the Indian Association of Canadian Studies in January 1993, I was struck by the enthusiasm evinced by my Indian colleagues for the Indo-Canadian contribution to Canadian Literature. Such is the level of interest that in the last four years I have published four books, with three different publishers in Indian, on SACLIT. But "here" in Canada, publishers have not been interested in my anthology, which has gone a-begging for the last three years. ("Drumming" 3)

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[34] According to Statistics Canada's analysis of the 2001 Census of Canada, of the 963,200 individuals living in Canada who self-identify as South Asian, "over 500,000 people of South Asian origin lived in Toronto, while another 163,000 made Vancouver their home" (Stats Can)

In *SACLIT Drama*, the anthology referred to in her *Canadian Theatre Review* editorial, Parameswaran repeats the pattern. Her articulation of the "personal context of immigrants' experience" ("Introduction" ii) is elaborated with evidence drawn from her own writing: "*My own early scripts, of which Meera is an example, were written in [the first phase of the immigrant experience]*" ("Introduction" ii; emphasis added); "*My Sita's Promise*, written and staged in 1981 belongs to the first collective phase of Indo-Canadian experience, though at the personal chart, it falls in the third of the phases, namely the phase in which a well-settled immigrant turns to contributing to the intersections of one's community-affiliations and one's larger Canadian identity" ("Introduction" ii; emphasis added). The pattern recurs in Parameswaran's definition of South Asian-Canadian diasporic subjectivity that she elaborates in "Dispelling the Spells of Memory." The lived experience of the author is conspicuously positioned as the authority upon which the argument presented is grounded.

While it is not a strategy I employ, I certainly recognize that the strategy of arguing from the authority of experience has an established place in the spectrum of analytical approaches to literature. My concern, however, is that Parameswaran's individual perspective becomes applied by the larger academic community as the singular voice speaking on behalf of the diversity of voices contained within the field of South Asian-Canadian theatre. When this occurs, alternate perspectives on and approaches to the field are silenced. Kamal Al-Solaylee, professor of journalism at Ryerson University, and previously the drama critic for the *Globe and Mail*, has reviewed South Asian-Canadian drama as part of his engagement with the Toronto theatre scene and continues to speak internationally about South Asian-Canadian theatre in that context.[35] Al-

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[35] In his presentation to the 2009 13th International Symposium of Theatre Critics and Scholars at the 54th Serjino Pozorje Festival at Novi Sad, Serbia, Al-Solaylee includes a consideration of South Asian-Canadian theatre in his position paper "Can festivals point to a better future of audience development in Canada?". In this paper, Al-

Solaylee's writing on South Asian-Canadian theatre, unlike Parameswaran's, foregrounds the occasion of performance rather than focusing on the playwright's diasporic subjectivity. Another perspective on South Asian-Canadian theatre can be found in Rahul Varma, co-founder and artistic director of Teesri Duniya Theatre, and his contributions to scholarly journals of and conferences on theatre and culture studies, commenting on both his choices as a playwright and on the direction of the company.[36] Much of Varma's critical writing theorizes the intervention that he, as a playwright, and Teesri Duniya, as a theatre company, attempt to make within the field of Canadian theatre. He is clear that, unlike Parameswaran, he sees neither of these as participating in "Protest Theatre." Neilesh Bose, professor of history at the University of North Texas, researches literary cultures in the South Asian diaspora with a particular focus on theatre and presents yet another perspective on South Asian-Canadian theatre. His 2009 anthology, *Beyond Bollywood and Broadway: Plays From The South Asian Diaspora*, collects plays from English-speaking nodes of the South Asian diaspora — Canada, the United States, the United Kingdom and South Africa — and attempts to read them comparatively. Unlike Parameswaran who reads South Asian-Canadian theatre primarily within the context of specifically Indian theatre traditions, Bose attempts to read the drama of the South Asian diaspora within the context of performance traditions local to the node of the diaspora in which the texts and performances are created.

Solaylee provides an interesting context for Dharwadker's argument, that she develops building on Parameswaran, that South Asian-Canadian theatre is *original* theatre as a result of the age and stage of Canada's South Asian immigrant community. Al-Solaylee observes that *original* South Asian-Canadian theatre is unlikely to attract a South Asian-Canadian audience:"if you're thinking that a South Asian production largely attracts a South Asian audience, you'd be wrong. While the ratio of audience members who may identify as Indian, Pakistani or Sri Lankan is larger in productions from the subcontinent, the majority of festival goers are the same old white crowd" (5).

[36] Varma is a regular contributor to *Canadian Theatre Review* and has also published in *South Asian Popular Culture*. He has presented papers at the 2009 Canadian Association of Theatre Research conference in Ottawa *Capital Connections: Nation, Terroir/Territoir*; the 2008 conference as the University of Exeter, *British Asian Theatre: From Past to Present*; and in 2004 he delivered the University of Regina Fine Arts Riddell Lecture at the conference, *Beyond the 4th Wall: Aesthetic Distance and Community in the 21st Century*.

The authority of cultural "insidership" that is imposed on the person of Parameswaran

creates interesting (and misleading) observations in the analysis of South Asian-Canadian

literature. As Aparna Dharwadker observes in "Diaspora and the Theatre of the Nation," the

assumed authority of cultural "insidership" does not prevent Parameswaran from misstating the

political nature of South Asian, specifically Indian, street theatre. Dharwadker argues, from her

study of Indian theatrical events, that Indian street theatre is not inherently political, either

historically or currently, and that the connection that Parameswaran makes between Indian street

theatre and South Asian-Canadian theatrical institutions is grounded in an error in fact[37]. Rahul

Varma, playwright and co-founder of Teesri Duniya, interprets his childhood memories of

exposure to and engagement by Indian street theatre, in his interviews with Parameswaran,

within the context of the politicized theatre work that he engages with as an adult in Canada and

Parameswaran's expectations of him. He incorporates a political motivation into his past

theatrical engagement as an observer of Indian street theatre to validate and position the political

engagement that takes place in the theatre work that he does now — creating an implied

continuum between his South Asian childhood and his South Asian-Canadian present that

validates the populist nature of the advocacy work of his theatre group by grounding it in an

"authentic" multicultural "otherness." Parameswaran assumes Rahul Varma speaks with the

authority of a cultural insider and that his narrative of his development of himself as a theatre

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[37] While Dharwadker's analysis is useful in pointing out that the authority of cultural insider-ship can lead to flawed conclusions in the study of South Asian-Canadian literature, she also inadvertently demonstrates that the tendency to read South Asian-Canadian cultural production a-historically occurs within not just Canadian studies of this literature but also transnational studies. Dharwadker observes that there are both colonial and post-colonial phases of South Asian diaspora (where by colonial she means specifically British colonization, rather than colonization by other European empires or the earlier colonization by the Mogul empire). However, when this observation is applied to her analysis of the South Asian-Canadian community and its theatrical production, the historic, social and cultural complexity of that community is radically reduced: South Asian-Canadians become "Indian expatriate communities" (305). This allows Dharwadker to read South Asian-Canadian theatre within the framework of the theatrical nationhood of the modern state of India, but only at the price of reading South Asian-Canadian theatre and South Asian-Canadian literature a-historically.

worker can be read as a statement of fact rather than as a personal interpretation. She then, from her multiply authorized position as "cultural insider," "academic" and "theatre worker," recites what may be Varma's personal truth as a Truth that shapes the analysis of South Asian-Canadian theatre as a whole. Within an academic framework — and a transnational academic framework, at that — Parameswaran, perhaps inadvertently, grants cultural authority to the notion that "authentic" South Asian-Canadian draws on, if not defines, an "authentic" South Asian essence.

Given my divergence from Parameswaran's approach to this body of writing, it is reasonable to question why I invoke her here. As I have said earlier, my intention is not to diminish or to dismiss Parameswaran's contribution to this field of study. Instead, I intend to use Parameswaran's writing as a signpost for how South Asian-Canadian theatre has been read against the narrative of progress that Filewod argues marks Canadian national theatre. As I will argue below, Parameswaran's critique of South Asian-Canadian theatre and its negotiation with Canadian national identity is framed within the context of its ability to integrate "authentic" South Asianness into "authentic" Canadianness — in other words, how it "fits" or "misfits" within the frame of Canadian national theatre. By examining these moments of "fit" and especially "misfit" we can extend the context of our analysis of South Asian-Canadian theatre beyond the frame of Canadian national theatre and into an engagement with what I am calling, borrowing on Kruger, Canadian theatrical nationhood providing us with another site to explore the ongoing processes of cultural negotiation that create South Asian-Canadian cultural identity.

What follows are two case studies of two radically different theatre companies, Vancouver Sath and Teesri Duniya Theatre. While these companies differ in terms of their organizational structure, political orientation, and performance strategy, they both provide an opportunity to examine the processes of negotiation with *Présence Canadiénne*. Each of these

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companies, from their different positions within the South Asian diaspora *and* the specifically

Canadian node of the diaspora, demonstrate within both their institutional structures and play

texts the mutually transformative nature of *Présence Canadiénne* in the negotiation of South

Asian-Canadian cultural identity and its theatrical representation.

1. Red Indians: Vancouver Sath, the Naxalite Movement and Workers' Theatre:

Vancouver Sath is a theatre collective that emerged in 1982 from an informal discussion

group of politically engaged writers in Vancouver's Sikh/Punjabi community seeking to confront

not just social issues but also a perceived stagnation within the literary and cultural aspects of the

local community. From its beginnings, Vancouver Sath attempted to redirect the community's

attention to the ongoing realities of life "here" — the processes of negotiating South Asian-

Canadian cultural identity — at a time when the political instability of life "there" was becoming

an almost overwhelming distraction. In his overview of the development of Vancouver Sath in

Canadian Theatre Review, Sadhu Binning records that, at the time of the development of the

theatre collective, "[t]he main focus of our community [. . .] was Punjab because the situation

there was beginning to slip towards the problem that later evolved into the Khalistan movement"

("Vancouver" 14).[38] The attention to "there," the collective felt, "was such that people did not

pay the much needed attention to the problems facing us as an immigrant community in a

different geographical, economical and social environment" (14). The concern of the collective

was that, in failing to address the process of negotiating lived cultural identity *here*, the

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[38]The Khalistan movement is a secessionist movement within the modern state of India that has as its goal the
establishment of an independent Punjabi speaking, Sikh homeland. The Khalistan movement and its supporters
have been directly implicated in the 1984 assassination of Indian Prime Minister Indira Singh and are suspected of
involvement in the 1985 bombing of Air India Flight 182.

community risked "in actuality becom[ing] the very lees (sic) of *this* society, which was perhaps the hidden desire of the ruling class *here*" (14; emphasis added). Not only do the organizers of Vancouver Sath see the processes of negotiating a South Asian-Canadian identity as essential to the community's survival "here" but they also place special value on active engagement with that process. To be passive is to become less than marginal. It is to become the waste product of the social organization of this place.

The discourse that Binning employs as he narrates Vancouver Sath's transition from an informal concept into a formal theatre organization suggests that Vancouver Sath is not simply engaged in producing, as Parameswaran names it, "ethnic protest plays" ("Introduction" xxii); but rather it is recognizably engaged in producing Workers' Theatre rooted in socialist philosophy and ideology. Like the theatrical works created by the Canadian Workers Theatre Movement, Vancouver Sath does not just produce politically engaged theatre but is "engaged in a collective effort to change the actual organization of society — from capitalism to socialism" (Endres xiv). Unlike the Canadian Workers' Theatre Movement, the socialist underpinnings of Vancouver Sath tie the collective not to the Bolshevik movement in Soviet Russia, but rather to Maoist insurgents in the modern state of India. Vancouver Sath's engagement with "immigrant" issues is explicitly positioned in terms of class struggle and "economic exploitation of [the] immigrant" ("Vancouver"14). The formal organizational structure of the collective underscores the company's commitment to socialist ideals. The collective "eschew[s] all things hierarchical" in terms of both its membership, textual production and performance strategies:

> We [. . .] decided against any formal membership for this organization. The idea was that whoever agreed with the goals and was willing to work towards them could join. Every member was entitled to equal credit for the work done.

Whenever somebody, for whatever reason, wanted to stop working he or she

could simply get up and go. (14)

It would not be a conventional structure where some people carried chairs

and others sat on them. The person sitting on the chair would also carry it. (15).

Parameswaran observes "[Vancouver Sath] is a collective. All the plays are collectively

workshopped (sic) and some are collectively written" ("Introduction" viii). However,

Parameswaran's analysis of the company is not focussed on the actions of the collective but

rather on the actions of an individual: "Vancouver Sath's main playwright, Sadhu Binning"

("Introduction" viii).

Why does Parameswaran recognize the structural specificity of Vancouver Sath only to

ignore its emphasis on collective action and valorize (and scourge) the actions of an individual?

Why does Parameswaran re-label what is overtly and explicitly "Workers' Theatre" under the

broader rubric of "Theatre of Protest"? Why name the Vancouver Sikh community as "East

Indians" and propose reading "the plays [produced at that geographic and cultural location] like

English morality plays and Ram Lila plays of the Hindu tradition" ("Introduction" vii)? The

answers to these questions, I argue, are to be found in understanding the two national imaginaries

that Parameswaran engages in her writing: the Canadian and the Indian. In terms of

Parameswaran's project of establishing "SACLIT" as a field of academic study not only within

the context of Canadian national literature but also within the context of Indian diasporic

literature, this discursive manoeuvring is not just understandable, but essential. In writing for an

audience rooted in a Canadian national imaginary, shifting attention from the collective to the

individual allows Parameswaran to allocate blame for the "flaws" in Vancouver Sath to an

individual South Asian-Canadian, Sadhu Binning, rather than to a collective South Asian-

Canadianness. Although Parameswaran admires Binning's "courage" and the "fire" in his writing ("Introduction" vii), she disparages his "lack of dramatic sophistication" ("Introduction" xxii) and argues that "as of now, [he] is not an accomplished playwright" ("Introduction" xxiii) — an unusual observation to make about the "main playwright" of what she sees "is the most successful theatre group in western Canada" ("Introduction" viii). In my reading of Parameswaran, Binning is positioned as responsible for imbricating Vancouver Sath with Workers' Theatre — a mode of theatre that, from the perspective of Canadian national theatre's narrative of progress, appears not just anachronistic but backward.[39] If Vancouver Sath embraces what from the perspective of Canadian national theatre appears to be an "outdated" theatrical form, Parameswaran locates this "defect" in the eccentricities of an individual rather than allowing South Asian-Canadian cultural production as a whole to be stereotyped as "primitive" or "backward." Binning is responsible for doing "damage to the 'image' of the community" by "airing family (ethnic) problems outside the family" ("Introduction" xxii). Although Binning "has something very significant to say" ("Introduction" xxiii), he allows himself to be distracted, in Parameswaran's opinion, from his focus on the "real" problems facing South Asian-Canadians — systematic racism.   If Vancouver Sath argues that oppression *within* the South Asian-Canadian community is as significant as oppression *upon* the community, again that can be explained as the result of the "immature" writing of a playwright who is still developing rather than signalling that the community encompasses a diversity of individuals in a diversity of class and power positions.

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[39]If we accept the history of Canadian national theatre as a succession of "movements," then even the participants in what is generally named and understood as the Canadian Worker's Theatre Movement see the movement as occurring within a finite time frame: 1919-1943. However, I argue the identification of this moment as the only moment of Workers' Theatre in Canada assumes that only one form (and genealogy) of socialist philosophy is capable of producing a Workers' Theatre, that is a theatre that explicitly addresses issues of class struggle.

In terms of the Indian national imaginary and the place of Vancouver Sath within the frame of diasporic Indian literature, Parameswaran must mask specificity within generality to create continuity between "here" and what has come to be understood as "there" — the modern state of India. If Vancouver Sath is enmeshed with a community that is an ethnic minority within India — and a repressed, possibly secessionist minority at that — then it makes sense to elide the specificity of Punjabi Sikh-Canadian cultural identity within the more general label of "East Indians" and avoid challenging the myth of the Hindu-Brahminical underpinnings of Indian national identity. If the philosophy and ideology that Vancouver Sath is grounded in is a philosophy and ideology that has also formed the foundation of a militant movement that, within present-day India, has been deemed "the most dangerous threat to India's territorial integrity, prosperity and wellbeing" (Ahuja and Ganguly 249), then it makes sense to elide the specificity of the "Naxalite movement"[40] within the broader and temporally distant rubric of the "Marxist movement in India in the earlier decades of [the twentieth] century" (Parameswaran, "Introduction" v). These discursive manoeuvres are vital if Parameswaran is to be able to realistically position the community from which Vancouver Sath emerges as an Indian diasporic community that not only sees the modern state of India as "home" but also longs for return there. They are also needed convince an Indian readership of Vancouver Sath's claim to Indian diasporic identity.

Despite her rejection of the disruptive potential of Vancouver Sath to both the structures of Canadian national theatre and assumptions of an "authentic" South Asian cultural vector, Vancouver Sath haunts Parameswaran's analysis of "SACLIT" drama: "Am I betraying my

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[40]Below I give a fuller description of the Naxalite movement, a socialist movement specific to India that is grounded in Maoist thought, and its relationship to the Bolshevik movement more closely associated with what is conventionally labelled as the Canadian Workers' Theatre Movement.

ethnic community in foregrounding Binning instead of focusing exclusively on [. . .] plays [in which] the we-they demarcations are clearly drawn along minorities-establishment lines?" ("Introduction" xxiii). I agree that Vancouver Sath as a collective, rather than Binning as an individual, has something interesting to tell us; however, the approximations and elisions that Parameswaran must make for her project are not as useful in mine: mapping negotiations of South Asian-Canadian cultural identity reflected in literature, in this case, in the context of Canadian theatrical nationhood. For my project it is necessary to examine specific contexts for the mutually transformative operation of *Présence Canadiénne* and *Présence Asiénne*, in particular to engage with the "Marxist movement in India" that shapes Vancouver Sath's socialist philosophical foundation.

Sadhu Binning in his commentary on the community of writers with whom he works observes that "[p]ost-partition [of British India into India and Pakistan], Punjabi-Canadian literature was under the strong influence of progressive or Marxist politics" ("Punjabi-Canadian" 283). The writers of his generation trace the source of these politics to "expos[ure] to the Naxalite movement in the Punjab"(281). The Naxalite movement represents a mode of socialist thought that is specific to the modern state of India. Emerging in 1967, the Naxalite movement represents a fundamental divide in Indian communism between the communist philosophies of Soviet Russia and communist China. Affiliating itself with Chinese communism, the Naxalite movement reinterprets the teachings of Mao within the context of the semi-feudal, agrarian society of the Bengal peasants. Advocating a policy of "annihilation of class enemies," the Naxalite movement, primarily through the writings of its intellectual leader, Charu Mazumdar, engaged in not just a "rhetoric [that] displayed a tendency towards the bloodthirsty" (Seth 594) but also, as Sanjay Seth points out, a rhetoric that placed "emphasis on the symbolic and

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existential dimensions of violence" (593). Annihilation, for the Naxalite movement, "[did] not only mean liquidating an individual, but also liquidating the political, economic and social authority of the class enemy" (Mazumdar qtd. in Seth 596). As Seth argues, the celebration of "excess" of both literal and symbolic violence by Mazumdar, is, in part, due to the practical realities of socialist action in a semi-feudal rather than bourgeois economic system. Class, in a semi-feudal economy, is not determined by the individual's position in relation to the means of production; instead,

> in the semi-feudal world of the Indian peasantry, the insignia of domination and subordination were everywhere inscribed — in the naked use of force, in dress, in language and body language, as well, of course, as in economic exploitation. There existed an elaborate semiotics of power, and because domination was exercised in and through many sites, rebellion against it could never be simply a matter of 'expropriating the expropriator.' (595)

Rebellion, for the Naxalite movement, requires a literal *and* a symbolic "annihilation" of the "class enemy" by "defying and overturning the hierarchical codes of language and dress" and by "eliminat[ing] [the class enemy as] one of the nodal points at which the many manifestations of feudal power intersected, and through which they were exercised" (596). This strategy locates class *identity*, rather than racial/ethnic identity or bourgeois class position, as the primary factor in determining who is the oppressor and who is the oppressed. Naxalite philosophy, despite its overt embrace of extreme violence, opens up a space for the oppressed, the peasant, to become an active participant in the creation of identity by turning the system of power that oppresses him/her upside-down and by giving him/her the agency to establish the distance between classes for him-/herself rather than having it imposed on him/her.

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Inherent in Naxalite philosophy is a rejection of modernity's narrative of progress. This rejection of modernity is embedded in the processes that creolized the already creolized Marxist thought of Maoist communism to serve the specific needs of the new Indian location where it would be employed. Seth argues that before the Naxalite movement, the Marxist tradition in the Imperial colonies "championed both modernization and revolution" by attempting to identify and align itself with elements within the colony that were seen to be "historically progressive" under the assumption that such movements would also be politically progressive (600). However, the assumed coincidence of "historically progressive" and politically radical was not a position embraced by the Naxalites as the "historically progressive" frequently resulted in greater oppression for the peasants they sought to liberate: "such distinctions — between modernizers and traditionalists, ardent nationalists and halfhearted ones — were politically irrelevant, for both were part and parcel of the same history and politics" (600). For the Naxalite movement, then, this refusal had the effect of "de-linking what was politically revolutionary from the question of what was more modern" (601) resulting in actions that would appear to defy conventional Marxist philosophy: namely rejecting the value of trade unions, peasant organizations and student unions in bringing about the liberation of the people from oppression by the ruling class.

Refusing to privilege the industrial worker over the agrarian peasant, the "modern" urban over the "pre-modern" rural, Naxalites organized in small groups that immersed themselves in local populations. Immersing themselves in the traditions and structures of local communities was as much a philosophical position as an organizational strategy. As Seth observes, the Naxalite philosophy embraced the Maoist tenet of learning from the peasant masses, resulting in an organizational structure that was "more likely to encounter and accommodate localized forms of peasant action" (598) than traditional Marxist movements. Making space "for this idiom of

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peasant politics not only in its practice, but also in its theory" (598) made the Naxalite movement infinitely adaptable and transportable. Placing emphasis on the specific needs and conditions of the local made Naxalite philosophy able to function in the Bengal, in the Punjab and with the multitude of traditions that it encountered (and continues to encounter) in the tribal regions of the northern Indian state.

When we read Vancouver Sath within the context of the Naxalite movement, differences between the political strategies of the two are obvious. Vancouver Sath does not advocate guerrilla struggle and the very literal annihilation of class enemies. Vancouver Sath does advocate trade unionism as a viable means of class struggle. How do we read these breaks with what are central tenets of the Naxalite movement? Binning observes that after "the horrendous events of 1984" ("Punjabi-Canadian" 283), that is, the assassination of Indira Gandhi and the violent repression of India's Sikh community that followed, Punjabi-Canadian writers were less open to the radical politics of the Naxalites. However, to equate the rejection of the literal violence of the Indian Naxalite movement with an equal rejection of the political philosophy of the Naxalites would be, I argue, to overlook the negotiation between *Présence Asiénne* and *Présence Canadiénne* that transforms Naxalite theory to work in the "different geographical, economical and social environment" within which the Punjabi-Canadian community exists "here" (Binning, "Vancouver" 14). As with the differences between Vancouver Sath and the Naxalite movement, the differences between "here" and "there" are obvious. While the Punjabi-Canadian community is an ethnic minority in both locations, "here" it encounters a bourgeois economic organization with an established tradition of trade unionism. "Here" it encounters a "New World" society that, as part of its national imaginary, believes that it is organized without

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the presence of an "Old World" class structure.[41] These differences create a specific and local

socio-economic environment that Naxalite philosophy is peculiarly suited to adapt to.

Working not in terms of the national and the general but in terms of the local and the

specific, Vancouver Sath's plays address equally the oppression of the rural agricultural worker

(*A Crop of Poison*, *Picket Line*) and the urban industrial/service worker (*Lesson of a Different*

Kind). Like the Naxalite movement, Vancouver Sath refuses to privilege the urban worker over

the agrarian "peasant;" however, the local social environment of Vancouver Sath requires that its

plays also work to convince not just the first generation of immigrants but also "the younger

generation growing up here" (Binning, "Vancouver" 14) that class struggle continues to be

relevant to life in this place. In part, Vancouver Sath addresses this problem by equating

different forms of oppression: class oppression, gender oppression, and racial oppression.   All

forms of oppression are equal from the perspective of the people whom Vancouver Sath seeks to

empower, and all oppressors are equally "class enemies." Oppression in the plays of Vancouver

Sath is not just a function of position in relation to the means of production but is a result of

imbalances of power that create the opportunity for economic exploitation. Much like the

Naxalite philosophy that grounds its socialist orientation, Vancouver Sath, in both its

organization and theatrical output, rejects the demand to place issues of ethnic solidarity ahead of

issues of class solidarity. Instead, Vancouver Sath's theatrical output points to the class

oppression that occurs within the Punjabi-Canadian community as well as to class based

oppression that the community as a whole may encounter. As the elderly mother in *Different Age*

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[41] Anton Allahar and James Côté in their 1998 study, *Richer and Poorer: The Structure of Inequality in Canada*, argue that the myth of a classless Canadian society is part of the myth of Canadian national identity. Allahar and Coté argue that the influence of the myth of Canadian "niceness" "predisposes us to view our society in rosy terms, as being devoid of major divisions and disparities, as being generally classless. This feeds the liberal ideology that embraces the idea of equality and eschews attempts to characterize ours as a class-divided society."(23-4)

Same Cage laments her son's mistreatment of her, that lament is couched in terms that point to the economics of an imbalance of power: "You need a babysitter, use your mother; you need extra money, send your mother to work in the farms; you get behind in your payments, send her to live in the cabins" (Vancouver Sath qtd. in Parameswaran, "Introduction" vii). Gender oppression (*No Small Matter*) and generational oppression (*Different Age Same Cage*), read through the optic of economic exploitation, are as abhorrent to Vancouver Sath as are more conventionally recognized forms of class exploitation.

Unlike the Naxalite movement, the local and specific capitalist, bourgeois, Canadian environment within which Vancouver Sath operates demands a different response to class struggle than promoting violent guerrilla mobilization of the oppressed. In the *Canadian* economic reality, Vancouver Sath must, as it does in *Picket Line* and *Lesson of a Different Kind,* engage with the working class politics specific to "here" that are not present "there." Not just embracing but fostering trade unionism, Vancouver Sath paradoxically remains true to Naxalite philosophy by using local traditions to call the oppressed not just to awareness but to action in class struggle. Vancouver Sath uses "symbolic and existential" rather than literal violence to call the people to "annihilate" class enemies, employing the "certain cultural presumption built into [trade unions] functioning" that operates "here" rather than "there": that is "a certain level of bourgeois culture" (Seth 597).

However, while the specifics of "here" may require Vancouver Sath to adopt an alliance with the trade union movement, "class enemies" are still defined in terms that reach beyond their position in relation to the means of production. The character of "The Boss" in *Lesson of a Different Kind* performs in the "New World" the "Old World" "insignia of domination and subordination [. . .] in the naked use of force, in dress, in language and body language, as well,

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of course, as in economic exploitation." His power over his workers is encoded in his "three piece suit," "very flashy tie," and his "beeper" (1.II 86) but his ability to dominate his workers derives not just from his position in relationship to the means of production but also from his ability to manipulate and control his workers through a kinship system he is embedded within. As the "Old Male Worker" describes, "The Boss" is:

> a fine young man [. . .] He always calls me uncle [. . .] if he is ever mad at me or something he won't tell me straight, but he will go to my wife on the second floor and if she does something wrong he comes and tells me about it just like a family member you know. (1.II.67-71)

Rather than advocating "family" solidarity, Vancouver Sath exposes that "family" (or to borrow from Parameswaran) "ethnic" solidarity is a facade that "class enemies" within the community will use to further their oppression of the working class.

Conserving the definition of "class enemies" while adapting the response to these enemies to suit the local and specific conditions of the Canadian environment suggests that a process of negotiation between *Présence Asiénne* and *Présence Canadiénne* has shaped the philosophy behind the work of Vancouver Sath. However, while the socialist movement in which they are grounded has been (further) creolized by their attempts to speak to "the different geographical, economical and social environment" encountered within the Canadian space, Vancouver Sath holds true to the Naxalite principle that the oppressed class must become actively engaged with defining its own identity rather than being a passive recipient of an imposed identity. Vancouver Sath performs processes of negotiation that form South Asian-Canadian identity and centres those processes on the issue of class struggle to draw its audience's attention to its own participation in the negotiation of identity and class struggle.

Lesson of a Different Kind is one of the few Vancouver Sath plays written originally in English and their only published play. The vast majority of the plays of Vancouver Sath are written in Punjabi and only translated into English if and when required, demonstrating Vancouver Sath's commitment to working for and within local and specific communities. However, where most of their plays address issues that emerge from within the Punjabi-Canadian community, that *Lesson of a Different Kind* is not only written in English but given a textual form in addition to its performance suggests that this play attempts to speak to a larger audience than just the Punjabi speaking community of British Columbia. As I will argue below, their audience for this play is the "younger generation growing up here" (Binning, "Vancouver" 14): a generation of South Asian-Canadians rather than Punjabi immigrants who may use English as its primary language and who may believe that, in Canada, it exists within a classless society.

The plot of *Lesson of a Different Kind* is straightforward. In the opening scene, the audience encounters Resham Gill, a college student, delivering a project report to his class. While the exact nature of the project is not divulged, Resham announces that in order to complete this assignment he has sought out the help of "[his] cousin, the janitorial contractor" (I.9) and expresses his concerns that by simply *observing* "[his] actions as a researcher [have] caused some *real* problems" (I.6-7; emphasis added). In Scene II, the audience returns with Resham to the source of his problem: his research with his cousin. We encounter his cousin — "The Boss" — who, as I discussed earlier, is caricatured as a Naxalite "class enemy," and we encounter the working class oppressed who, as the scene unfolds, are not just economically but sexually exploited by "The Boss." By the end of Scene II and Resham's research trip to the custodial service, "The Boss" has rooted out an attempt to unionize his workforce, fired "Young Female Worker –2," the union organizer, and dismissed Resham's contempt for his treatment of

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his workers: "Look you don't know how things work here, you got your information. Now go and write your report — don't tell me how to do my job" (II.346-8). In Scene III we return with Reshan to the college classroom as he completes his report. While he is praised by his instructor and his fellow students for his "very interesting analysis" (III.2-3) that "shows clearly how we treat lower class people" (III.6), he is also admonished for allowing the academic "fourth wall" to slip — for becoming an actor in the scene unfolding before him rather than a passive observer:

> Resham: But sir I am puzzled. My question is, what should we do now?
>   Should we simply forget the whole incident or should we somehow
>   try to help?
>
> Teacher: I appreciate how you feel. But I must say that you have broken the
>   very first rule of academic research and that is never to get close to
>   your subject — always keep your distance, otherwise you lose
>   your objectivity and cannot see things clearly.
>
> Resham: But sir we are not talking about subject or object, these are real
>   people and real situations, do we have no responsibility toward
>   what we find out?
>
> Teacher: Mr. Gill, you are allowing your emotions to guide your senses.
>
> (III.7-17)

Following the instructor's exit from the stage, Resham attempts to recruit his fellow students to attend a meeting to protest "Young Female Worker – 2's" dismissal but encounters apathy: his colleagues have skiing trips and concerts, bourgeois leisure activities, to attend, activities that take precedence over working for the oppressed whom they study. Resham, alone on the stage at

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the end of the scene, "walks out as if going on to some great mission" (III 97), disgusted by the

inaction of his classmates and the inadequacy of words separated from actions.

Within the confines of this "blunt and minimal" (Parameswaran, "Introduction" x) plot,

Vancouver Sath presents a very nuanced examination of the complex processes of negotiation

within South Asian-Canadian identity. Resham, the only named character in the cast, is

positioned as a member of "the next generation growing up here." Before his "project" he is

unaware that he exists in a society inscribed by class structures. He does not see that he is part

of the "we" that exploits the lower class. However, his classmates readily place him as a member

of the exploiting rather than exploited class. "Student–3" responds to Resham's presentation

with the congratulation that Resham's report "shows clearly how *we* treat lower class people" (III

6; emphasis added). Given the ease with which "Student–3" includes Resham within this "we,"

"we" is not to be understood as racially restricted but is instead a mark of class status. This elite

class has the power and privilege to deny the operation of class, in part by exoticizing social sites

where class status is most apparent. "Lower class people" are depicted as not just economically

"othered" but also ethnically "othered," and Resham, from his position within the elite is invited

to join in this exoticization of marked class structure. It is Resham, not his instructor or his

colleagues, who "wants to write a report about Punjabi workers" (II.9-10), their working

conditions, and their class oppression. Subjecting the "Punjabi workers" to the analytical gaze,

Resham demonstrates that the "next generation," in negotiating South Asian-Canadian identity, is

called to place class loyalty ahead of ethnic loyalty in this supposedly classless society. In

Lesson of a Different Kind, the "next generation" is indoctrinated into this double-vision of

Canadian class structure (class that is but is not) through the ideological state apparatus of the

education system. The "next generation" is literally schooled in the separation between "teacher" and labour organizer, between observer and actor.

However, it is only through his encounter with the "Punjabi workers" that Resham is brought to a realization of the brutal realities of class oppression here. The inadvertent result of his class report is that Resham is made to feel the realities of class oppression and his role within the transparent Canadian class structure. While he is told he is "wasting [his] life in school," the workers underscore the place of his education in saving him from having to "ask [his] cousin to give [him] a job" as a janitor (II.14). The "Old Female Worker" who sees herself as "a dumb old uneducated woman" (II.28) and "Young Female Worker – 1" who is "not educated [and] can't even speak the damn language" (II.54) call Resham's (and the audience's) attention to the role of education in establishing and maintaining class structure. Both Resham and the audience are called to see that his luxury of pursuing knowledge rather than bare economic survival, the mark of his class privilege, has always been a facet of Resham's negotiation of his identity as a South Asian-Canadian. Resham is, as he discovers, a "class enemy," not because he has chosen to become like his cousin "The Boss" and actively engage in oppression of the working class, but because he has been a passive subject and beneficiary of the class system, much like his college classmates.   He has accepted that the class system is something other to the operation of his life and is something that can be studied, observed, and analyzed rather than engaged as his own lived reality. He has exoticized and distanced himself from the class system that continues to operate in this place.

The *Lesson of a Different Kind* that Vancouver Sath's didactic play teaches — not just to Resham but to all members of the next generation brought up here — is that they can redeem themselves and this society.   By actively renegotiating a South Asian-Canadian cultural identity

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grounded in conscious recognition of class oppression, the members of the "next generation" can

begin to reorganize their society into one in which the working class has equal access to power.

From "Young Female Worker – 2," Resham learns that it is not the destiny of the working classes

to be oppressed. Instead, through collective action, the working classes can disprove the "truth"

of their destiny and free themselves from economic exploitation. "Young Female Worker – 2"

has herself learned these lessons on "a mushroom farm" where she had been employed before

working for "The Boss" (II.304-5). Her teachers at the farm had been Canadians, "a farm

workers' union" that the "Punjabi women workers" had contacted (II.306). Her encounter with

the trade union movement has provoked "Young Female Worker – 2" to renegotiate her South

Asian-Canadian cultural identity to incorporate a conviction of her own agency within a class

structured society:

> Young Female Worker – 2:   The whole idea that you can stand up and
>
> fight for your rights. You know we were
>
> treated as heroes by the trade union people,
>
> lots of people came to our help. We found
>
> out we weren't alone, that we are part of a
>
> whole class. Even the university professors
>
> and students would come and walk on the
>
> picket line with us. And they used to tell
>
> us how this system of exploitation works.
>
> (II.315-320)

Resham, the good student, learns his *Lesson* well as his final speech demonstrates: "things just don't change by themselves — somebody has to take the initiative" (III.37). Through class awareness and class solidarity, class oppression can be ended *here*.

Does Vancouver Sath practice a form of Workers' Theatre? Yes. An examination of the subject matter of its plays and the structure of its organization makes its identification as Workers' Theatre undeniable. Like the mobile agitprop theatre practised by Canada's Workers' Experimental Theatre, Vancouver Sath's work "strip[s] the theatre of its stage machinery in order to communicate more immediately with the audience" (Enrdes xvii); takes "the theatre out of the concert hall and away from its traditional role as entertainment [to use live performance] in short, for the construction of socialism" (Endres XX); and presents "characters [that] are abstract representatives of a given class. Usually [. . .] only two classes — ruling and working" (Endres xviii). However, as Filewod points out, the Canadian Workers' Theatre *Movement* "was an organizational strategy that confirmed the vanguard leadership of the Communist Party and which thereby dictated terms of acceptance" ("Naming" 228). As Robin Endres observes in the introduction to *Eight Men Speak and Other Plays from the Canadian Workers' Theatre,* the mode of theatre and theatrical organization that has been periodized as Canadian Workers' Theatre represents a specifically Canadian interpretation of a mode of theatre that has its foundations in the Soviet Russian Bolshevik revolution and the writings of Lenin. As I have argued, Vancouver Sath represents a specifically Canadian interpretation of the Maoist inflected Naxalite movement within a theatrical context. Can there be workers' theatre in Canada that exists apart from the Canadian Workers' Theatre *Movement*? Must workers' theatre in Canada be periodized solely in terms of its relationship to the Soviet Workers' Theatre Movement? Can the study of workers' theatre in Canada be expanded to incorporate the transnational history of socialism, particularly

its interpretation in the postcolonial world? As economic forces and funding sources turn their attention to the workings of transnational capital, does grassroots class struggle necessarily become an irrelevant topic for theatrical exploration? As the work of Vancouver Sath forces us to ask: does class struggle become invisible because of the ways in which class hierarchy and racial hierarchy have become imbricated in the Canadian space? Is class struggle now the "immigrant's" problem?

The perhaps less obvious result of reading Vancouver Sath against the mythic history of Canadian national theatre is to call attention to the tension created within that history by the incorporation of what is conventionally identified as the Canadian Workers' Theatre. Canadian Workers' Theatre, Endres suggests, was never envisioned by its practitioners as an indigenous Canadian cultural product but rather a creolization of an international phenomenon to serve the specific needs of this place. In her analysis of the history of what is conventionally thought of as the Canadian Workers' Theatre, Robin Endres identifies *Eight Men Speak* as the production in which "the international forms of agitprop were used in a specifically Canadian way" (xxvi). The specifically Canadian vector, what I have been calling *Présence Canadiénne*, identified by Endres incorporates the political, social, and historical realities of this place that led to the 1931 arrest and detention of eight leaders of the Canadian Communist Party. While the negotiation with *Présence Canadiénne* produced a particularly Canadian articulation and cultural product, the Canadian Workers' Theatre Movement continued to see itself as a local and specific node within an international framework of socialist motivated theatre: "True to the aims of *agitprop*, *Eight Men Speak* was a response to a political situation, and in turn influenced political events" (Endres xxviii; emphasis added). If Canadian Workers' Theatre exists as a specifically Canadian node within an *international* (and I would argue *transnational*) network of theatre production, is

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it legitimate to read it as a past moment within Canadian *national* theatre's narrative of progress

and the evolution of an essentially Canadian theatre? Canadian Workers' Theatre, rather than

pointing to an essentially Canadian theatre culture, instead points to a Canadian theatre culture

that works in and within an always already transnational framework. Seen in this light, the

Canadian Workers' Theatre Movement calls attention to the tension within Canadian theatrical

nationhood by pointing to the fictiveness of the mutually affirming narratives of the Canadian

nation and Canadian national theatre.

Is Vancouver Sath "ethnic protest theatre"? Certainly issues of ethnic and racial

oppression are imbricated with their struggle against the class system in Canada, but to read

Vancouver Sath as just "ethnic protest theatre" requires such an oversimplification of the term

that, on the one hand, the term is generalized into meaninglessness and, on the other hand, the

central project of Vancouver Sath is negated. As I will argue below, the same caution applies to

Teesri Duniya. It too is "ethnic protest theatre," but, in the context of Canadian theatrical

nationhood, it stretches the boundaries of the rubric and points to the complex negotiations that

produce South Asian-Canadian cultural identities and the multiple ways these negotiations can be

represented in literature.

*2. Money and the Ethnic Vote: Teesri Duniya Theatre, Rahul Varma, and Populist Theatre in
Canada.*

Teesri Duniya Theatre was founded in Montreal in 1981 by Rahul Varma and Rana Bose.

Although "an ideological split" (Parameswaran, "Introduction" xiii) in 1985 resulted in Bose

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leaving the company to form Montreal Serai,[42] Rahul Varma remains a dominant personality

within the company as its artistic director, chief playwright, and member of its board of directors.

Teesri Duniya, literally "Third World" in Hindi, closely resembles the model of "legitimate"

Canadian theatre, that is theatre that is recognized as "art" rather than "entertainment." Teesri

Duniya Theatre has been and continues to be funded, reviewed, and studied as theatrical art. It is

possible that this is why Teesri Duniya continues, in 2009, to stage at least one major production

each season and why it has been so successful in attracting funding from multiple levels of the

state. At present, Teesri Duniya Theatre receives funding from The Canada Arts Council, The

Québec Arts Council, and The Montreal Arts Council. Teesri Duniya Theatre also receives

funding from The Ministry of Canadian Heritage and from The Québec Ministry of Employment

for reasons that are socially rather than aesthetically motivated. The mission of The Ministry of

Canadian Heritage is to "promote Canadian content, foster cultural participation, active

citizenship and participation in Canada's civic life, and strengthen connections among

Canadians" ("Heritage") rather than to determine aesthetic standards. The Québec Ministry of

Employment seeks to encourage development of employment opportunities within the Québec

economy, not to validate a theatre company's claim to the status of art. This combination of

financial support, both from arbiters of aesthetic merit and from arbiters of social benefit, suggest

that while Teesri Duniya can be read as "legitimate" theatre, it stretches the understanding of

theatrical "legitimacy" as it operates in the Canadian context. "Legitimate" Canadian theatre, the

example of Teesri Duniya suggests, may be perceived as having an overtly social function within

the national imaginary without being required to surrender its claim to the status of art. Teesri

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[42]While I agree with Parameswaran that the split between the co-founders was ideological, I would argue that it was
not a difference in social politics that led Bose to form a separate company but rather artistic politics. Bose's vision
of theatre incorporates many more elements of experimental and *avant garde* theatre than does Varma's.

Duniya's identification as "legitimate" theatre within the frame of Canadian theatrical nationhood is further supported by the presence of theatre academics and theatre professionals within the organizational structure of the company. Edward Little, professor and chair of the theatre department at Concordia University, is both the associate artistic director of the company and the editor of the company's quarterly journal, *alt.theatre: cultural diversity and the stage*. The company's board of directors includes academics (Dipti Gupta, Dawson College; Thomas Waugh, Concordia University; Jazwant Guzder, McGill University), South Asian-Canadian professional elites (Rahgu Raghunatha, engineer at Bombardier), and arts professionals (James Douglas, Bougie Wougie Media). Teesri Duniya looks more like a "legitimate" contemporary Canadian theatrical institution than does Vancouver Sath, and would appear to be recognized as such.

In its early operations, Teesri Duniya Theatre focused on the production of Hindi language plays in Canada, in 1985 moving from performance of plays in Hindi to performance of plays translated into English, and, from 1985 to the present, to the production of scripts that are written in both English and French for a Canadian audience. Parameswaran argues that the growing theatrical focus of Teesri Duniya Theatre on the Canadian location as a site for negotiating South Asian-Canadian identity is a function both of the moment of immigration associated with its founders and of the "evolution" of immigrant life in *this* place. It reflects, she argues, "a creativity [that] is a luxury that one can afford, both at the individual and collective level, only in a late phase of immigrant life" ("Introduction" xii). In terms of the chronology of immigrant adaptation that Parameswaran envisions, Teesri Duniya Theatre corresponds to the fourth phase:

in the first phase there is a preoccupation with nostalgia for the original homeland

mixed with sense of wonder for the new environment; in the second, one is

preoccupied with climbing ladders, professional and social; in the third, one

focuses on the social and social-work aspects of one's heritage culture; in the

fourth phase, one (be it individual or community) looks outward towards the

larger community. ("Introduction" xii)

While I agree with Parameswaran that the social and political history of the moment in the South

Asian diaspora at its Canadian node are important to consider, it is also essential to consider the

intersection of that negotiation with Canadian theatrical nationhood. In other words: how are the

structures of Teesri Duniya as a theatrical institution, and its plays, affected by its engagement

with Canadian theatre?

The founding of Teesri Duniya coincides with the consolidation of a popular theatre

movement within Canadian theatre culture. As Filewod observes, in the last decades of the 20th

century "a popular movement of radical grassroots theatre work that countered the

professionalized institution of Canadian theatre" ("Naming" 228) emerged both as a continuation

of the Leninist inspired theatre work of the Worker's Theatre Movement *and* as a new counter-

cultural intervention in Canadian theatre culture. The popular theatre movement consolidates a

trans-national effort to apply the potential seen in Canada's alternative theatre to empower and

educate the oppressed on a global level. Much like the Canadian alternative theatre movement,

"a strategy of naming [theatrical institutions] that nationalized the aesthetics of counter-culture

performance in order to legitimize it in the structural terms imposed by [. . .] arts councils," the

Canadian popular theatre movement was named from within the movement as "a bid for

resources" (Filewod, "Naming" 228). What is generative about this strategy of naming

movements within Canadian theatre history is not so much the theatre they identify or inspire, but rather, as Filewod argues, their ability to "script structures that are capable of commanding funding; these structures in turn force new policy solutions from the various structures with which they exchange [in a cultural economy]" (228). For the popular theatre movement, the institutional structures they were scripting are suggested by original principles of the Canadian Popular Theatre Alliance developed in 1981, and the restatement of those principles in 1992 by Ground Zero Productions. In terms of Berger's notion of theatrical nationhood, the principles of CPTA and Ground Zero are pointedly populist in orientation and focused on creating a theatrical space for the plurality of cultural voices existing within the Canadian population. Taking amongst its core principles an "attempt to seek out, develop and serve audiences whose social reality is not normally reflected on the Canadian stage" (CPTA qtd. in Filewod " Naming" 233) and a choice "to work with communities whose voices have not been given equal access to resources in our society" (Ground Zero qtd. in Filewod, "Naming" 234), the Canadian popular theatre movement foregrounds its emphasis on structures of legitimizing rather than legitimate theatre — that is theatre that speaks for diversity rather than homogeneity.

By scripting structures of legitimizing theatre to force policy change in the funding structures of the state, the Canadian popular theatre movement, perhaps ironically, forces an institutional shift in what can be recognized as legitimate theatre institutions within Canadian national theatre. While the Canadian popular theatre movement transformed the definition of Canadian national theatre to make space for the diverse voices of the population, as Filewod observes, the movement was itself transformed through "the gradual penetration of the movement by the very sector its founders sought to exclude" (233). In "the grant-conditioned climate in which popular theatre work develop[s] in Canada," it is possible to observe that the

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relationship that develops between popular theatre institutions and granting agencies is "in fact a benign form of state sponsorship that last[s] so long as it serve[s] the interest (inarticulate, negotiated and ad hoc as they might be) of state and quasi-state policy" (238). As Filewod observes, at the point where the distance between legitimating and legitimate theatre collapses, "popular theatre work [becomes] part of the larger hegemonic workings of the liberal social contract" (238). To extrapolate from Filewod's analysis, I suggest that popular theatre institutions that survived the fragmentation of the movement were able not just to adapt to the economic realities of shifting funding priorities but were able to reinforce part of what Berger argues is the mutually validating narratives of the nation and national theatre.

Teesri Duniya Theatre continues to operate very much in the structural mode outlined by the principles of the Canadian Popular Theatre Alliance. Much like CPTA's original principles, Teesri Duniya's mission statement identifies it as theatre that sees itself as a means to enacting social change:

> Teesri Duniya Theatre is dedicated to producing socially and politically relevant theatre that supports a multicultural vision of society, promoting interculturalism through works of theatre, and creating theatrical styles based on the cultural experiences of visible minorities living in Canada. (Teesri).

This social change is produced not just by the performances that Teesri Duniya presents on the stage but also through activities like *Rights Here!:A Theatre and Law for Human Rights Project devoted to long-term Advocacy,* a project that Teesri Duniya sponsors in partnership with Concordia University's Specialization in Theatre and Development, the Park Extension Youth Organization (PEYO), and a Legal Advisory Committee consisting of members of the Equality Committee of the Québec Bar Association. *Rights Here!* is only one component of the

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company's "theatre and community collaboration program," a program that is itself only one of Tessri Duniya Theatre's "four distinct areas of activities":

- production (of original works and translations into and from English/French/other languages)

- play development through our program called Fireworks

- publication of a theatre quarterly called *alt.theatre: cultural diversity and the stage*

- theatre and community collaboration program: designed to develop creative skills among emerging visible minority artists and enhance intercultural interaction. (Teesri)

The "cultural experiences of visible minorities living in Canada" (Tessri Duniya) ground the productions and the mission of this theatre institution in an attempt to intervene in the Canadian theatre landscape and to bring attention to the cultural diversity and culturally diverse theatre that it argues are an integral part of the theatre of this place.

While the structure of Teesri Duniya closely follows the model of Canadian popular theatre, the specific organization of Teesri Duniya seems to have rendered it relatively impervious to accusations that it adopts a paternalistic (and tacitly racist) position with respect to the communities with whom it identifies. Teesri Duniya and its theatre workers are not "a small group of (mostly) white, professionally trained popular theatre workers" (Filewod, "Naming" 237) that seek out an underrepresented audience and community to serve. The company and its theatre workers instead emerge from within a community that can be read as oppressed not just on the national level but also on the local level. Developed by members of Montreal's South Asian-Canadian community, Teesri Duniya performs the process of South Asian-Canadian

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cultural negotiation in terms of not a national ethnic minority, but a minority that is further marginalized as an allophone (and anglophone) minority within francophone Québec society. Practising not "colour-blind casting" (Parameswaran, "Introduction" xiii), but rather "multiethnic" casting (Teesri), Teesri Duniya Theatre has expanded its original vision of the community it serves from that of a single ethnic minority to an entire multicultural society:

> Today, Teesri Duniya, which began as primarily a South Asian group, is an all-inclusive organization whose membership, artists and dramatis personae come from a wide range of ethnic and racial backgrounds, including the dominant cultures, thus sending a clear message that the real and ideal face of Canada and Québec is multiethnic, multiracial and multilingual. (Teesri Duniya)

While this difference between Teesri Duniya and the Canadian popular theatre movement is not insignificant, on its own it is not enough to explain why Teesri Duniya has experienced continued success in attracting state and other sponsorship while funding for the Canadian popular theatre movement has become increasingly limited.

What is unique about Teesri Duniya Theatre with respect to the popular theatre movement is its doubly minoritized position within Canada and Québec and within the narratives of federal unity and provincial independence. The Québec sovereignty referenda of 1980 and 1995 called the attention of Canadian federalists and Québec separatists to both the presence and the electoral power of the allophone minority in Québec, creating an opportunity for Teesri Duniya Theatre to benefit from its ability to perform *both* of the competing national narratives in the creation of *both* national theatres — that is the narratives of Québec as part of the Canadian nation *and* of Québec as an independent, sovereign nation. Ironically, as these are narratives competing to inculcate two separate nations in the same geographical space, in both, state

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sponsorship of Teesri Duniya performs the myth of "tolerance" of the ethnic and cultural other.

From the perspective of the Canadian national narrative, state sponsorship of Teesri Duniya

reminds the Québec allophone/anglophone minority of the benefits of remaining within a

federated and officially multicultural nation. Canadian "national" tolerance of difference

embedded within the structure of official multiculturalism reinforces the national narrative of a

centralized authority that ensures a stable government *a mari usque ad mare*. From the

perspective of the Québec national narrative, state sponsorship of Teesri Duniya allays for

Québec allophone/anglophone minorities fears they might have for their position within an

independent Québec. Ethnic minorities, instead of facing political instability, will find a secure

future in a sovereign Québec as "le Québec semblait définitivement avoir opté pour un modèle

pluraliste" (McAndrew 215) . The independent nation of Québec, the narrative suggests, will

entrench a pluralist society united in francophonie narrating "provincial interculturalism within a

monolingual framework" (Taylor 89). In the narrative of the Québec "proto-nation" (Taylor 89),

ethnic difference is accepted as part of the lived reality of the people of a multilingual society

operating under the unifying umbrella of the French language. In soliciting and accepting

sponsorship from the federal, provincial, and municipal layers of the state, Teesri Duniya Theatre

has, of necessity, had to negotiate with this aspect of *Présence Canadiénne*, the social and

political realities of this place that derive from its particular Québec location.

Performing simultaneously the narratives of Canadian national unity and Québec

sovereignty requires of Teesri Duniya Theatre very careful and deliberate negotiations with

Présence Canadiénne in its theatrical performance of South Asian-Canadian cultural identity.

Teesri Duniya Theatre's strategy in these negotiations hinges on the ambiguity it creates at the

site of "multiculturalism" through the particular interpretation of that idea the Theatre uses to

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ground both its institutional structure and play texts. "Multiculturalism," for Teesri Duniya Theatre, is both a celebration of ethnic and cultural difference *and* a negation of that difference under the unifying sign of "artistic excellence." Creating itself as "a theatre that focuses on minority issues, [and] builds solidarity among minorities" (Teesri) Teesri Duniya not so tacitly underscores the difference between "new," "minority" Canadians and the "two solitudes" of the national narrative that are scripted as the "majority" — the Anglo-Celtic settler/invader in English Canada and the "pure laine" Québécois in French Canada. Pursuing what the Canada Council describes as "an innovative, mosaic approach to Canadian theatre," the theatre of Teesri Duniya "is both influenced by the artists' cultural and national roots, and reflective and responsive to the cultural experiences of living in Canada" (Guly). Teesri Duniya is "proud to have produced works in English, French, Hindi, and Tamil" — the two "official" Canadian languages and two of the multitude of South Asian languages (Teesri).[43] Identifying itself with the "social conditions in which immigrant communities presently live" and the linguistic marks of South Asian "difference," Teesri Duniya scripts itself into the narrative of Canadian "official multiculturalism." As the ethnic and racial "other" to the "founding nations," Teesri Duniya narrates itself as both celebrating and translating ethnic cultural experience within the framework of the Canadian cultural mosaic. "Collaborating with like-minded companies across Canada" (Teesri), Teesri Duniya foregrounds its ability to transform a "South Asian" perspective into a "South Asian-Canadian" perspective and to perform that perspective in a way that is available to "majority" Canadians. Presenting plays that have "a distinctly Canadian voice" (Teesri), Teesri Duniya Theatre is a site at which the negotiation of South Asian-Canadian cultural identity is performed, and it creates the theatrical institution as a cultural informant who will translate that

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[43]Although not as heralded as are the works produced in Hindi and Tamil, works in Urdu, another of the South Asian languages have also been produced by Teesri Duniya Theatre.

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identity into one that is comprehensible (and acceptable) to the cultural majority. Teesri Duniya Theatre performs the multicultural "other," particularly the South Asian-Canadian "other," as separate, contained, and understandable — in other words, tolerable.

While the institutional structure of Teesri Duniya Theatre reinforces the national narrative of Canadian "tolerance" by performing South Asian-Canadian identity as a consumable "other," the original works created and performed by the company act out, in the fraught arena of Québec separation, the federalist message that allophones will find political safety and stability only within the Canadian confederation. The early English language plays of Teesri Duniya focus on ethnic minorities in conflict with a police state. *Job Stealer* (1987), Teesri Duniya Theatre's first original play text, thematizes the parallels between the places allophone refugees have fled and the place where they have arrived: separatist Québec. In "some country caught in political violence" (100), the multiethnic cast of future refugees face chaos in "streets [. . .] littered with broken glass and stone" (100). Opening amidst "cries and gunfire," Julio and his wife, Martha, discuss the ongoing violence in their country and their fears for their child, Amelia. Joined by Nalla, Kabul, Anna, and Jing, the group discusses the "[t]he open mass, the meeting, and the police, the teargas, batons, dogs, water cannons and jail" and the arrival of people from the countryside seeking safety in the city (1.I.20-1). The characters are not depicted as engaged in the political chaos that surrounds them. They are depicted as "mothers, teachers, doctors and workers" (1.I.62) not as "a communist [or] a separatist, [or] a terrorist" (1.I.70-1). During their conversation, the group is confronted by the police who demand their identity papers and then brutally beat them. At the end of this encounter, the cast members symbolically board ship to become refugees. They "step out into the night, naked,...except for [their] yesterdays" (1.I.95-6). When they arrive in Canada, they encounter racism both at the social and the state level and,

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perhaps more importantly from the perspective of the federalist narrative, they encounter violent, political instability:

> Julio: Another bomb just went off. It's the poor who get killed. What the
> hell do those separatists want?
>
> Nalla: They want to make a new country. Just a handful of them.
>
> Kabul: If it does not stop, more will get killed. More will disappear, and
> more will flee to the mountains and escape, and then there will be
> some thugs among them and all of us will get blamed as terrorists.
>
> (1.I.602 - 9)

Although Québec is not explicitly named in the text, the geographic location of the company in Montreal, the identification in the script of the fishermen who rescue the refugees from the sea as "Canadian fishermen," and the temporal proximity of the October Crisis[44] to the time of writing of the play text, make the identification of the refugees' host province as Québec somewhat inevitable. With this tacit identification of Québec as a place of violent, political instability, Teesri Duniya underscores the federalist narrative that allophones do indeed need to be afraid not just of the possibility of an independent Québec but also of the process by which that independence may be gained.

While the emphasis on the threat of Québec separation (and separatists) to the allophone community continues as a theme in Teesri Duniya Theatre's works — *Isolated Incident* examines

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[44] The October Crisis is the series of events in fall of 1970 which brought to a tragic head the Front de libération de Québec's (FLQ) attempts to use terrorism in addition to propaganda to bring about an independent, socialist Québec. The FLQ "was involved in over 200 bombings between 1963 and 1970" (Laurendeau para 2). On the 5th of October, 1970, the FLQ kidnapped James Cross, the British Trade Minister to Montreal, and 5 days later, the Québec provincial minister of Labour and Immigration, Pierre Laporte was kidnapped. On October 16th, the Canadian federal government under Pierre Trudeau controversially enacted the War Measures Act in response to the Québec provincial government's request for military assistance. Laporte was found murdered on October 17th. Cross was recovered alive in early December 1970.

"the 1987 police slaying of an unarmed black youth, Anthony Griffin, in Montreal" (Parameswaran, "Introduction" xv) and *No Man's Land* returns to the threat of political instability brought about by the separatist movement — Teesri Duniya Theatre also performs a narrative that can best be described as sovereignist. The company may have begun "as primarily a South Asian group," but it has developed into "an all-inclusive organization whose membership, artists and dramatis personae come from a wide range of ethnic and racial backgrounds including the dominant cultures" (Teesri).   Exploiting all of the slippage of meaning within the term "multiculturalism" — from the celebration (and entrenchment) of difference to the recognition of difference within political and social collectivity — has allowed Teesri Duniya Theatre to accommodate both the federalist and sovereignist narratives. However, this strategic deployment of the slipperiness of "multiculturalism" has not come without risks. Rahul Varma narrates that, as he has attempted to increase the company's "exposure in the [English-Canadian] academic community" ("Contributing" 26), Teesri Duniya Theatre's attempts to stretch "multiculturalism" to include both the sovereigntist pluralist model and the federalist mosaic model, has met with attempts to police his interpretation of the term and reposition it within the Canadian frame of "official multiculturalism." As Varma reports, the commitment of Teesri Duniya to work with actors, writers, and theatre professionals of *all* cultural backgrounds where "*all* includes the dominant cultures, too" ("Contributing" 26), is frequently met not just with suspicion but with active resistance. Interviewed by a "theatre professor who wanted to learn what the 'other' theatre companies were all about" ("Contributing" 26), Varma is explicitly questioned if the company choice to use a "white" director, Jack Langedijk, for Teesri Duniya Theatre's production of *Land Where the Trees Talk* in 1990 was an attempt "to up the quality of [the company's] work" ("Contributing" 27). Varma quite rightly, I feel, reasons that this

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"uninformed" ("Contributing" 27) question assumes that artistic quality among ethnic artists is necessarily substandard and that "quality" is the monopoly of the "white" majority. However, while Varma finds the professor's question "understandable" within the frame of a national refusal to define multiculturalism, I argue that the professor's question is equally understandable within the frame of the ambiguity that Teesri Duniya exploits in the term "multicultural."   From the perspective of English Canada, the vision of all-inclusive plurality that Teesri Duniya must embrace to place itself within the narrative of Québec sovereignty is incompatible with the "multi-cul-de-sacs" (Mistry) that are inscribed by official multiculturalism — in other words, Teesri Duniya cannot be authentically "other," from the perspective of English Canada, if it includes "whiteness" within its vision of "the real and ideal face of Canada and Québec [as] multiethnic, multiracial and multilingual" (Teesri). However, this conception of "multiculturalism" is entirely compatible with a Québec sovereigntist narrative of a diverse society united under a collective participation in francophonie — a pluralist, political society that, in principle if not often in practice, recognizes and tolerates difference within.

This friction between Canadian multiculturalism and Québécois pluralism apparent in the structure and work of Teesri Duniya Theatre is also visible in the company's decision to begin producing translations of its original English language scripts in French. Interestingly, *Counter Offence*, the company's first project funded by the Canada Arts Council, is also the first of the company's plays to be performed in translation. In 1999, *Counter Offence* was performed by Teesri Duniya as *L'Affaire Farhadi*, earning the company the "distinction of being the first culturally diverse company to produce a French-language play" (Teesri). Borrowing from the Montreal Gazette's review of the play, Teesri Duniya Theatre claims that its production of *L'Affaire Farhadi* "could be a vanguard of the revolution in *French-language* theatre" in Québec

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(*Gazette* qtd. in Teesri; emphasis added). The company has gone on to produce a French

language translation of *Bhopal* in both its 2005 and 2006 seasons. This interest in participating in

French-language theatre occurs nearly eighteen years after the company's founding and eighteen

seasons of performing work in Montreal. While it is possible to read this "sudden" linguistic

transformation as an attempt by Teesri Duniya Theatre to expand its audience base, I argue that

an equally valid reading is that Teesri Duniya begins to produce works in French as a recognition

of a fundamental linguistic shift in the allophone community.

Since 1977, when the *Charter of the French Language* (also known as Bill 101) was

passed by the Lévesque government in Québec, it has been mandatory for all children unable to

prove their parents had received an English elementary education first in Québec, and later

anywhere in Canada, to receive education in French.[45] *La génération 101*, a term popularized by

Claude Godbout's 2008 documentary of the same name, are the generation of children —

primarily children of immigrants to Québec — who have grown up under the policy of enforced

French education. As is examined in Godbout's film, the members of *la génération 101* see

themselves as Québeckers but feel they are excluded from Québec society because of their

position as ethnic minorities: "Ces quatre jeunes dénoncent le racisme, le chômage qui frappe

certaines communautés, et s'interrogent sur l'insertion de ces centaines de jeunes immigrants qui

maîtrisent aujourd'hui parfaitement le français, mais qui n'ont pas développé, comme eux, de

réels contacts avec la société d'accueil" (eurêka!). This ambivalent identification of *la génération

101*, feeling simultaneously part of yet excluded from Québec society, is mirrored in Teesri

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[45] On October 22nd, 2009, the Supreme Court of Canada declared portions of the *Charter of the French Language* (Bill 101) restricting access to English language education in Québec unconstitutional. The Québec legislature is working to close the loop-hole to Bill 101 the Supreme Court decision has opened. It will be interesting to see how these transformations are represented within the future works of Teesri Duniya Theatre as part of its on-going negotiation with *Présence Canadién/ne*.

Duniya Theatre's productions of *Counter Offence/L'Affaire Farhadi*. Rather than a play in which "we-they demarcations are clearly drawn along minority-establishment lines" (Parameswaran, "Introduction" xxiii), *Counter Offence/L'Affaire Farhadi* works to frustrate clear and simple identifications of victims and victimizers, oppressed and oppressors. In the preface to the English-language text of the play, Varma explicitly rejects the value of thinking in terms of "we-they demarcations" and questions whether the consequences of that mode of addressing racial oppression has not in fact led to further social injustice:

> Should the fear of racism be allowed as an excuse to prevent a white police officer from doing his duties? Should a white policeman wait for a policeman of colour to arrive on the scene before he arrests an ethnic man who is beating his wife? Can a woman, who is being battered, afford the delayed police response? And what if the battered woman is of the same colour and culture as the batterer? Wouldn't it be double racism? Racism against victim's gender and against her colour? Is a policeman justified in presupposing charges of racism? If he is not racist, why should he be afraid of charges? And who are the people who use the race card in every dispute involving ethnic communities? What credibility is the anti-racist struggle going to have if it is used as a front for battering? (ii)

These are the questions that *Counter Offence/L'Affaire Farhadi* raises but does not answer as it positions its audience to sit in judgement on the actions of Sergeant Guy Galliard. The play is constructed as the trial of Galliard for the murder of Shapoor Farhadi. The witnesses address their testimony to an "unseen judge" by "step[ping] into the illuminated area [of the performance space] and speak[ing] as if from the witness stand" (1.1). The audience in this structure is quite literally forced to occupy the space of the "unseen judge," to assess the evidence presented and,

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as the play ends without a verdict, to render a decision of the fate, not just of Galliard, but of the multi-ethnic and multi-racial society where the events of the play have occurred. The testimony of witnesses is both announced by the actors and performed in vignettes throughout the course of the trial, providing the audience with the unique ability to both hear the evidence as mediated by the personae of the characters and to see for itself the unmediated unfolding of events.

Galliard, a member of the domestic violence unit, has been accused of murdering Farhadi, an Iranian visa student that Galliard had arrested seven months earlier for assaulting Shazia Rizvi, "[a] 26 year old Muslim woman brought up in Canada" (v) and Farhadi's wife. After the arrest, Farhadi, with the encouragement and support of Moolchand Misra, "[a]n 'Indo Canadian' — an anti-racist activist" (v) — files "racial misconduct" (1.9.8) charges that threaten to end Galliard's career. As the play unfolds, Galliard, although he would not win any medals for cultural sensitivity (he has a disturbing tendency to refer to Farhadi as "boy"), demonstrates that he has no racist agenda for his arrest and prosecution of Farhadi. Instead, what motivates Galliard is his personal experience of domestic violence and his conviction that domestic violence is a social evil that transcends cultural boundaries:

> Galliard: I remember when my dad got mad, my mom got beat up. He kicked the door, ripped the phone out of the wall, threw food and pulled big handfuls of her hair. My dad was 6 feet, 300 pound. When he got started, my brother ran to pull the curtains and I hid behind the door with my hands over my ears and my eyes closed. My mother died and everybody believed it was in her sleep. (pause). So when I see someone beat his woman, part of me says, send him to hell. Is that racist Judge? (1.9.1-7)

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Clarindra Keith, "[a] black woman who runs a centre for battered women" (v), reinforces for the audience Galliard's position that spousal abuse cannot be protected as a cultural privilege within Québec civil society because "[n]obody's culture equals torture" (1.7 25). For both Galliard and Clarindra, the priority is protecting Shazia, the only member of the Farhadi's marriage that they recognize as oppressed.

Opposing Galliard and Clarindra is Moolchand Misra. Moolchand wholeheartedly embraces a philosophy of "we-they demarcations [. . .] clearly drawn along minority-establishment lines." Moolchand is so invested in the "we-they demarcation" that he is prepared to alter his persona in order to better conform to racist stereotypes of the "we" identity. As Shapoor observes, when "they" are not present, Moolchand speaks with a "Canadian accent" (1.6 26) . However, when "answering the unseen judge," a representative of the establishment "they," Moolchand adopts "his usual East Indian" accent (1.6 26). In the case of Shapoor Farhadi, Moolchand sees an opportunity to further sharpen and define the "we-they demarcation." Moolchand attempts to convince Shapoor that police response to domestic violence is determined by the ethnicity of the perpetrator : "That cop had nothing to gain by arresting one of his own tribesman. It is only when they find someone 'different' they get all dutiful" (1.6.53). He attempts to convince Clarindra to shift her support from Shazia to Shapoor, prioritizing ethnic solidarity over compassion for a victim of domestic violence. He explicitly argues that Shapoor must be protected because he is one of "us," a visible minority, not one of "them":

> Moolchand: Please, listen to me — listen to me...help us. He is not a typical
>   Canuck, opens a beer, watches hockey and scores punches on the
>   wife for fun.

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Clarindra:	No, he doesn't play hockey.
Moolchand:	He's one of us, see?
Clarindra:	Isn't *she* also one of us? (1.7.27-32)

While Moolchand's overt goal in taking up Shapoor Farhadi's cause is to ultimately increase minority representation of the police force, the rhetoric he employs suggests that his implicit goal is to entrench the boundaries between the minority and the majority, boundaries that are grounded in racist ideology. Moolchand speaks in terms of "coloureds" and "white cops" and the need for "the white cop [to] see that the coloured cop next to him is just as human as anybody else" (1.10.53-54). But, while he argues for tolerance from "white" for "coloured," for Moolchand, "white" will always be the enemy: "The best way to win over your enemy is to love your enemy" (1.10.54-55).

While Moolchand ultimately achieves success in his endeavours to manipulate the establishment, from the perspective of the "minority," he is increasingly shown to be "our" enemy. Moolchand attempts to solicit Clarindra to manipulate Shazia to drop charges against Shapoor by arguing that "us, the East Indians, the Africans, the Chinese — you know — people like you and me — If we are to survive, we must be united" (1.7.17-8). Clarindra's response is to tell Moolchand to "[g]et the hell out of [her] office" (1.7.75), and after Shapoor beats Shazia again, Clarindra calls Moolchand "a wretched piece of scum" (1.14.38). Shafiqa, Shazia's mother, responds to her husband's reports of Moolchand's public defense of her daughter's abuser with threats : "tell that mullah and Moolchand, if they say a word about my daughter, I will chase *them* out of the country" (1.8.54-56). Moolchand's own actions ultimately convict him of being an enemy of the "minority." When Shapoor attempts to separate himself from his "protector," Moolchand responds with both verbal and literal violence:

Moolchand:	Shithead...Iranian shithead...Complete shithead. Why don't you take on someone your own size? Idiot. What will I tell everybody now? That I'm protecting a proven wife beater?
Shapoor:	Forgive me please.
Moolchand:	Shut up. We were getting somewhere. We were finally going to have some coloured cops on the force. You were going to give the most important testimony. You blew it. I had Galliard cornered; I could have proven him a racist.

[. . .]

MOOLCHAND repeatedly hits SHAPOOR with a rolled newspaper. SHAPOOR goes down on the floor.

Moolchand:	*Ghadda*! That is a slap in my face...a big bloody slap. (1.13.2-13)

Moolchand is not interested in the wellbeing of "minority" individuals, but only in achieving the goals of his personal agenda. With the pronoun shift from "we" to "I" and the shift in his concerns from the loss of collective gain to the loss of personal pride, Moolchand betrays that he is engaged in reinforcing his personal, rather than a collective, identity.

Moolchand is not the only character in *Counter Offence/L'Affaire Farhadi* whose actions are rooted in a defence of "tribalism." Much like Moolchand, Gilles Prougault, "President of the police brotherhood (union)" (v), confronts the audience with a "we-they" world view where "we" are police officers and "they" are everyone else. Much as Moolchand sees Shapoor's arrest as an opportunity to further his own agenda, Prougault sees Moolchand's persecution of Galliard as an opportunity to further his own. Prougault's agenda is, again like Moolchand's, implicitly racist – his goal is to maintain the status quo of the police force. Moolchand's insistence that

"[w]e should have ethnics serving ethnic criminals" (1.9 35) and Clarindra's arguments for "more ladies in the force because ladies serve ladies better" (1.9. 36) threaten the traditional boundaries that mark out Prougault's tribe. Prougault fears that in the political climate of the moment of the play his goal of maintaining the "we-they demarcation" that defines the police force may be sacrificed in pursuit of others' goal of an independent Québec:

> Prougault: Shut up Sergeant. I don't need your garbage mouth doing any
>   more damage! Every ethnic leader and bleeding heart white is
>   calling! Fuck, I don't need another inquiry, not with the union
>   election coming up.
>
> Galliard: What inquiry?
>
> Prougault: The chief has ordered an inquiry.
>
> Galliard: He thinks I am a racist?
>
> Prougault: He got a call from Bouchard's office. Damage control after
>   Parizeau's ethnic remark!
>
> Galliard: Bouchard?
>
> Prougault: You're the first victim Guy. "...We lost the referendum because of
>   the ethnics".[46] The man lost the battle of his life because he didn't
>   have ethnics on his side. Surly Mr. Bouchard has to woo ethnics.
>   How do you expect the chief not to call an inquiry? (1.9.30-43)

As his exchange with Galliard betrays, it is not only the threat to the "we-they" demarcations that concerns Prougault, but the potential that threat has to disrupt his ability to "police" those

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[46] This is a direct reference to the speech given by Jacques Parizeau, then leader of Parti Québécois, and Premier of Québec after the defeat of the 1995 referendum on Québec sovereignty. In that speech, Parizeau attributes the defeat of the motion for sovereignty - the "Oui" side - "on money and the ethnic vote" ("Separation").

demarcations as President of the police brotherhood. Again, like Moolchand, Prougault's

motivations are revealed as grounded in personal rather than collective ambition.

Where Moolchand engages in (primarily) discursive violence when Shapoor threatens his

ambitions, Prougault enacts a much more literal violence on Shapoor. As is revealed in the

closing moments of the play, it is Prougault rather than Galliard who murders Shapoor to ensure

that Moolchand will never again be able to use Shapoor Farhadi and his claim of racial abuse at

the hands of the police to threaten him again. As the play closes with Prougault's crime and an

extended speech from Moolchand as he receives "the honour of Indo-Canadian of the year" (1.22

68), the audience, the "unseen judge," is left to pass its verdict on Galliard, but perhaps more so

on these two rabid proponents of racial division. In the closing evidence, the "judge" is

presented with the hypocrisy of both men. Neither, despite his claims to the contrary, is

interested in the wellbeing of his collective, only revenge. Prougault seeks personal revenge on

Shapoor: "Damn I am mad. I got all these problems. Why? Why? I know, I know. *(staring*

directly at SHAPOOR)" (1.23 66). Moolchand seeks personal revenge on a world that frustrated

his ambitions:

> Moolchand: Some years ago, I was already a Canadian citizen, had a degree
>
> from McGill and one from New Delhi and an immigrant's
>
> discipline. But I was bumped out of a job. Why?
>
> [. . .]
>
> "He is not a suitable candidate for the classroom." I guess it was
>
> my *Bombaywallah* accent and my lack of humour. [. . .] The
>
> reason was they will let you get only so far ahead and then they
>
> will cut you down (1.23-69)

With this, Varma, the playwright/prosecutor, concludes his case. The evidence presented against Galliard has, in the denouement of the play, turned against the men who would champion "we-they demarcations": one man sworn to uphold the laws of his society but who proves himself willing to take "extralegal" action to protect his position, and one man who loudly voices his commitment to racial justice but is willing to overlook social injustice when it threatens his ambitions. The case for the "unseen judge" to decide then is whether to condone Prougault and Moolchand as men who honour and defend their respective constituencies or to denounce them as self-serving hypocrites who endanger the stability and safety of their society.

In the case of both Vancouver Sath and Teesri Duniya Theatre, the negotiation of South Asian-Canadian cultural identity is performed at the intersection of two national imaginaries. While in the case of Vancouver Sath the most obvious site of negotiation with *Présence Canadiénne* is the reinvention of Naxalite philosophy, it is *Présence Asiénne* that allows for an accommodation of the specific political, social, and economic conditions of this place. The case, predictably, is not the same for Teesri Duniya Theatre. Teesri Duniya foregrounds not just the negotiation with an already creolized *there*, but the multiple valences within the "New World" *here*. Teesri Duniya Theatre is located in a different Canadian region and, as Parameswaran has pointed out, engages with a different moment of the South Asian diaspora. Teesri Duniya Theatre's audience is much more diverse than Vancouver Sath's in terms of its languages, religions, and regional cultures *there* in addition to its diversity in terms of languages, religions and regional cultures *here*. Perhaps most importantly, Teesri Duniya Theatre's and Vancouver Sath's audiences differ in class affiliation. Where Teesri Duniya performs for a white collar, urban audience, "Sath is blue collar, in motivation and intended audience" (Parameswaran, "Introduction" xxi). In the case of Teesri Duniya Theatre the site of negotiation with *Présence*

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Canadiénne is in the constant negotiation and renegotiation of South Asian-Canadian identity at a specific regional location within Canada. As the dynamics of regional politics shift, South Asian-Canadian cultural identity continually must renegotiate with *Présence Canadiénne* to produce a functional identity. As the structure and work of Teesri Duniya Theatre in their particular Québec location demonstrate, this renegotiation constantly engages with the shifting pressures on the allophone community: the pressure to be "multicultural" Canadians and the pressure to be part of a pluralist, francophone Québec. Teesri Duniya performs this process of South Asian-Canadian cultural identity by never choosing between the two competing national narratives it is confronted with. Instead, Teesri Duniya Theatre scripts itself as part of both the Canadian national *and* the Québec proto-national theatre, and part of both narratives of nation.

Chapter IV: Indra's Jewelled Net: Reflections and Connections in South Asian-Canadian Fiction

My insistence that the diasporic subjectivity of South Asian-Canadians and their literary representations must be read as specific to this location within the South Asian diaspora, where it is produced, is not unique within the larger institutional study of South Asian diasporic literatures. Makarand Paranjape, in his analysis of Indo-Australian literatures, insists that a consideration of the "specific features of the South Asian diaspora in Australia and its literary representations" is needed to read not just the "special Australian manifestation" that inflects this particular location within the diasporic framework but also how this literature reflects other movements within the diasporic network (247). Neil Murphy and Wai-chew Sim, in their introduction to *British Asian Fiction: Framing The Contemporary*, make a similar, though not identical, call for recognition of the specific vectors that coincide in British Asian literature.[47] Murphy and Sim argue that the textual specificity and cultural complexity reflected in British Asian literature is too frequently elided under the institutional search for evidence of "hybridity." In place of this insistence on an ironically universal "hybridity," Murphy and Sim argue that the "critical elaboration of writers deemed 'multicultural' need[s] to pay scrupulous attention to the material and negotiated specificities of different migrant encounters" within the space of the British nation (2). The contexts relevant to South Asian-Canadian literature are not identical to those relevant for Indo-Australian literature and neither is identical to those relevant to British

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[47] Murphy and Sim further differentiate the British "jewel" of the South Asian diasporic net by extending the definition of "British Asian" beyond its traditional equation with South Asian ethnic identity to include not only writers of the South Asian diaspora but also writers who would in Canada be identified as "Asian" or "South-East Asian."

Asian literature. However, these unique bodies of literature are interconnected, at the very least

by their relationship to the South Asian diaspora and the project of European (de)colonization.

In terms of these arguments that there is a need to read the inflections of the local within

the different locations of the South Asian diaspora, how do we read South Asian-Canadian

literature that would appear to make secondary or even seemingly avoid direct comment on

here? For example, how do we read the negotiation with *Présence Canadiénne* in Rohinton

Mistry's *A Fine Balance*? In terms of its content, Mistry's 1995 novel would appear to focus on

developments with the society of an independent Indian state, from 1947 through the turmoil of

the Emergency[48] called by Indian Prime Minister Indira Gandhi in the 1970's. How do we read

the negotiation with *Présence Canadiénne* in Anita Rau Badami's *Can You Hear the Nightbird*

Call? Badami's 2006 novel, while partially set in Canada and dealing in part with the trauma of

diasporic movement, relies for much of its narrative momentum on the trauma of Partition[49], the

advent and eventual militarization of the Khalistan[50] movement, Operation Blue Star,[51] and the

chaotic aftermath of the assassination of Indira Gandhi. These two novels have been read and

even celebrated as Canadian novels primarily because of the location of the authors as

immigrants to the Canadian nation. While this approach does incorporate these texts within the

frame of multicultural Canadian literature, it overlooks the comments that these texts make

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[48] In June 1975, the Allahabad court found Indira Gandhi guilty of using government resources during the 1971 election, ordered her to vacate her parliamentary seat, and impose a six year ban on her return to politics. Jha argues that in the political chaos that surrounded her refusal to step down in the face of increasing opposition pressure, Gandhi engineered the declaration of a state of emergency within the country as "a ploy [. . .] to save her parliamentary seat and leadership position, a ploy that resulted in a severe setback to the democratic process" (para 5).

[49] Partition refers to the traumatic division in 1947 of British India into the independent nations of India and Pakistan.

[50] The Khalistan movement is an attempt to create an independent Sikh homeland within what is now India and Pakistan.

[51] Operation Blue Star, ordered by Indira Ghandi, was designed to violently repress the militarization of the Khalistan movement and military resistance to Indian sovereignty. For this purpose, the Indian army, on June 4th, 1984, invaded the Golden Temple in Amritsar, the Sikh's holiest shrine, killing over 1,000 people.

directly on Canadian social and political realities and the institutionalization of Canadian

literature. This containment of these texts within what Mistry himself has called "multi-cul-de-

sacs," multiple dead ends, may be a response to what Lily Cho has argued is the institutional fear

that the demands of "minority" Canadian literature to be read as Canadian literature "seem[s] to

threaten the coherence of the [Canadian] national literary at precisely the moment of its

consolidation" ("Dreaming" 189). While I would agree that Cho's assessment is a valid

summation of the barriers to reading the Canadian in these texts, it does not point to a reading

strategy that will help to read the complex contextualizations, the negotiations among vectors,

which are necessary to read South Asian-Canadian literature. What has been a particularly useful

conceptual figure in undertaking this critical repositioning is one gestured at by Badami in *Can

You Hear The Nightbird Call?*: Indra's jewelled net. Indra's jewelled net is a motif with a history

and network of cultural influence that is almost as complex as the discourses it connects and the

concepts that it describes. Indra's net enters into written discourse with the Rig Veda, "the oldest

and the principal of the Vedas, composed in the 2nd millennium BC[E]" ("Rig Veda"). Written

in early sanskrit, the Rig Veda is dominated by hymns to Indra, the king of the gods, who wields

in battle "Vajra, the lightning bolt," along with his bow, net, and hook (Naylor). The storm god

of the *ksatriyas*, the warrior class, Indra has been interpreted as the personification of the sky and

"the heavenly representative of the Aryan invaders of the Indian subcontinent during the second

millennium BCE. He is the destroyer of cities — the conqueror" ("Indra"). In this iteration,

Indra's net is both the "master's tool" and the tool of mastery, a useful reminder that colonization

in South Asia has a much longer history than the relatively brief subjection of the subcontinent to

the British East Indian Company and subsequently to the British Crown.

As the Vedic culture gives way to Brahminical culture around the fifth century BCE, and

Sapta Sindhava[52] gives way to *Bharat,*[53] Indra's dominance over what was becoming the Hindu

pantheon begins to wane. Supplanted by Shiva and Vishnu in what "Joseph Campbell and others

have seen [. . .] as a process by which the Aryan invaders were somewhat assimilated by the

older Dravidian religion already in place" in the subcontinent, Indra is reduced to a figure of

fun, a minor weather god given dominance over other minor gods ("Indra"). However, while

Indra's influence within Hinduism declines, he, or more specifically, his jewelled net, continue to

be relevant within Hinduism's "dissident" offshoot: Buddhism. In the Mahāyāna tradition of

Buddhism that emerges in south India around the first century BCE, the motif of Indra's net is

reinterpreted as a metaphor for the interrelationship of all life. The net and its attributes are

described in the *Avatamsaka Sutra*:

> Far away in the heavenly abode of the great god Indra, there is a wonderful net
>
> that has been hung by some cunning artificer in such a manner that it stretches out
>
> infinitely in all directions. In accordance with the extravagant tastes of deities, the
>
> artificer has hung a single glittering jewel in each "eye" of the net, and since the
>
> net itself is infinite in all dimensions, the jewels are infinite in number. There
>
> hang the jewels, glittering like stars of the first magnitude, a wonderful sight to
>
> behold. If we now arbitrarily select one of these jewels for inspection and look
>
> closely at it, we will discover that in its polished surface there are reflected all the
>
> other jewels in the net, infinite in number. Not only that, but each of the jewels

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[52] *Sapta Sinhava* is the name used in the Rig Veda to refer to the civilization of the Indus River valley.
[53] *Bharat* is the name for the whole of the sub-continent that begins to appear in puranic texts around the first
century BCE. It was also taken as the official name of India at the time of independence.

reflected in this one jewel is also reflecting all the other jewels, so that there is an

infinite reflecting process occurring. (Cook 2)

As the motif travels from first century CE India to fourth century CE China, from the Mahāyāna

tradition to the Hua-yen tradition, the metaphor of Indra's net begins to describe the increasingly

complex philosophical concepts of a non-teleological world view:

[E]ach individual is at once the cause for the whole and is caused by the whole,

and what is called existence is a vast body made up of an infinity of individuals

all sustaining each other and defining each other. The cosmos is, in short, a self-

creating, self-maintaining, and self-defining organism. (Cook 3)

Following further along this thread, the motif of Indra's net connects to Japan in the seventh

century CE where the metaphor central to Hua-yen was transformed into Kegon, the school of

Japanese Buddhism that saw itself as the inheritor and transmitter to future generations of the

Hua-yen tradition.

Following this one thread of Indra's net provides us with both a conceptual framework

and a model for reading South Asian-Canadian fiction within the context of both the specific

Canadian location and the larger South Asian diaspora.[54] The path(s) that the motif of Indra's net

is transmitted along, the motif suggests, are certainly important to the understanding of the

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[54] This following of one thread in Indra's net in one very limited direction by no means limits the connections that the motif of Indra's net makes, nor is it the only example that demonstrates the applicability of the motif to South Asian-Canadian literature. The metaphor of Indra's net is central to Buddhist debates on the nature of language and semiotics in that it describes the "reiteration of cosmic processes and the reflection of the absolute and undifferentiated realm of essence" that takes place in the space between signifiers and signifieds that "defies human possibilities of comprehension" (Rambelli para 26). This play within textuality has been linked to western studies directly through the work of Roland Barthes and through structural affinities with the work of Jacques Derrida. Fabio Rambelli's observations on the connections between Buddhist thought and Western language theory suggest that the interaction cannot be read as the Occidental appropriation of Oriental culture but rather the tracing of another thread and another "jewel": "Since the 1970s, Buddhism has been taking root in Western countries and is flourishing as an autonomous tradition. This is perhaps similar to what happened many centuries ago in China and in the other countries of East and Southeast Asia, when many forms of Buddhism spread and started to interact with those cultures, producing new and richer ideas and practices"(para 26).

complexity of Buddhist expression. They are the threads of the "wonderful net" that transmit the

motif across temporal, cultural and spatial boundaries. Each thread has its own unique history of

resistance to or ease of transmission. However, equal in importance to the threads, as a system

of routes and interconnections, are what the matrix of the threads support: the "jewels" that

reflect each other and the reflections of the other jewels. These "jewels" are specific locations

hanging within the connections of the net but which cannot be reduced to simply points of

intersection. Instead, each "jewel" represents a unique vantage point on the infinite play of

reflections. At each site the motif of Indra's net must negotiate not only with variables specific

to the site but with the unique set of reflections of the other "jewels" that can be seen from that

site. Simply put, the Mahāyāna tradition of Buddhism is not identical to the Hua-yen tradition

and neither is identical with the Kegon school of Buddhism. However, each is a reflection of the

others that integrates those reflections within the specifics of its particular location to produce an

interrelated form of Buddhism that is specific to the place, culture, and time within which it

operates.

When applied to readings of South Asian-Canadian literature, the motif of Indra's net

serves many functions. First amongst these is that the figure foregrounds the impossibility of

discovering in the texts an "authentic" South Asian culture or an "authentic" representation of

"home." Indra's net is a symbol of the conquest of South Asia that has become completely

integrated into South Asian culture. It both is *and* is not "authentically" South Asian, in much

the same way as the Taj Mahal,[55] vindaloo,[56] and the English language[57] can all be read as both

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[55] The Taj Mahal was built in the 17th century by Shah Jahan as a mausoleum for his favourite wife. Shah Jahan was the Mughul emperor of Hindustan from 1628-1658 ("Shah Jahan"). The Mughul conquest of South Asia was undertaken by Jahan's ancestor Zahir ud-Din Muhammad, also called Babur, who became ruler in Fergana (Uzbekistan) in 1495, and invaded South Asia via Afghanistan beginning in 1526 ("Babur").
[56] Vindaloo is a hot, vinegary curry dish that is most frequently identified with the Goan region of the modern Indian state. However, the dish is believed to have originated as a local adaptation of a dish favoured by the Portuguese,

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authentic *and* inauthentic to the South Asian cultural vector that is reflected in South Asian-Canadian literature. Instead of reading the operation of *Présence Asiénne* within South Asian-Canadian literature as faithful (or distorted) reproductions of "authentic" South Asian culture within the South Asian diaspora, reading through the metaphor of Indra's net suggests that the representations of South Asian culture in South Asian-Canadian literature are better understood as reflections, and reflections of reflections seen from a specific point in time and space. The implications of this go beyond the argument that the vector of South Asian culture negotiated within South Asian-Canadian literature must be understood as always already hybrid and "impure." The more interesting implication is that the particular representation of South Asian culture represented in South Asian-Canadian literature can only be created in *this* place, from this particular vantage point on the infinite play of reflections.

This insight might go some way to understanding Germaine Greer's infamous response to Mistry's *A Fine Balance* and demonstrate how reading through the motif of Indra's net interrupts critical claims to master this body of literature. Mistry's fictional vision of Bombay, Greer argues, does not coincide with her memories of the city and, as a result, she rejects the "truth" of the reflections of India that Mistry inscribes in the text. While Mistry dismisses Greer's arguments as "asinine" and "brainless" (Mistry qtd. in Smith), I would argue that the specifics of her complaints bear closer examination. This is not because I agree with her aesthetic assessment of *A Fine Balance*, but rather, Greer's comments can give us some sense of the

who conquered Goa in 1510 and held the colony until Indian annexation in 1961. Even the name of the dish "vindaloo" is believed to be "of Portuguese origin—from *vin d'alho*, signifying a sauce made from wine (Portuguese *vinho*) and garlic (Portuguese *alho*)" ("vindaloo").

[57] English is listed as one of the official languages of the modern states of India and Pakistan. In Sri Lanka, English was replaced by Sinhalese as the language of government in 1958. There is currently a movement in Sri Lanka to re-introduce "a three-language policy [. . .] that provides for equality among Sinhala, Tamil, and English, and to some extent seeks to restore the position of English, whose role in the community was greatly reduced from the 1960s to the 1980s" ("Sri Lanka"). The English language is used in "Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, the Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka. [where] English is their main link language" ("South Asian English").

reflections that can be seen in the text and also serve as a useful reminder that, as critical readers, our viewing "I"/eye is viewing the novel from different locations and within different plays of reflections. Greer rejects Mistry's reflection of 1970's India saying: "It's a Canadian book about India. What could be worse? What could be more terrible?" (Greer qtd. in Smith). In terms of the reflections that can be seen in the "jewel" of the novel, clearly the post-independence national identities of "Canada" and "India" and the relationship between them is reflected in the novel. Reading the novel's cultural location in a space of tension between what Greer's comments would appear to suggest are two incompatible national spaces, argues that the connections that the novel creates between "Canadian" and "India" do not map neatly onto a map of the world's countries. The connections between the Canadian and Indian national space that Mistry reflects, as I will argue below, are instead "terrible," in multiple meanings of that word. These connections are obnoxious to the tidy spatial order that divides the world's geography within the bounded spaces of discrete nations and they are terrifying to the ideologies that attempt to inscribe those national spaces within hierarchical frames of "First World" and "Third World," "Developed" and "Developing" Worlds, "Global North" and "Global South." While the connections between national spaces are part of the play of reflections visible in the novel, *A Fine Balance* also reflects aspects uniquely associated with the cultural production of the Canadian space. It is a "Canadian" novel, Greer complains, not a novel written in Canada. This "Canadian" identification insists that associated with a place are unique cultural, historic, and social realities that also make the novel "terrible." Simultaneously recognizing the requirement to pay attention to the specificities of place with the requirement to pay attention to the connections that interrupt the specificities of place is indeed a formidable and difficult, though not impossible, task.

I must admit that my nationalist pride bristles at Greer's use of "Canadian" as a pejorative. However, because it is a *nationalist* pride, a cultural, social, and historical feature of this place, it is also a reminder that the play of reflections visible from my position is not necessarily the same play of reflections visible from the location Greer occupies. The model of Indra's net calls on us to be aware that difference in location produces a different vantage point on the play of reflections visible within *A Fine Balance*. Do these different locations and different perspectives on *A Fine Balance* make Greer's interpretation of it wrong and mine right? Unfortunately for my wounded nationalist pride, the metaphor of Indra's net would suggest that neither is right and neither is wrong; they are simply different. Indra's net invokes an image of an infinite play of reflections and reflections of reflections where the original, the "Truth," is infinitely lost in the play of reflections visible at any given position. The reality that reading through Indra's net reveals is not that Greer's reading of *A Fine Balance* or my reading of the text is contingent or relative, but rather that both readings are incomplete, limited by the play of reflections visible to the individual reader. The implications of this are that no one reader can claim mastery over the text, regardless of how self-reflexive that reader may be. Instead, individual readings must be read collectively to map out the play of reflections visible at the point of the text, always with the understanding that those readings are necessarily inflected by the limited vision of the reader. Adding critical reading to critical reading allows more of the pattern of reflections at the location of the text to become visible than any single reading can, this always with the understanding that the reflections visible in the text are always already complicated by the position of the reader.

This tactic of reading *A Fine Balance* additively in order to engage more fully with the pattern of reflections visible in the novel does not begin or end with Greer. What is the

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relationship of the novel to diasporic subjectivities, both pre- and postcolonial? How does the

novel reflect on the relationship between diaspora and nation? How does it reflect the concepts

of "home" and "belonging"? What is the relationship between the Indian historic past and the

Canadian present moment reflected in the novel? A similar series of questions can be raised

about Anita Rau Badami's *Can You Hear the Nightbird Call?* How do we read the reflections in

Badami's novel of the 1947 partition of British India into the independent states of India and

Pakistan? Is this reflection, as Ingrid Ruthig implies in her review for *Books in Canada*, an

aspect of the novel that sets the context of Badami's text as the evolution of an independent

India? Is the starting point of the novel, as Veronique Dorais argues in her review for *Canadian*

Ethnic Studies Journal, the bombing of Air India Flight 182? Does *Can You Hear the Nightbird*

Call? reinforce the distinction between the "Indo-Canadian community" and the community of

"Canadians" as Ian Mulgrew would appear to suggest in his review for *Literary Review of*

Canada (19)? Ultimately, the pattern of reflections (and reflections of reflections) compels us to

ask what, in the study of Canadian literature, is not a new question: "Where is here?" The

answer, I will argue below, is as simple as "the ground beneath our feet" *and* as complicated as

the play of reflections in Indra's jewelled net.

Reading Mistry's *A Fine Balance* and Badami's *Can You Hear the Nightbird Call?*

through the model of Indra's net is a "terrible" task. Both authors assert that their texts begin

with a single image that becomes the focus of a pattern of reflections. For Mistry, the image is

of a woman at a sewing machine. For Badami, the image is "a Sikh man set on fire, then thrown

over a bridge" (Badami qtd. in Brodoff). As I will argue below, the single image of the woman

at a sewing machine in *A Fine Balance* becomes a focal point for reflections of the role of

oppressive government regimes in Canada and India in dehumanizing their societies and their

individual citizen-subjects through a sustained assault on the weakest members of their societies.

In *Can You Hear the Nightbird Call?* the single image of the murdered Sikh man becomes the

focus for reflections on the roots/routes of extremism and the place of the Canadian state in

creating "homegrown" terrorist movements.

1. Location, Location, Location! : Defining Diaspora in Anita Rau Badami's Can You Hear The
Nightbird Call?

On May 1st, 2006, the Canadian Government issued an Order in Council setting out the

terms for a commission of inquiry into the June 23rd, 1985 bombing of Air India Flight 182 over

Cork, Ireland[58]. The year 2006 also saw a nongovernmental, literary intervention into what is

still the open question of how the Air India Flight 182 bombing could happen and its meanings

for Canadian society: the publication of Anita Rau Badami's *Can You Hear The Nightbird Call?*

Unlike the "official" inquiry which focuses its attention on critiquing government procedures and

responses to the bombing and its aftermath,[59] Badami's fictional inquiry focuses on the social and

historical interactions within the South Asian diaspora that are specific to the Canadian location,

and it reflects on how these interactions may have fostered, and continue to foster, extremist

violence. What Badami suggests to her readers through the unfolding of the narrative of *Can*

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[58] On June 17th, 2010, the final report of the commission of inquiry was released. In his opening remarks, Commissioner John C. Major emphasizes that the bombing of Air India Flight 182 cannot be read as separate from the Canadian nation: "The bomb that blew up Air India Flight 182 was manufactured in Canada as part of a plot that was developed in Canada. The bomb was hidden in luggage that was placed on a Canadian plane in Vancouver and later transferred to Air India 182 in Toronto which stopped in Montreal to pick up additional passengers before it commenced its fatal flight. Another bomb was placed on a Canadian plane in Vancouver, in luggage destined for an Air India flight, and exploded in Narita, Japan, killing two baggage handlers. I stress that this is a Canadian atrocity. For too long the greatest loss of Canadian lives at the hands of terrorists has been somehow relegated outside the Canadian consciousness." (Commission).

[59] The report is available in full on the Inquiry's website. The structure of the report emphasizes its focus on governmental procedure: "Volume I: Overview; Volume II: Part 1, Pre-Bombing phase of the investigation, Part 2, Post-Bombing phase of the investigation; Volume III: The difficult questions arising when Intelligence must be used as evidence in a trial, Witness Protection, and The problems associated with Terrorism Trials; Volume IV: Aviation Security; Volume V: Terrorism Financing" ("Inquiry").

You Hear the Nightbird Call? is that more consideration needs to be given to the parallels

between Canada's white supremacist "past" and tolerance of diversity in the "present." What is

the difference between the "continuous journey" regulation and "official" multiculturalism? How

is the individual affected by being identified as the "undesirable other?" Does this differ from

the effect on the individual of being "tolerated?" How do these individual factors intersect with

diasporic subjectivity? And how does the subjectivity of the diasporic individual influence the

collective diasporic experience?

The complex pattern of reflections that are visible in *Can You Hear the Nightbird Call?*

argues that the bombing of Air India Flight 182 was not the product of a single event, like the

partition of the Punjab at the time of Indian and Pakistani independence, or the influence of a

single political movement like the Khalistan movement. Instead, the extremist violence that

brought down Air India Flight 182 was the product of multiple interactions of historically

situated social, cultural and political vectors that coincide in the specific place of the South

Asian-Canadian diaspora but which are also intimately bound to the place and peoples of the

ancestral homeland. Framing her narrative between the historic events of the *Komagata Maru*

Incident and the bombing of Air India Flight 182, Badami would appear to be responding to

Uma Parameswaran's call for "Indian diasporic writers [. . .] to develop archetypes or [to]

establish cultural allusions" grounded in these two historical events ("Dispelling" lvi). However,

Badami's exploration of the connections between what Parameswaran hopes will become the

"cornerstones of the Indo-Canadian ethos" ("Dispelling" lvi) seems to reject rather than foster

what Parameswaran problematically embodies as the "blood-consciousness of Indo-Canadians

and, indeed of every Canadian" ("Dispelling" lvii). Badami's focus on the role of individual

processes of identity negotiation within diasporic consciousness actually critiques the assumption

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of collective, embodied cultural and historical memory that Parameswaran's ambitions would appear to suggest are possible. The connections between *here* and *there*, Canada and India, that Badami explores in *Can You Hear the Nightbird Call?* do not, as Parameswaran feels is necessary for the continuing development of Indo-Canadian literature, "shift [our] focus [as writers and critics] from the original homeland to the present homeland" ("Dispelling" liv). Instead of a straightforward shift of attention, the connections between *here* and *there* that Badami's writing suggests we need to pay attention to are much more complex in their relationship to each other.

The play of reflections in Badami's text suggests that the experience of diasporic subjectivity in individuals *here* influences or creates diasporic subjectivity in individuals *there* which, in turn, changes diasporic subjectivity *here* in an infinite play of reflection and transformation. In *Can You Hear the Nightbird Call?* this interdependent development of diasporic subjectivity between individuals here and there is emblematized in the transfer of material goods, specifically, lavender soap. As a child, Sharhan/Bibi-ji "envied most of all [her friend] Jeeti's supply of lavender soap, sent by Sher Singh, her father, all the way from Canada" (4). For Sharhan/Bibi-ji the scent of lavender becomes symbolic of her desire to escape her life in the village of Panjaur and the smell of "hot, stinking shit" that "corrupted her waking hours and infected her dreams and ruined even her meals" (6). Once in Canada, Bibi-ji is able to indulge in "her favourite lavender perfume" (39) and to "send lavender soap to [her] sister," Kanwar, who stays in the Punjab (170). It is "the smell of the pale violet soap" that in turn haunts Bibi-ji's niece Nimmo in her memories of her "last terrifying night in Dauri Kalan" and her last memory of her mother: "a pair of lavender-fragrant feet suspended above the floor" (161). That "sweet fragrance" (156), that "faint, familiar fragrance" (169) that had originated with Bibi-ji in

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Canada and is returned to her by Bibi-ji allows Nimmo to recover her traumatic memories of her forcible displacement during Partition. It also allows her to recognize and accept her relationship to Bibi-ji. Through their mutual encounter, facilitated by Leela's own diasporic journey, the diasporic subjectivity of the two women is changed. Bibi-ji is able to recover a portion of her past and begins to plan how to incorporate that recovered past into her future. Nimmo, too, recovers her past and begins to consider the possibility of a future for herself and her family in Canada. As Satpal, Nimmo's husband, jokingly suggests: "Maybe we should ask her [Sharhan/Bibi-ji] to take us all back to Canada with her!" (176). And with her own joking acknowledgement that Bibi-ji would be all too willing to take them with her, Nimmo's diasporic subjectivity is transformed to adapt to this new possibility. Lavender soap marks out a pattern of reflections between these two women in their two locations and their separate negotiations of diasporic subjectivity that allows each to influence and transform the other.

Badami is, as Parameswaran complains is too common among the "better-known writers of the diaspora," an author who "foreground[s] some of the most negative images of India" ("Dispelling" li-i). Badami is also an author who foregrounds some of the most negative images of Canada. In *Can You Hear the Nightbird Call?* neither the Indian nor the Canadian national space is idealized, frustrating both the diasporic nostalgia for *there* and equally frustrating an assimilationist embrace of *here*. Badami also does not reinforce "we-they demarcations [that] are clearly drawn along minorities-establishment lines" in the Canadian space (Parameswaran, "Introduction" xxiii). *Can You Hear the Nightbird Call?*, instead, refuses to create or to reinforce a positioning of the South Asian cultural vector as some sort of inviolable "sacred cow." Instead Badami calls the reader's attention to differences and tensions *within* the diaspora as important components in the negotiation of South Asian-Canadian diasporic consciousness.

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Badami's text critiques the politics of the nation-state, both Canada's and India's, but it also calls attention to and critiques what Kenishka Goonewardena calls the 'good' and 'bad' politics that occur in diasporas. Clarifying the line between progressive and reactionary moments within the same diaspora and the creation of "*Us and Them*" (Badami 341) within South Asian-Canadian diasporic subjectivity seems to be at the centre of Badami's text.

The idea of diasporic subjectivity as a complex and ongoing process of negotiation is a thematic that connects Badami's body of work. While it is a process rooted in individual agency, diasporic subjectivity, as Badami constructs it, cannot be separated from the collective. Heike Härting observes in her analysis of Badami's 2002 novel *The Hero's Walk* that diasporic identity in that text is constructed as "an interdependent process of individual self-discovery and social reconnection on a local rather than a global level" (57). Like in *Can You Hear the Nightbird Call?,* Badami's conception of diasporic subjectivity is best understood as following the model of Indra's net: it inscribes a relationship between individual and collective that reflects the negotiation between diverse influences of multiple collectives through the specific location of the individual as agent. This conception of diasporic subjectivity functions to "interrupt the nation's dream of homogeneity and clearly defined borders" by calling attention to the transnational flow of peoples and cultures that occur within the diaspora (Härting 58). Diaspora in this construction is not a closed, unified entity whose boundaries can be policed and whose contents can be readily commodified by the nation-state. Transnational movements of people and culture, Härting argues, create diasporic subjectivity not just in individuals who are in diasporic dispersal but also in those who "stay put" (Härting 58) through the series of interactions and reflections that connect individuals within the diaspora. This is a conception of diaspora that troubles the nation-state but it is also a conception of diaspora that troubles the idea

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of globalization. Because this conception of diaspora is dependent on the location of the individual with respect to the diasporic network, rather than prioritizing transnational dislocation, even economic and political forces that may be globalizing in their influence must be read within the framework of the individual's specific location.

This insight into the complexity of diasporic subjectivity, as opposed to diasporic movement, argues against a reading of Badami's texts as simply reinscribing or reinforcing definitions of Otherness within Canadian literature. I argue that Badami is not, as Mridula Nath Chakraborty suggests, simply writing "nostalgic narratives" (128). Badami's project is not an attempt to "serve the dual function of keeping the myth of the Return (to the country of origin) alive while serving up the vignettes of that culture in celebratory doses for communal nostalgic consumption" (Chakraborty 128). Nor is it an attempt to "stand in as and for an essentialized and authentic picture of the ethnic Other" (Chakraborty 128-9). Rather, Badami's project is to argue that South Asian-Canadian diasporic subjectivities are too complex and too individual to be read reductively. *Can You Hear the Nightbird Call?* reflects the complexity of and differences *within* South Asian-Canadian diasporic consciousness and the dangers of failing to recognize that complexity and internal difference. Somewhere in the connections between these differently located and constructed diasporic consciousnesses and their reflections of and on each other lies the answer to how the tragedy of Air India Flight 182 could have happened and how the Khalistan movement continues to inspire the threat of extremist violence within the South Asian-Canadian diaspora.

Can You Hear the Nightbird Call? is structured around the intertwining lives of three central female characters, Sharhan/Bibi-ji, Leela, and Nimmo. Each of these women presents the reader with a different reflection on the possible meanings of "Canada."   For Sharhan, "Canada,

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with its lavender soap and chocolate, was *her* fate" (27), a fate that had been denied to her father

when he was not "allowed [. . .] to get off the *Komagata Maru*" (11). Canada represents

Sharhan's opportunity to become transformed into Bibi-ji, wife and partner of the increasingly

successful business man, Khushwant Singh/Pa-ji. It represents the opportunity for not just

freedom from poverty but economic success. However, Bibi-ji can only claim these

opportunities by usurping "Kanwar, her sturdy, loving, lost sister" (7) who had a prior claim to

Khushwant, leaving Kanwar to face *her* fate in the horror of Partition and Bibi-ji to face her own

guilt. For Leela, "Canada" represents the loss of her "comfortable life [as] Mrs. Bhat — a full

and happy existence" (94) in Bangalore, but it is also a place where, after seventeen years, she is

recognized as "one who belong[s], one who needed no maps to find her way" (312). While she

claims belonging in Canada, Canada ultimately refuses to claim her:

> [Leela's daughter Preethi] thinks about Brian Mulroney's gaffe [after the bombing
>
> of Air India Flight 182], calling India's prime minister, Rajiv Gandhi, to offer his
>
> condolences when it was a planeload of mostly Canadian citizens who had died.
>
> How would Leela have felt? Preethi wonders. Even in death, neither [Canada nor
>
> India] claimed her poor mother as its own. (396-7)

The vision of Canada reflected from Nimmo's position is as complicated and conflicted as the

vision of Canada seen by Bibi-ji and Leela. Canada, in the form of Bibi-ji, Nimmo's lost aunt,

might be a route to recovering her own lost past and financially redeeming her present. But

recovering Nimmo's past can only be achieved at the price of confronting her childhood

memories of the terrors of Partition and redeeming her present at the cost of her pride. Canada is

both the place to which she sends her eldest son for the hope of a better future and the place

where she loses the same son to "religious extremists and guerrilla fighters in a country far

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away" from Canada (310). Nimmo's hopes that her son "would learn to be like those smart boys [. . .] in the better parts of New Delhi" (182) and eventually bring his younger siblings to Canada are not just dashed but betrayed by her son's culpability in the chaos that destroys her husband, her other two children, and, in the end, her sanity.

The vision of Canada that is reflected from the position of each of these characters is distinctly different. In part this difference exists because each woman occupies not just a different position in relation to the larger South Asian diaspora but also a different position in relation to the specific location of the South Asian-*Canadian* diaspora. Bibi-ji leaves what is still colonial India to join her husband in Canada. Bibi-ji's ability to enter Canada as Pa-ji's wife is an unforeseen consequence of her father's "voyage that ended in nothing" (5): the voyage of the *Komagata Maru*.   In the years following the *Komagata Maru* Incident, Canada had maintained a policy of strictly excluding immigration from India. However, there was one exception to this policy: "the wives and minor children of men already in the country" were permitted entry into Canada after 1918 (Johnston 134). This, however, was not the result of a change in the Canadian government's attitude towards Indians as "undesirable" immigrants, but, rather, a result of Canada's position within the Commonwealth and the Canadian government's concession to the needs and demands of the Imperial centre:

> [A]t the Imperial War Conference of 1918, Prime Minister Borden [. . .] bent to
> the pressure of British officials who told him that the stakes were high, that the
> atmosphere in the Panjab, the chief recruiting ground for the Indian army, was
> being poisoned by agitators making skilful use of the Canadian situation and he
> recognized the damage done by the *Komagata Maru*. (Johnston 134)

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The "damage done" by Canada's exclusionist policy was not directly visible in the Canadian nation but was visible in a perceived threat to the stability of colonial rule in India. Bibi-ji is able to "overcome space and time and [win] the country that had turned her father away all those years ago" (Badami 36) not in spite of but because her father was "denied entry into Canada, denied a chance to make a better life and finally accused of treason" (17). Bibi-ji's relationship to the South Asian diaspora generally, and the South Asian-Canadian location of the diaspora specifically, allows Badami to point out that within the specificity of individual diasporic consciousness there are historical interconnections that the individual may or may not be aware of. Sharhan/Bibi-ji is aware of her father's failed attempt to reach Canada, "that unknown distant land" (11). She may have been aware that what compelled her to show herself to her sister's suitor, "even though her mother had threatened her with three kinds of beatings if she did" (29) was a reflection of her father's diasporic ambitions. However, Sharhan/Bibi-ji, a sixteen-year-old young woman from a small rural village at the time of her marriage, is unlikely to know the proceedings of the Imperial War Conference of 1918. Sharhan/Bibi-ji may be able to see the reflection of "that distant Why Not that had propelled her father into making one journey" in her question to herself, "Why not take a chance?" (29), but she does not see that India *and* Canada's relationships to colonialism are implicit in the outcome of both journeys. Reading through the model of Indra's net, however, propels the critical reader to see the reflection of Harjot Singh's failed voyage on the *Komagata Maru* in his daughter's successful entry into South Asian-Canadian diasporic consciousness and the relationship of both transnational movements to the colonial project.

Leela's position within the South Asian diaspora and the South Asian-Canadian location differs from Bibi-ji's. Leela leaves a country that is struggling to inscribe a discourse of itself as

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a unified, national entity and arrives in a country engaged in the same struggle. Leela leaves an

India that inscribes itself as a "*sovereign, socialist, secular, democratic republic* with a

parliamentary system of government" ("Government"). It has been ruled for the first twenty

years of its existence by the Congress Party, led first by Nehru and later by his daughter Indira

Gandhi. It is a country unified by a constitution that "integrate[s] 562 formerly autonomous

princely states into the Union of India" ("India" para 9).   However, it is a country that has used

force to defend its territorial integrity from external forces, "notably [. . .] Pakistan and China,

[which] led to a series of Indo-Pakistan Wars, and an Indo-Chinese War in 1962" (para 10). It is

also a country whose territorial integrity is threatened from within: "certain states such as Assam,

Kashmir, and Punjab demanded more autonomy" (para 10). Leela arrives in a Canada that

similarly perceives its territorial integrity threatened by external forces, particularly American

cultural imperialism, and from internal forces, both the demands of "a new form of Québec

nationalism" that emerged after the Second World War and the demands of "other internal

differences [. . .] Canada's Native peoples and the 'ethnic minorities'" (Mackey 55).   Leela's

Canada is celebrating its centennial year as a culmination of a series of "state interventions in

cultural politics" to introduce "symbols of a renovated and future-oriented Canadian nation"

(Mackey 56). This is a Canada that "[a]fter the Second World War" had begun to take "steps to

move from the status of colony to independent nationhood" (Mackey 52). Canadian citizenship is

brought into legal existence in 1946; the Maple Leaf becomes Canada's official national flag in

1965; "Oh Canada" becomes Canada's official national anthem in 1967. Manipulating "the

symbols of nationhood," however, is not just an exercise in creating an Enlightenment nationalist

discourse. Only part of the state's goal in intervening in cultural politics is to inscribe the

Canadian "nation as evolved – as individual and different from all other nations" (Mackey 56-

57). The other part of the state's goal is to inscribe a discourse that "creat[es] unity and similarity between diverse and different cultures, or 'stocks'" (Mackey 57) that inhabit the space of the Canadian nation. Although Leela is not aware that the India she leaves behind and the Canada that she arrives in are both engaged in a similar nation building project, reading through the model of Indra's net draws attention to these parallels as a context for reading her diasporic subjectivity. Leela's diasporic subjectivity allows an opportunity to not so much "challenge the nation" as challenge nationalist identity. Both India and Canada, in the moment of Leela's diasporic movement, are engaged in the project of creating a discourse of national unity that will allow the state to more efficiently manage what is in both cases a heterogeneous population. Leela provides a focal point that reflects the similarities between the Indian and the Canadian national projects, aligning them in the same temporal moment and collapsing the "spatial and psychic distance [of First World ethnic studies] from Third World nationalism" (Chariandy para 3). Her diasporic subjectivity provides the grounds for reading the similarities between (rather than the sameness of) Indian and Canadian anti-colonial nationalisms.

Neither Bibi-ji nor Leela fits the traditional pattern of diasporic movement. Neither is displaced by trauma and instead both enter the South Asian diaspora through voluntary migration. Their relationship to diaspora is perhaps best understood within the context of postcolonial diasporic thought. As David Chariandy suggests in "Postcolonial Diasporas," diaspora as a critical context, in terms of reading the characters of Bibi-ji and Leela, must be understood as figurative. However, it is still productive to read these characters in relationship to their diasporic subjectivities as it allows us to "make inventive demands on existing political, institutional, and epistemological constraints" (para 18). Perhaps the least of these demands is to insist that Bibi-ji and Leela need to be read as part of the same South Asian diasporic network as

Nimmo. Nimmo does experience a catastrophic displacement from her homeland. Partition, the birth of two modern nation-states, makes her one of the "ten million people [who] lost their homes, their families, communities and memories" (Badami 51). However, Nimmo's experience of traumatic dislocation does not make her identification as diasporic any more straightforward than that of Bibi-ji or Leela. Nimmo never leaves what is now identified as South Asia. Instead, Nimmo's diasporic movement and "internal displacement" directly questions the relationship between diaspora and nation in a way that Bibi-ji's and Leela's do not. For Nimmo the relationship between nation, culture, and geography is not conceptual; it is profoundly real. Death lies in being the "wrong" person on the "wrong" side of an "imaginary" line:

> They heard trains chugging slowly a few miles beyond the fields, saw their dark trail of smoke. A rumour spread that the long metal caterpillars were full of dead bodies – of Hindus and Sikhs if the trains were heading towards India, and Mussulmans if they were going to Pakistan. They passed burning villages and villages that were unnaturally quiet, and sometimes more people joined their kafeela, all heading south, hoping to cross the new boundary line which had appeared like a wickedness in their innocent lives, into India. (157)

Nimmo is able to relate that her diasporic journey ends in "New Delhi, in a vast village of tents and shacks — a refugee camp set up by the government of the newborn India" (157). But then the question becomes: how do we understand her diasporic movement? How do we read diaspora from colonial India to "newborn India"? Does Nimmo's movement from "India" to "India" complicate her recognition as diasporic even though what starts her "long journey" (157) conforms to the traditional definitions of diaspora? Does Nimmo's diasporic subjectivity challenge the nation by pointing to its temporality and arbitrariness or does the nation foreclose

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the possibility of her diasporic subjectivity by making her displacement internal to the nation? Can we only read Nimmo as engaging diasporic subjectivity when she foresees her future, the future of her children, in Canada? When we read the character of Nimmo through the model of Indra's net we are forced to question how, even when diasporic subjectivity is positioned as a challenge to the concept of nation, it is still framed if not limited by national boundaries. Does diasporic subjectivity, even figuratively imagined postcolonial subjectivity, "worry the nation" (to borrow from Jonathan Kertzer)[60] or tacitly reaffirm its authority? Much like the characters of Sripathi and Arun in *The Hero's Walk*, Nimmo witnesses "the ways in which the material effects of global developments transform [her] quotidian li[fe]" (Härting 58). She also witnesses how a political movement engendered in the Punjab, translated and militarized through the diaspora, and then acted out in transnational violence radically alters the day-to-day existence of her family's life.

There are points of consistency within the complex diasporic subjectivities of these three characters as they engage with the South Asian-Canadian location of the South Asian diaspora. For each woman the concept of "home" is central to the construction of her identity and, in each case, "home" cannot be equated with the ancestral homeland. For Bibi-ji, "home" is not Panjur, the village of her childhood. In her memories, as in reality, Panjur is no longer a living place but a potentially dangerous specter of a time before:

> [A]fter Partition, Panjaur itself disappeared into that grey zone between India and
> Pakistan where floodlights threw every detail into stark contrast, barbed wire

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[60] In his book *Worrying The Nation: Imagining a National Literature in English Canada*, Kertzer proposes "worrying" as a scholarly form: "Worrying might be called a dogged engagement with the problematic. To worry at a subject is to consider it persistently in different ways, in a spirit of diffident concern. It is not the most enlightening style of criticism because it tends to be gloomy, but what it lacks in consistency it makes up for in tenacity." (35). The subject that is worrying Kertzer (and that Kertzer is worrying) is the continuing possibility of a national literature in a time when the ideas of the "nation" and the "national" are being called into question.

bristled and soldiers kept watch year-round, she could not even return to the place

of her origins, a necessary thing if memory is to be kept fully alive. (4)

Home for Bibi-ji "is *here* now" in Canada (119; emphasis added), in the "Taj Mahal"[61] built by

Pa-ji for "[his] queen to live in" (63). Inside her Vancouver home, Bibi-ji reinvents and reclaims

the Punjab. But the Punjab that Bibi-ji keeps inside her home is one that has been negotiated

with the Canadian space that her Taj Mahal sits upon. As she teaches Leela, Bibi-ji has realized

the importance of consciously negotiating with the social and political realities of this place,

what she calls "the Minority Boat" (137), in the process of creating her own diasporic

subjectivity.

> "The Chinese, the Japanese, the Italians, that barber Majid, you and me,"
>
> Bibi-ji said. "In this country we are all in the same boat."
>
> "What boat?" Leela asked.
>
> "The Minority Boat," Bibi-ji said darkly. "A leaky thing — could go down
>
> any minute if you don't watch out." She patted Leela's arm. "Make sure it does
>
> not drown you." (137)

Leela and Nimmo reflect the same ambivalent relationship to the ancestral homeland that Bibi-ji

demonstrates; for them, as for Bibi-ji, their ancestral homelands are remembered in painful

moments "sharp and clear as shards of glass" (4). Home, the place of belonging, the place to

which they desire to return, is elsewhere.

Leela's ancestral home, the home of her grandmother, "*the house that Rama Shastri*

built" (75) is the place where she is not accepted. Although she feels she does belong to "the

family of Well-Known People living inside [its] walls" (75), her grandmother's refusal "to touch

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[61] The "original" Taj Mahal is located in Uttar Pradesh and not in the Punjab.

[Leela] while making a great show of cuddling the children of her younger sons" (81) makes it clear to her that she is not accepted. Akka's racism, racism she encourages in her other grandchildren, will not allow her to accept the child of her eldest son and his German wife. As "a child of eight"(74), Leela realizes "that to survive she would have to use whatever means she had to get away from the house to a place that she could own entirely"(87). In the moments before her death on Air India Flight 182, on her first journey to India in seventeen years, Leela comes to the realization that home is not "*the house that Rama Shastri built*" in Balepur, or in her husband's family home in Bangalore; instead home is "*the house that we bought*" in Vancouver (392). As Leela demonstrates, with time, "Abroad" has turned into "Home" (308). Nimmo's experience echoes the experience of the two older women. However, while like Bibi-ji and Leela, Nimmo's relationship to "the land [her] people had tilled for a hundred years" (159), is marked by pain and loss, her relationship to the ancestral homeland is also marked by terror. Nimmo's home is "the city of New Delhi in a country called India which had, by chance, become hers" (167). It is the home she shares with Satpal and her children, with the handprints in the whitewash that echo the handprints on the wall of her childhood home. Like Bibi-ji who retreats within the walls of her Taj Mahal after the deaths of Pa-ji and Leela, Nimmo retreats within the walls of her home after the slaughter of her family. Nimmo discovers, as Leela does in the last moments of her life, home is where she, unquestionably, belongs.

These three women who occupy different positions within the South Asian diaspora share a similar commitment to the home they make away from the ancestral homeland. While Badami focuses on these three female characters, to argue that Badami links feminine subjectivity to the complex negotiation of home would be to overlook that the depiction of these three female characters is interdependent with male characters. Bibi-ji's sense of self is constructed on the

reflection of herself that she receives from Pa-ji. With Pa-ji's death, Bibi-ji loses not just her

husband but the mirror that had preserved her youth: "All these years she had seen herself

through her husband's eyes — a beautiful woman who never aged. But he was no longer here to

look at her, and she crumbled, an old woman alone" (336). While Bibi-ji remains as "an old

woman living in a dead house on 56th Avenue in Vancouver, on the western edge of the world"

(395), she remains in the house that Pa-ji built for her and the home they created together. Leela,

too, constructs her identity through her interdependent relationship with her husband, Balu.

When she becomes "Mrs. Bhat, the wife of Balachandra Bhat, daughter-in-law (the only one) of

the famous Gundoor Bhats" she is able to "[shove] to the remotest corner of her mind" the

rejection and absence of identity she experienced in her ancestral home. What she discovers

"inside the airplane, up in the sky, thirty-five thousand feet above sea level" is not that home "is

the house that *I* bought," but that home "is the house that *we* bought" (392; emphasis added), the

home that she creates with Balu in "the house with pine trees and hydrangeas, roses and

clematis" (392). Like the two older women, Nimmo, too, depends on her interdependent

relationship with her husband, Satpal, for her sense of identity. Her relationship with Satpal

allows her to stabilize her identity, countering the pain of "the unconnected bits and pieces" of

memory that shape her past (159). He becomes, for her, a talisman against the terrors within her

that threaten to overwhelm her: "She hated waking up and not finding her husband's body beside

her. How would she live without Satpal's gentleness and strength? How would she sleep without

his arms wrapped around her to keep her nightmares at bay?" (158). The handprints that mark

Nimmo's home, unlike those that marked her ancestral home, are not those of the entire family,

but only hers and Satpal's. Placed there while they interrupt their shared task of whitewashing

the house to make love, for Nimmo, the handprints continue to mark the house as "home" even after her family is destroyed:

> Even later, the time came when she would sit in the same room, dark and filthy and smelling of death rather than fresh paint, and yet when her eyes landed on those faded handprints, the single large one beside her own two, she would feel a tiny spark of that distant joyous moment when her husband's body had lain on hers, warm and so very alive. (245-46)

The example of these three central female characters argues that Badami is not proposing that the space of home is gendered either feminine or masculine. Instead, "home" is the space created by both the "princess" and the "lion," Kaur *and* Singh, in an equal, mutual, and interdependent relationship.

Jasbeer Singh has a very different understanding of home than that of the three central female characters or their male counterparts, an understanding that is reflected in and destroys the lives of Bibi-ji, Leela, and Nimmo. Jasbeer, Nimmo's eldest son, is given, at the age of seven, to Bibi-ji to raise and educate in Canada. Growing up in Canada "[h]is only real friend was Preethi Bhat," Leela's daughter (192). Jasbeer is an unhappy and angry child, not because of any trauma that he has experienced, but, as his mother Nimmo worries, because of "the darkness she senses in his thin body" (150). In Canada, under Bibi-ji's care, Jasbeer continues his angry and "destructive" behaviour: "[h]e hated his school and inspired complaining letters from his teachers almost every week" (192). When taken to New Delhi to visit his parents he "fought constantly with his younger brother, kicked his mother, refused to go near his baby sister and, on the sixth day, earned a thrashing from his father" (192). He manipulates both Bibi-ji and his mother, using their affection for him to drive a wedge between them. Bibi-ji comes to suspect

that what is fuelling Jasbeer's destructive behaviour is not that "he did *not* have enough of a

sense of his cultural roots in this western country" but rather that "[t]he boy had too *much* of a

sense of history instilled into his head by Pa-ji" (198). Pa-ji is an enthusiastic, amateur historian

who, in his office in the Taj Mahal, "work[s] on his book, *The Popular and True History of the*

Sikh Diaspora" (200). However, as Pa-ji admits to Bibi-ji early in their marriage, his obsession

with the history of the Sikh diaspora is intimately tied to creating a personal history for himself.

In the "blank slate of a foreign country," Pa-ji has been able to invent an entire family "out of

thin air" to fulfill his childhood "longing for his dead parents" (202-03). However, both Bibi-ji

and Pa-ji come to realize that there is danger in Pa-ji's "small private fictions" (204) when they

are communicated as truth to an angry and destructive Jasbeer:

> For the first time Pa-ji had an inkling of the trouble that he had perhaps started
>
> with his youthful fictions. He had believed then, as he did now, that a man
>
> needed such a thing as a history. Without history you were nothing, a nobody,
>
> one of those fluffy seed-heads floating in the summer breeze, unaware of your
>
> origins, careless of your destination. Meaningless, mythless, *shapeless*. He had
>
> not thought there could be harm in fostering in this boy who had come into their
>
> lives a sense of the people he belonged to, a pride in his Sikh roots, so that he
>
> would never feel anything less than a healthy respect for himself. (206).

Jasbeer (mis)understands the history that Pa-ji is trying to impart to him. He is "helplessly

furious" at the racism that he encounters in his schoolmates and the school's principal. And, as

Leela points out, "[h]e does not have a sense that his actions have consequences" because Bibi-ji

spoils him (235). These influences and his responses to them make Jasbeer a willing protégé of

Dr. Randhawa, a zealous advocate of the cause of Khalistan.

However, as Badami inscribes him, Jasbeer is not to be understood as representative of Canadian Sikhs, or even a particular generation of Canadian Sikhs. Instead Jasbeer is to be understood as an individual who is responsible for his own decisions. To the complex system of influences that surround him, Jasbeer adds his *uyir*:

> A Tamil word — it refers to something a person's soul has brought with it from a distant place in the universe — not inherited from the parents, nor acquired from the place, or the food, or air, or earth, or water even. *Uyir* is the mystery in every one of us, the thing that makes us move and grow, the thing that makes us alive. Sometimes this *uyir* is good and sometimes it is made bad. (Badami 236)

Jasbeer is not a victim of circumstance; instead, it is his *uyir*, that aspect of his identity that is uniquely his own, that leads him to embrace Dr. Randhawa, who Pa-ji warns is a "foolish man who preache[s] death and destruction" (287). It is Jasbeer's *uyir* that leads him to, as Bibi-ji fears, become "involved with religious extremists and guerrilla fighters in a country far away" (310). Jasbeer alone makes the decision to sacrifice everyone he knows and cares for in the pursuit of a united, independent Punjab — Khalistan — a Sikh ancestral homeland which has never existed.

Within the context of *Can You Hear the Nightbird Call?*, Jasbeer's insistence on identifying home with the fiction of an ancestral homeland is depicted as an aberration. Unlike Bibi-ji, Leela, and Nimmo, who identify home with the present, Jasbeer identifies home with a mythical past that he projects into an equally mythical future. While Jasbeer may be an aberration, Badami's text points out that he is not an isolated example. With each visit to Canada, Dr. Randhawa is able to attract larger and larger audiences to hear him speak, and more and more acolytes to join his cause. This embrace of the Khalistan movement by members of the

larger community complicates the reductive assumption that extremism can only be the province of someone like Jasbeer: a troubled, angry and destructive youth. Badami suggests that some members of the community, like Bibi-ji, lend their support to the Khalistan movement out of a sense of personal grief and a desire for revenge, all complicated by religious convictions: "The Indians had humiliated the Sikhs and they had killed her Pa-ji. It was now a question of defending the faith, the thing that gave them, as a tribe, a face and a distinction" (343). However, unlike the particular case of Bibi-ji who is personally affected by Operation Blue Star, the "*sea of anger*" (344) that wells up within South Asian-Canadian diasporic consciousness after the Indian army's invasion of the Golden Temple, and after the assassination of Indira Singh by her Sikh bodyguards, is more difficult to explain. The explanation, Badami suggests, is to be found in unravelling a diasporic puzzle. How are the actions of individuals and nation-states "in a country far away" from the Canadian location reflected in South Asian-Canadian diasporic subjectivity? How does that transformation of South Asian-Canadian diasporic subjectivity materially impact "a country far away"? And how does that network of mutual influences result in the downing of an aircraft carrying 329 people in the place in between?

Badami's exploration of the causes of the bombing of Air India Flight 182 and its relationship to South Asian-Canadian diasporic subjectivity does not provide easy explanations for what was an act of "home-grown" *Canadian* terrorism that targeted the bodies of predominantly *Canadian* citizens. It does, instead, argue that the "easy explanations" are not just "easy" but reductive in their assessment of the range of influences that intersect in the reality of extremist violence within the Canadian space.   The "easy" explanation, from the perspective of Canadian national unity, is to displace the source of extremist violence away from Canadian cultural and geographic space. Jonathan Kay argues that the roots of extremist violence have

been "imported" by South Asian-Canadians as part of a "culture of violence from their homeland" (para 3). The World Sikh Organization of Canada (WSO) [62] argues extremist violence within the South Asian-Canadian community is a myth "first perpetuated by the Government of India for its own political interests, and quickly sealed with a stamp of approval by some opportunistic politicians" ("Rise"). However, the mapping of diasporic subjectivities that Badami reflects in *Can You Hear the Nightbird Call?* problematizes this position to the point that it becomes unsustainable. *Here* and *there*, Badami argues, cannot be reified in terms of geographical space; instead *here* and *there* are mutually interdependent, each creating and recreating the other. If there can be said to be a "culture of violence," the "homeland" that engenders it is as equally the Canadian national space as it is any other space within the South Asian diasporic network. The political motivation for promoting the belief in this "culture of violence" again points to the interdependences rather than the differences between the Indian and Canadian national spaces. As the WSO points out, there are strong similarities between the Khalistan separatist movement and the Québec separatist movement, both of which threaten the unity of the nation-state, both of which have been associated with violence, and both of which have been countered by the state with military and political force.

　　Can You Hear the Nightbird Call? has more unsettling implications than simply to point to the facile flaws of the "easy" answer. *Can You Hear the Nightbird Call?* argues that there is an inherent danger in "closing the book" on the Air India Flight 182 bombing and the long

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[62] The World Sikh Organization of Canada describes itself as "a non-profit international umbrella organization founded in 1984 as an international organization, with a mandate to promote and protect the interests of the Sikh Diaspora, as well as to promote and advocate for the protection of human rights for all individuals, irrespective of race, religion, gender, ethnicity, and social and economic status" ("WSO"). While the WSO claims to be an international organization, its only offices are located in Canada where the WSO "is governed by a National Assembly of 31 Executive Members representing five regions in Canada" ("WSO"). While the WSO may be international in its interests, it is decidedly Canadian in its organization and governance.

history of the South Asian-Canadian diaspora. It is, as Lily Cho argues, emblematic of the

demands that "minority" literatures place on the Canadian literary canon:

> the demand [. . .] for a history of the present which understands the past is not
>
> simply the past. There are histories which remain unredressed, memories which
>
> continue to haunt, and legacies of exploitation and dislocation which have yet to
>
> be narrated other than as unfortunate features of a regrettable past. ("Dreaming"
>
> 193)

Can You Hear the Nightbird Call? is published in the same year that the Canadian inquiry into

the Air India Flight 182 bombing was announced and one year after courts in Canada found "two

Canadians [. . .] not guilty on first-degree murder charges in the bombing" and courts in India

"revealed that only one police official …was convicted in the 1984 anti-Sikh riots in which more

than 3,000 Sikhs were killed in Delhi alone" (Badami 403). This temporal positioning of

Badami's text inscribes a "history of the present which understands the past is not simply the

past." This narrative reflecting the past in the unfolding of the present is reinforced by Badami's

reflection of objective history within her fictionalised recounting of the events leading up to the

bombing of Air India Flight 182. The particular example of this is Badami's recounting of the

1985 attack on Ujjal Donsanjh, an event that she fictionalizes only by excluding his name: "A

Sikh lawyer's head was bashed in with an iron rod because he protested Canadian immigration

policies that, he claimed, allowed secessionists and extremists from Punjab safe haven in

Canada" (373). Dosanjh has long been an outspoken critic of the Khalistan movement and the

belief that Sikhism and support for Khalistan are identical. He has consistently "been critical of

those who support violence to create a Sikh homeland in India" (Hume).   In Dosanjh's career

first as a "human rights and social justice activist" ("Meet Ujaal Donanjh") and later as a

politician at both the provincial and federal levels of government,[63] this position has made

Dosanjh a consistent target of attack and intimidation. In 1985, months before the bombing of

Air India Flight 152, Dosanjh was attached in the parking lot of his law practice "by an assailant

wielding a lead pipe, leaving him with a broken hand and a gash in his head that required 80

stitches" (Kay).

Through Dosanjh and the still open site of the Air India Flight 182 bombing, Badami's

creative exploration of South Asian-Canadian diasporic history continues to be reflected into the

present. The year 2010 may have seen the publication of a final report from the Canadian

government's inquiry into the bombing; however, it also saw the publication of the latest of a

long cycle of threats against Dosanjh. In April of 2010, Inderjit Singh Bains, one of the

organizers of Surrey, B. C.'s Vaisakhi Parade,[64] "said on a Punjabi radio station the Liberal MP

Ujjal Dosanjh and B. C. MLA Dave Hayer[65] weren't welcome at the event, and if they showed

up they would be responsible for their own safety" ("Politicians"). In that same month, the Royal

Canadian Mounted Police, Canada's national police service, began an investigation into death

threats made against Dosanjh, the sitting Liberal party member of the Canadian parliament

representing the riding of Vancouver South, British Columbia. The R.C.M.P. investigation was

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[63] As a member of the British New Democratic Party, Dosanjh was first elected to the provincial legislature in 1991 as the representative from Vancouver-Kensington to the ruling New Democratic government. Rising from the backbenches of the legislation in 1995 to serve a variety of cabinet positions, Dosanjh was eventually appointed Minister Responsible for Multiculturalism, Human Rights and Immigration and was appointed Attorney General. After a leadership controversy within the BC NDP, Dosanjh became Premier of the province in February 2004, the first South Asian-Canadian to become Premier of a Canadian province. In the May 2000 election, the BC NDP lost the government and Dosanjh lost his seat in the legislature. Returning to politics in 2004 as a federal Liberal candidate in Vancouver South, Dosanjh was elected to the ruling Liberal government and served as federal Minister of Health from 2004 - 2006. After the fall of the Liberal government in 2006, Dosanjh has continued to hold his seat as the Liberal MP from Vancouver South.
[64] Vaisakhi (or Baisakhi) is a festival celebrating New Year's Day according to the solar calendar of Southern India and the spring harvest in Northern India. It is a festival of special importance to Sikhs ("Baisakhi").
[65] "Hayer's father, publisher Tara Singh Hayer, was shot dead in his Surrey garage in 1998 after condemning Sikh extremists in his Indo-Canadian newspaper. His murder has not been solved" ("MP Ujjal Dosanjh"). At the time of his murder, Tara Singh Hayer was also scheduled to "testify as one of the key witnesses against Sikh extremists in the Air India bombing trial" ("Facebook").

sparked by online threats made against Dosanjh on "Ujjal Dosanjh is a Sikh Traitor," a page on

the social networking site, *Facebook*. These threats range from attempts at character

assassination, calling Dosanjh a "rat in our midst" and a "scumbag traitor and an insult to the

Sikh religion" ("Facebook"), to calls for a much more literal assassination: "Someone shoot him

— ASAP" ("Facebook"); "It'd be much more appropriate to pierce him with bullets, not

compassion" ("MP").

Dosanjh argues that the attacks he has endured for over twenty-five years are not isolated

incidents but rather reflections of a larger and much more frightening pattern of extremist

violence within Canada. Early in 1985, before he was attacked, Dosanjh had warned of the rise

in extremism in Canada's Sikh community and its potential threat to the *Canadian* nation: "If

tomorrow Canadians don't want to awaken to a violent ghetto they'd better wake up now"

(Dosanjh qtd. in Cruickshank). In 2010, responding to the *Facebook* site calling for his

assassination, Dosanjh issued a similar warning to the Canadian nation: "Canadians should take

these threats very seriously as an indication of poisoned minds, born and raised in Canada"

(Dosanjh qtd. in "RCMP"). What has fostered this violence, Dosanjh argues, is a form of

systemic racism that perverts the ideals of a multicultural Canadian society. It is a form of

systemic racism that overtly claims to tolerate ethnic and cultural difference within the

framework of a diverse society but tacitly holds difference apart from the right to claim Canada

as "home." From Dosanjh's position, the same systemic racism is responsible for allowing the

violence within the Canadian Sikh community to continue and, ultimately, for the bombing of

Air India Flight 182. As he testified to the Air India Inquiry in 2007, systemic racism allows for

both Canadian society and the Canadian government to believe that extremist violence "wasn't

really happening to Canadians" and that instead it "was happening to some brown guys that were

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arguing with each other, that [Canadians] don't understand" (B'nai Brith15).[66] Dosanjh is

convinced that "separatist extremism is more entrenched in some Canadian Sikh communities

than in Punjab, the Indian regions where the Khalistan movement [. . .] originated" (Armstrong).

This separatist extremism that Dosanjh sees from his position, holds a potential for violence that

originates within Canada and is a threat to Canada.

How Dosanjh understands the source of extremism associated with the Khalistan

movement and its potential threat to Canadian society is by no means a universally accepted

position. However, as Badami suggests in *Can You Hear the Nightbird Call?* the "truth" cannot

be expected to be found in a single perspective but rather in looking at the system of perspectives

and their relationship to and influence on each other. To understand the effect and importance of

the Air India Flight 82 bombing for the South Asian-Canadian diaspora and the Canadian nation,

we must, as Badami suggests, try to see and think through Indra's net to write a different history

of our mutual present.

2 Mise-en-abîme: The Role of Empathy in Rohinton Mistry's Tales from Firozsha Baag *and* A
Fine Balance

Badami's writing emphasizes the importance of recognizing the local position at which

South Asian-Canadian diasporic subjectivity is negotiated. However, defining the vectors of

influence and processes of negotiation that take place at an individual "jewel," like the Canadian

location within the South Asian diaspora, is not the only possible application of Indra's net to

readings of South Asian-Canadian literature. Rohinton Mistry's writing, I argue, is less engaged

within mapping out the specificity of the individual "jewels" as it is with trying to map out the

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[66] Dosanjh's testimony to Part I of the Air India Inquiry is cited extensively in B'nai Brith Canada's final submission
to the commission, specifically in the context of B'nai Brith's assertion that counter-terrorism law and policy within
Canada is, at present, not applied or administered on a non-discriminatory basis.

patterns of reflections that create interdependence between individual locations and individual

people. This engagement with the play of reflections between the Indian and Canadian "jewels"

places emphasis on the reader as him- or herself forming a specific "jewel" within Indra's net.

Each individual reader, from his or her specific location, will both see and contribute to the

pattern of reflections within Indra's net inflected by his or her unique location. However, by

being positioned within this complex play of interdependence, the reader is also forced to situate

his or her own individual identity in the context of the larger collective identity playing out

within the network of "jewels."

In both *Tales from Firozsha Baag* and *A Fine Balance*, the play of reflections between

individuals and national spaces leads to a reading of what Paul Gilroy would identify as one of

the "less belligerent forms" of universality (17). This is not a form of universality that, as Arun

Mukherjee rightly protests "devalues the political, racial and national while valorizing the

cosmopolitan and the international" (*Oppositional* 19) in a veiled gesture of cultural imperialism

that seeks to validate the aesthetic and ideological values of the West. It is an understanding of

the human condition that reads universality in:

> [t]he recurrence of pain, disease, humiliation and loss of dignity, grief, and care
>
> for those one loves [that] can all contribute to an abstract sense of a human
>
> similarity powerful enough to make solidarity based on cultural particularity
>
> appear suddenly trivial. (Gilroy 17)

This "pragmatic planetary humanism" locates "the predicament of fundamentally fragile,

corporeal existence" as the grounds upon which to build a universal sense of identification and

empathy rather than the grounds upon which a universal sense of sameness and conformity is

demanded (Gilroy 17). This appeal to empathetic identification seems to lend itself to a reading

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through the model of Indra's net. Empathy is contingent on the ability of the individual to understand and feel the emotions of another, to be able to see the reflections of the self in the location of the other, and to see the reflections of the other in the location of the self. Empathy, the ability to feel the interconnectedness with other individuals, becomes both the threads that hold the net of "jewels" together and the pattern of reflections visible in any one faceted "jewel." This positioning of the reader to read empathetically rather than sympathetically differs from what Joseph R. Slaughter describes as sentimental reading. Drawing on the writings of Marx and Engels, Martha Nussbaum, and Richard Rorty, Slaughter describes models of sympathetic reading as a way of encouraging imaginative identification between the "powerful" and the "powerless" that fosters a "relation of the observer (or the reader) to the sufferer [as] metaphoric, or poetic" (93). However, as Slaughter points out, these models of sympathetic reading tacitly underscore the hierarchical separation of economic "haves" and "have-nots," employing sympathy for the "have-nots" as a way of cultivating and reaffirming the humanity of the "haves":

> The edification [of the sympathetic reader] conceived in Rorty's, and to a lesser degree Nussbaum's, model of sentimental education is the cultivation of *noblesse oblige* of the powerful (rights holders) toward the powerless (those who cannot enact their human rights) that ultimately reconfirms the liberal reader as the primary and privileged subject of human rights and the benefactor of humanitarianism. These unequal divisions of the world into the rich and powerful, who have security and sympathetic understanding on their side, and the poor and powerless, who are in need of both security and sympathy, have a tendency to recenter the traditional subjects of history as the subjects of

sentimentality and goodwill. However, this divisive world map of suffering and

sympathy contains the seeds of its own undoing and undercuts the patronizing

sense of moral superiority and cosmopolitan largess that it seems to encourage on

the part of the rich, safe, and powerful readers. (Slaughter 104-5)

In place of this model of reading in which generosity is seen as unidirectional, from the reader to

the sufferer, Slaughter argues that there is a need to read the writing narratives of suffering as "a

deeply generous act" that invites the reader to imaginatively respond to the situation presented

(105). The invitation that narratives of suffering make to the reader are not to sympathize and

"other" the sufferers, but rather to see the reflection of the sufferers in the self:

Narrators who deliver their testimonies of suffering make an appeal not on the

basis of some metaphysical leap of faith or in the empathetic mode of

metaphorical imaginative identification; rather, the narration is a metonymical

claim of belonging to a common community, of membership in the universal class

of humanity from which their suffering has effectively excluded them. (Slaughter

105)

In this metonymic reading of narratives of suffering, where suffering stands in for the whole of

the human condition, Slaughter proposes reading narratives of suffering assuming that the

reader's *pity* is with the sufferer while the reader's *empathy* is with the one who intervenes in the

suffering. In *Tales from Firozsha Baag* and *A Fine Balance*, the reader would seem to be invited

to empathize with the narrator, the position that sees and, through the structure of the narrative,

metonymically reflects the space of Indian civil society within Canadian civil society. In *Tales*

from Firozsha Baag and *A Fine Balance* these empathetic threads/reflections structure and

support Mistry's exploration of South Asian-Canadian diasporic subjectivity.

Tales from Firozsha Baag, much like Badami's *Can You Hear the Nightbird Call?*,

engages with a complex understanding of diasporic subjectivity that is separate from diasporic

movement. Kersi, the protagonist whose narrative holds together this short story cycle, is

depicted as engaging diasporic subjectivity long before he travels from Delhi to Toronto. Kersi

also becomes the vector that causes his parents who "stay put" (Härting) to enter into South

Asian-Canadian diasporic subjectivity. For both Kersi and his parents, what leads them into

diasporic subjectivity is their ability to empathize with those who have gone "abroad." As each

is able to put themselves into the location of the other, the distance between those locations,

these "jewels," collapses; however, the "jewels" retain their local specificity. *A Fine Balance*

calls upon the reader to see the reflections of contemporary Canadian civil society in Indian civil

society during Indira Gandhi's Emergency. Order and "bad" government that establishes a

regime that dehumanizes the poorest and most vulnerable members of its society, Mistry argues

in his October 1996 interview with CBC Radio's *The Arts Tonight*, dehumanizes *all* members of

that society. Each individual member of society becomes dehumanized by becoming inured, by

failing to empathize with, the abuses that are being perpetrated with their silent sanction. The

criminalization of poverty, the establishment of tent cities of the homeless, forcible sterilization

of "undesirables" are all hallmarks of the Emergency government's systematic dehumanization

of Indian society. They are also hallmarks that Mistry "fears, he's seeing [. . .] in the [1995]

government of Ontario Premier Mike Harris" ("Rohinton Mistry") and in the unfolding legal

battle of victims of Alberta's Sexual Sterilization Act.[67] *A Fine Balance* attempts to defamilarize

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[67] In 1993, Leilani Muir became the first of over 2,800 Albertans sterilized without their knowledge or consent to launch a lawsuit against the Alberta government. Under the Alberta Sexual Sterilization Act (1928 – 1972), Muir's fallopian tubes were surgically removed at the age of 14 while she was an inmate at the Provincial Training School in Red Deer, Alberta. Although the act was written with the horrific (but neutral in terms of racial or gender bias) implied intent of preventing "feeble-minded Alberta citizens [. . .] from procreating" (Grekul 248), its application by the Alberta Eugenics Board was horrific *and* biased: "several subgroups, including women, Aboriginals, and

a *Canadian* audience's experience of poverty and social exploitation by reflecting the

dehumanization of *Canadian* society and its most vulnerable members in the dehumanization of

Indian society under the Emergency.

While the humanism that Mistry explores in his writing proposes a different way of

understanding the relationship between the individual and the collective than "the humanism of

existentialists and phenomenologist's, short-sighted Protestants or complacent scientists" (Gilroy

17), the forms of his writing map another layer of interconnectedness and reflection within South

Asian-Canadian diasporic consciousness. In both *Tales From Firozsha Baag* and *A Fine

Balance*, Mistry employs:

> the formal complexities that arise when a work openly or cryptically utilizes the
>
> collectively shared knowledge and experiences of a society: experience of
>
> colonialism, legends of heroes and villains, deeply held belief systems, rhetorical
>
> pronouncements of local elite such as politicians, businessmen and movie stars
>
> and so on. (Mukherjee, *Oppositional* 21)

While Mistry does not employ "formal complexities" that can be readily recognized as "Third

World" or reflective of "newly Commonwealth" societies, he does remain true to the spirit of

Mukherjee's observation. The forms that Mistry employs are not simply engaged in exploring

the private lives of individuals but are "tangled with the broad socio-political conflicts"

(Mukherjee, *Oppositional* 21) that contextualize the relationships that the individual forms with

other individuals and with the collective. Mistry employs formal complexities that have been

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teenagers and young adults [. . .] were overrepresented in cases sterilized by the Eugenics Board and its affiliated
mental health institutions" (249). As Grekul points out, this continuing practice of involuntary sterilization within
Canadian space long after "the horrors of Nazi Germany's eugenic program were exposed" (249), became common
knowledge through "media coverage of the legal battle between Leilani Muir [. . .] and the provincial government
[which] exposed many Albertans and Canadian to a dark period in the province's history" (248).

described as "distinctly Canadian" (Lynch xv): the short story cycle in *Tales From Firozsha Baag*, and the motifs of "the garrison mentality" and "survival" in *A Fine Balance*. The effect of Mistry's use of these literary forms is not to assert the cultural imperialism of the "New World" in establishing aesthetic values that mangle works from the Third World in an "arbitrary, ethnocentric fashion" (Mukherjee, *Oppositional* 23). It is not even to reaffirm that these particular forms are "distinctly" representative of Canadian *writing*. Instead, the effect of these forms within Mistry's writing is to establish South Asian-Canadian diasporic subjectivity as a position that sees a unique set of reflections in both the "South Asian" and the "Canadian." The reader is positioned to critically *read* within Mistry's texts forms and symbols that have been articulated as canonically Canadian, in such a way as to set Canadian and Indian national spaces and national*ist* identities as mirrors each to the other. This strategy creates the possibility for reciprocal visibility between the national spaces, and, as we saw in Badami, collapses the distance between "First World" and "Third World" by making visible their interdependence. Re-imagining and re-imaging the relationship between Canadian and Indian national spaces allows for Mistry's texts to make a unique intervention in the history of the Canadian present. The history of the Canadian present, *Tales From Firozsha Baag* and *A Fine Balance* suggest through their representation of the Canadian national narrative, is not only shaped by events that take place within the boundaries of Canadian national space. Instead, the "memories which continue to haunt, and legacies of exploitation and dislocation" (Cho "Dreaming" 193) *there* are reflected *here* through the negotiation of South Asian-Canadian diasporic subjectivity, and also need to be inscribed in the history of the Canadian present.

That *Tales From Firozsha Baag* is written in the form of a short story cycle reinforces the

pattern of interconnected individuals that shape South Asian-Canadian diasporic subjectivity.

The short story cycle as a genre can itself be read as a reflection of Indra's net:

> The term "short-story cycle" implies, above all, a principle of organization, a
>
> structural scheme for the working out of an idea, characters, or themes, even a
>
> circular disposition in which the constituent narratives are simultaneously
>
> independent and interdependent. The pivotal challenge of each cycle is twofold:
>
> the collection, must, at one and the same time, assert the individual and
>
> independence of each of the component parts while creating a necessary
>
> interdependence that emphasizes the wholeness and essential unity of the work.
>
> (Davis 74)

The title of Mistry's cycle does, as Rocio G. Davis suggests, "indicate an organizing concept" for

the "connective pattern" that ties these stories together (74). *Firozsha Baag*, the apartment

complex, provides a spatial metaphor for both the individuality and the interdependence of the

individual stories in the collection. Each narrative focuses on the lives of the residents of a

single unit within the complex. However, these individual narratives, like the residents of the

individual units whose tales they relate, are interconnected by more than just their spatial

position. They are connected through the interdependence of the individual residents in the

shared life of the complex. Rustomji is bound in an unending feud with his neighbour Nariman

Hansotia because of his refusal to participate in Nariman's efforts to get "the neighbours [. . .]

to pool some money and hire a contractor to paint the exterior of A Block" (Mistry, *Tales* 6).

Nariman gathers together the complex's children to tell them his own tales. Najima is bound to

Tehmina and the Boyces through their shared dependency on Najima's refrigerator. Dr. Mody,

through the admiration and consensus of his neighbours, gives "C Block a voice in Baag matters as important" as the "prominent priest" in A Block and the "chartered accountant" in B Block (80). Through their mutual interdependence the individual members of the Baag enter into each others' personal spaces and tales creating not just coherence within the short story cycle but a model of empathetic connections that hold the individuals within a coherent, if occasionally fractious, collective.

The final tale in the cycle identifies the particular location that holds the reflections of *Firozsha Baag* and is the source of the tales. In "Swimming Lessons," Kersi, in the double narration of the tale, is identified as the author of the collection through his parents' responses to the stories he has written. This final tale narrates both Kersi's experience of transnational migration to Canada and the effect of that migration on Mother and Father who "stay put" and frames the collection as a whole within the context of South Asian-Canadian diasporic subjectivity. The final tale of a short story cycle, Gerald Lynch suggests in his book *The One and The Many: English-Canadian Short Story Cycles*, should be understood as "bring[ing] to fulfillment the recurrent patterns, frequently reintroducing many of the preceding stories major characters and central imager and restating in a refrain-like manner the main thematic concerns" of the texts (26). In *The Tales of Firozsha Baag* the final tale in the cycle reorients the collection from a cycle of place to a cycle of individual development. In the final story, the reader discovers that he or she has been reading not just a novel of formation but a *kűnstlerroman*, the narration of Kersi's development as an author. Reading the collection through the location of Kersi, what becomes visible is not only how the tales narrate the interdependence of the individuals within the apartment complex, but also the threads that create interdependence between the complex and "abroad." Najamai's daughters Dolly and Vera "went abroad for

higher studies" (26) and end up living in Canada: "Vera [. . .] somewhere in Alberta, and Dolly

in British Columbia" (188). Dr. Mody collects stamps from

"Antigua…Australia…Belgium…Bhutan…Bulgaria…and on through to Malta and

Mauritius…Romania and Russia…Togo and Tonga…[. .] Yugoslavia and Zanzibar" (87).

Nariman, who spends his days reading the newspapers of the world at the library, tells the boys

the cautionary tale of Sarosh-Sid's attempt to immigrate to Canada, whose "life in the land of

milk and honey was just a pain in the posterior" (168). Before Kersi engages in diasporic

movement himself, he narrates the influences of diasporic movements on the interdependent

community of the Baag and on his own subjectivity as an individual and developing author.

This reading of the *Tales From Firozsha Baag* as the exploration of the construction of

Kersi's diasporic subjectivity and its impact on his creative literary production complicates a

reading of the collection as a narration of displacement. Instead, it is a narrative of

emplacement, specifically Kersi's location and the play of reflections that are visible from his

position and which he incorporates into his narrative. Rather than locating his relationship to

Canada and India as establishing "binary oppositions and his crisis of belonging" (Davis 88),

Kersi's relationships to both national spaces gives him a unique vantage point to see the

interdependence of the two national spaces. Within Lynch's framework the final story of an

English-Canadian short story cycle is best understood as a "return story." In the context of *Tales

From Firozsha Baag*, this raises the question: to what does Kersi return? As Father proposes in

"Swimming Lessons," Kersi's stories cannot be assumed to reflect a sense of nostalgia or

longing for "home." It is "not a sensible question" to wonder if, as Mother does, that Kersi

writes his tales "because he is unhappy and thinks of his past, and wants to save it all by making

stories of it" (243). Instead, Father offers that Kersi reflects the "memories and experiences"

(243) of his childhood in an apartment block in Bombay in the stories he writes in an apartment

block in Toronto. Father warns both Mother and the reader to not confuse "fiction with facts,

fiction does not create facts, fiction can come from facts, it can grow out of facts by

compounding, transposing, augmenting, diminishing, or altering them in any way" (250). The

facts of the fictional Kersi's childhood, Kersi's fictional father argues, can become a mirror in

which Kersi can reflect on both Canada *and* India. Kersi's return, in "Swimming Lessons" is not

his literal return to his ancestral homeland, but his return to the source of the imagery which he

chooses to use to communicate with his readers.

　　　　This reading of *Tales From Firozsha Baag* within the context of the short story cycle as a

genre suggests that the cycle needs to be taken as a collection in order to explore the play of

reflections between *there* and *here*, between India and Canada, that is the source of Kersi's

creativity. If the stories are separated, as they are when they are individually anthologized,[68]

they may be able to stand separately, but the "cyclical patterns of recurrent development and

return" (Lynch 191) are disrupted and the network of reflections that creates the integrity of the

collection as a whole disappears. Isolating individual stories either through the process of

anthologizing them or through critical engagement with the *Tales* that privileges an individual

tale overlooks the interdependence within the collection that creates a "unique balancing of the

integrity of each individual story and the whole collection" (Lynch 18), a model of Indra's net.

Following Forrest L. Ingram, Lynch defines the short story cycle as:

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[68] To provide two examples of this, "The Ghost of Firozsha Baag" is anthologized in the *New Oxford Book of Canadian Short Stories in English*, edited by Margaret Atwood and Robert Weaver, and the 4th Canadian edition of Oxford University Press's *Elements of Literature*, anthologizes "The Collectors."

> a book of shorts stories so linked to each other by their author that the reader's
>
> successive experience on various levels of the pattern of the whole significantly
>
> modifies his experience of each component part. (18)

In his study of the English-Canadian short story cycle, Lynch's literary history of the genre within the frame of Canadian national literature, the prevalence of the form would appear to suggest that there is something to his argument that the short story cycle "constitutes a distinctly Canadian genre (not, note, an exclusively Canadian genre) (xv). However, I would argue that what constitutes the short story cycle as a Canadian form is not, as he suggests, some "mysterious process by which the cultural memory of imaginative literature operates" (6). The "generic family of Canadian short story cycles" (5) does not exist in the *writing* of Canadian short story cycles but in the *reading* of those cycles within the context of each other. The individual cycles, like the individual tales within a cycle, can be read as independent to each other. However, how the *reader* rather than the *author* reads them together has the potential to "significantly modify her experience of each component part." This raises the interesting potential of reading *Tales From Firozsha Baag* against other short story cycles within Canadian literary history. What, for example, would be the insights gained from reading the *Tales* against Margaret Laurence's *A Bird in the House*? How would the development of Kersi as a writer compare to the development of Vanessa McLeod? How would the dynamics of the community of the Baag in Bombay compare to the dynamics of the community of Manawaka in Manitoba? What would the reflections of each text in the other be able to tell us about the relationship of the author's creative development in relation to place? What would be the insights gained from reading the *Tales* against Stephen Leacock's *Sunshine Sketches of a Little Town*? What reflections would be visible, from the reader's position, between a South Asian-Canadian

diasporic writer's contemplations on the nature of "home" and a Canadian Imperialist's contemplations, almost a century earlier, on the quintessential Canadian "home"?

Father's metafictional critique of *Tales From Firozsha Baag* raises an issue that becomes more urgent in reading the more explicitly political *A Fine Balance*. The majority of the characters of *Tales From Firozsha Baag* and Dina and Maneck, two of the four central characters in *A Fine Balance*, are Parsis. As Father reminds us, "Parsis came to India from Persia because of Islamic persecution in the seventh century, and were the descendants of Cyrus the Great and the magnificent Persian Empire" (*Tales* 245). Within India, Parsis always already have a diasporic subjectivity. This historic reality problematizes, as we saw in Badami's writing, the easy identification of "homeland" and home within these characters' constructions of diasporic consciousness and calls our attention to how diaspora can be made to serve the needs of the nation state. If *A Fine Balance* is read as an elaboration of "diasporic 'double duty' — of accountability to, rather than irresponsible detachment from, the homeland" (Herbert 11) — we are left with the almost impossible task of trying to determine: which homeland is the diasporic individual accountable to? And perhaps the more troubling task of determining why an engagement with "India's history and politics" (11) allows *A Fine Balance* "to problematize the potentially privileged detachment of the migrant in ways that recall critiques of depoliticized cosmopolitanism" (14) but an engagement with "Canada's history and politics" does not? Why is the Parsi diaspora identified as finding home within the Indian diasporic location but not identified as finding home within the Canadian diasporic location? This strategy would appear to attempt to impose a place of origin where, historically, that place of origin is more complex spatially and temporally than can be contained within the geographic or ideological boundaries of a single modern nation-state.

In *A Fine Balance*, this ambivalent relationship to a "place of origin" within the Parsi diasporic movement is exploited to allow the text to read the reflections of India under Indira Gandhi's Emergency in contemporary Canadian society. While this may allow "Mistry [to] establish a tension between his representation of the migrant *within* his fiction and his negotiation of his own migrant position *through* his fiction" (Herbert 11), what is more interesting to me here is to explore how the history of the Emergency and what are read as canonical Canadian literary forms establish a *mise-en-abîme*: "a slender line of reciprocal visibility [that] embraces a whole complex network of uncertainties, exchanges, and feints" (Foucault 5). In Foucault's analysis, this play of reflections and counter-reflections visible in Velásquez's painting in *Las Meninas* creates an aesthetic object that is able to "offer itself as representation in its pure form" (16): freed from its position as mimetic repetition of the "real" world, *Las Meninas* instead invokes the reciprocal process of mutual observation. As the artist is depicted observing the models of his painting, and the models are depicted observing the artist observing them, the spectator is placed within this process of mutual observation. The position of the spectator within this play of reciprocal processes is neither in the plane of the artist nor in the plane of the models. Instead the spectator is located between the scene of representation and that which is represented, in a unique location that is able to observe the play of reflections between the two surfaces in a way that is not available to either the artist or the models.

The structure of Mistry's *A Fine Balance*, much like the structures that Foucault observes in Velazquez's *Las Meninas*, places the reader within a process of mutual observation that destabilizes the position of the reader as objective observer. Positioned between the reflective images of the Indian nation-state in the 1970's and the Canadian nation-state in the 1990's, the reader of *A Fine Balance*, like the viewer of *Las Meninas*, is forced to become a participant in

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rather than an observer of the narrative because of his or her unique position in relation to the

reciprocal process of mutual observation between the two locations. This understanding of *A

Fine Balance* means that the novel cannot be read as only or even primarily "a historical novel"

(Brians 157).   The novel also cannot be read as necessarily preoccupied "with narrating the

'truth' about India as a national formation in the mid-1970's" (Gabriel 87). Like Velasquez's

Las Meninas, *A Fine Balance* is not simply engaged in faithfully fixing a past moment for

consumption by the reader; instead, as the epigraph of the novel suggests, it intends to

discomfort the reader in the present. This is not to say that the novel is not an examination of the

history of India's historical development or that it cannot be read as such. However, to read *A

Fine Balance* as only this is assume that the novel only offers one surface of reflection: the scene

of representation. Invoking Balzac's *Le Père Goriot* does, as Sharmani Patricia Gabriel

suggests, signal Mistry's novel's "desire to root narrative in the realities of the diverse social,

political and class formations of [. . .] national life" (87). But while Gabriel identifies that

"national life" as explicitly Indian, I argue that the structure of the novel suggests that the

"national life" that Mistry engages is both Indian *and* Canadian: that in the novel the reader is

positioned between the scene of representation and the scene of the represented and is uniquely

located to observe the play of reflections between these two "jewels" of Indra's net.

In *A Fine Balance* Mistry employs what are both contested *and* canonical features of

Canadian writing: Northrop Frye's concept of "the garrison mentality" and Margaret Atwood's

concept of "survival." Both "the garrison mentality" and "survival" hinge on the notion of

embattled individuals and collectives. In Frye's conception the "garrison is a closely knit and

beleaguered society, and its moral and social values are unquestionable. In a perilous enterprise

one does not discuss causes or motives: one is either a fighter or a deserter" (228). In Atwood's

conception "Canada is a collective victim" (*Survival* 36) whose literature is marked by the

symbol of survival: "what you might call 'grim' survival as opposed to 'bare' survival" (*Survival*

32). Both of these conceptions of Canadian cultural identity attempt to ground that identity in

the history of conquest and colonialism in *this* place. Frye explicitly identifies his notion of the

garrison mentality with "the earliest maps of the country [where] the only inhabited centres are

forts" (227), clearly excluding the maps and inhabited centres of the indigenous peoples of

Canada from his consideration of Canadian culture and instead focusing on "the conservative

idealism of [the garrison's] ruling class, which for Canada means the moral and propertied

middle class" (238). Cynthia Sugars points out that "it is a short step from Frye's identification

of the 'garrison mentality' to Atwood's exposé of Canadian colonial mentality and her survival

thesis" (*Unhomely* xix). Both Frye's and Atwood's attempts to identify what is uniquely

Canadian in Canadian literature are implicated in an "ostensibly unifying anti-colonial

nationalism" (*Unhomely* xx) that narrates the nation as unified by English-Canadian

settler/invader identity.

This attempt at positioning Canadian identity as formed in conflict with a monstrous

"wilderness" is a rearticulation of earlier articulations of Canadian anti-colonial nationalisms.

Both Frye and Atwood invoke a "dualism between wilderness and civilisation" where

"environment defines identity" (Mackey 45). Eva Mackey argues that the "use of wilderness as

a key to articulate the elements and characteristics of Canadian culture" (45) ties the anti-colonial

nationalist narratives of Frye and Atwood to the anti-colonialist attitudes expressed a century

earlier by the Canada First Movement at the time of Canadian confederation. While the earlier

articulation of Canadian nationalism positions the landscape as "noble" and Frye and Atwood

position the landscape as "ignoble," both articulations "[en]vision nature [as] a projection of the viewer and the *occupier*" (46; emphasis added):

> The "wilderness" aesthetic is the other side, the dark side of this stereotype of nature [somehow tamed, mirroring the traits and values of the people who have colonised it], which in a different way also re-affirms the viewer's sense of civilisation. (Mackey 46)

These articulations of "Canadians being lost in the wilderness" (Mackey 47) serve to define "Canadianness" by differentiating its people and culture from both the former European colonizer and the threat of recolonization by the American neo-colonial empire rising in the south. The narration of Canada as both an uninhabited and uninhabitable wilderness creates the "'wilderness landscape' as a signifier of Canada that differentiated Canada's northernness from European northernness" (Mackey 44). Unlike the American frontier, which can be conquered by the individual, the wilderness frontier is "huge, alien, unconquerable and quintessentially Canadian" (Mackey 48).

The concepts of the "garrison mentality" and "survival" inscribe this anti-colonial nationalist narrative not within the *writing* of Canadian literature, but within the *reading* of Canadian literature. This reflection of a nationalist narrative within the terms of the institutional study of Canadian literature may offer insight into why the writings of Frye and Atwood still "are central to the canon of Canadian literature taught in schools and universities" (Mackey 45) *and* still debated within the academy. This seemingly contradictory canonization of "the garrison mentality" and "survival," both entrenching and dismissing them, suggests that the value of these models is not in defining the Canadianness of a particular piece of writing but

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rather in creating a frame for allowing reflections of the Canadian nationalist narrative to be read within creative texts.

Much as I have argued that Lynch's proposal that the Canadian short story cycle can be read as "identifiably Canadian" (5) is better understood as describing the reader's position with respect to the genre rather than the writer's position within "such a thing as a generic family of Canadian short story cycles" (5), I argue that "the garrison mentality" and "survival" are more relevant in thinking through the reading rather than the writing of Canadian literature. Rather than describing themes in Canadian writing, Frye and Atwood are better understood as inscribing themes within the institutional study of Canadian national literature. "The garrison mentality" and "survival" inscribe a critical position that imbricates the reading of Canadian literature with Canadian anti-colonialist nationalism, reaffirming that "the discipline of Canadian literature is by definition a nationalist intellectual-cultural practice" (Lynch xv), at least in the academic study of Canadian national literature. By reading "the garrison mentality" and "survival" within *A Fine Balance,* I do not assume the text is written within a Canadian nationalist mode. Instead, I argue, it is an attempt to read the other reflective plane in the text: the plane of the Canadian state and Canadian nationalist identity. The reader is then positioned between the plane of representation and the plane of the represented, between an Indian nationalist history and a Canadian nationalist present, and the play of reflections between the two locations becomes visible at the unique location of the reader.

In *A Fine Balance*, the place of the wilderness "garrison" is transformed into the embattled location of Dina Dalal's urban apartment. For sixteen years after the death of her husband, Dina has battled a monstrous poverty that threatens to consume her. However, she does not wage this battle alone. In her struggle, she is aided by her interdependence on a close

network of family and friends that seeks to work with her to defend her independence from her brother. Shiran Aunty introduces her to tailoring, gives her her extra sewing machine and takes her on as a partner. At least half of her family "show their approval of her independent spirit" by inventing "numerous ideas for money-making ventures" (66). Her old school-friend Zenobia introduces her to Mrs. Gupta "the export manager of a large textile company" (74) and finds her a boarder. Zenobia's actions lead to the filling of Dina's garrison with "their schoolfriend's son, Maneck Kohlah," and "two tailors names Ishvar and Omprakash Darji" (79). Together Dina, Maneck, Ishvar, and Om form "a closely knit and beleaguered society, and its moral and social values are unquestionable. In [their] perilous enterprise one does not discuss causes or motives: one is either a fighter or a deserter" (Frye 228). They work collectively to protect the space of the apartment and the community within it. Deceiving the rent-collector, working to fill the dress orders, and, after the kidnapping of the tailors into a forced work program, living collectively in the apartment, binds the four members of the "garrison" both to the place of the apartment and to each other.

The mentality within this "garrison" is that of its only officer: Dina, who is moral and has been middle class. Dina warns the tailors about associating the Rajaram (Mistry 453), she diagnoses and insists on treatment of Om's lice (459), and she attempts to regulate the relationship between Maneck and the tailors (465). While Dina does recognize the interdependence of the community that develops within her apartment "garrison," she is also aware of her position as the controlling force within that community and that her actions are guided by her own sense of "self-preservation" and marked by "[d]eceit, hypocrisy, [and] manipulation" (452). However, that Dina, at the time of the narrative, is no longer middle class, and is in fact almost as poor as the subordinates she controls, allows for this particular "officer"

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to develop a different relationship with her "troops" than is suggested in Frye's conception of "the garrison mentality." Dina's economic survival is interdependent with the economic survival of the tailors and the ongoing reality of the community within the apartment. In essence, it is Dina's sense of "self-preservation" that allows for her to both recognize and to foster the connections that allow them to begin "[s]ailing under one flag" (465). As Sharmani Patricia Gabriel suggests, Dina's quilt of fabric scraps becomes a physical manifestation of the unification of the community of the apartment: "Although Dina alone first starts work on the quilt, she is gradually joined by Maneck and then by Ishvar and Om, so that the finished work represents the coming together of their socially separate and unequal worlds" (92). Itself a model of Indra's net:

> the quilt points to the interconnections between the patches [. . .] a unit of common experiences that is based not on a sameness that denies or represses difference, but on a conception of community which takes as its starting point the recognition of difference. (Gabriel 93).

This ongoing transformation of Dina from the "garrison" officer who can "tolerate only the conservative idealism of its ruling class" (Frye 238) to the "garrison" officer who realizes that survival depends on accepting and embracing the interdependent relationship of the society within the "garrison" allows for a renegotiation of the implications of "the garrison mentality."

As Dina's identity as "garrison" officer is transformed, the network of allegiances and alliances that the "garrison" makes with the world outside the apartment is also transformed. Through the landlord's attempt to use violence to evict Dina from the apartment, Dina is forced into two unlikely alliances: one with the rent-collector, Ibrahim, and one with the Beggarmaster. Although Ibrahim brings the two "goondas" (499) with him to deliver his late night eviction

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notice to Dina, he is horrified at the destruction that they wreak within the apartment and Om's and Maneck's violent resistance to the attack. Although he is the agent of the landlord, it is to him that Dina turns in an attempt to stop the violence within her "garrison": "'Stop him!' said Dina to Ibrahim, grabbing his arm and pulling, pushing him towards the fray. 'You brought these goondas! Do something!'" (500). Dina reaches out to the rent-collector to join her in the defence of the "garrison," and Ibrahim, although unable to stop the attack, does join with Dina by attempting to undo the damage as the goondas are creating it, trying to restore order within the apartment: "Ibrahim wrung his hands nervously and decided to gather the wrecked frocks. As fast as the paan-chewing man could scatter them, he picked them up, folded the torn pieces, and placed them carefully on the table" (500). Dina's alliance with Beggarmaster is as unlikely as her alliance with Ibrahim. Beggarmaster, who protects and manages his company of beggars, takes Ishvar and Om under his protection when he rescues them from the forced labour camp. However, Beggarmaster's protection comes at a price: "I'm not selling onions and potatoes in the bazaar. My business is looking after human lives. Don't try to bargain with me." (426). As Beggarmaster's "clients," the tailors are obliged to pay the Beggarmaster "fifty [rupees] a week per person, for one year" (426); however, as they discover after the attack on the apartment, Beggarmaster's protection extends not just to them, but to the apartment, if Dina is willing to accept it:

> "You already have shelter. Right here. This *is* your flat, isn't it?"
>
> She nodded impatiently at the silly question.
>
> "Those goondas committed a big mistake," he continues, "and I am going to correct it for them."
>
> "And when they come back?"

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"They won't. You tailors have made your payments regularly, so you don't have to worry — you are under my protection. Everything will be taken care of. But unless I know the amount of damage, how will I reimburse you? You want to start your sewing business again or not?"

Now it was Dina's turn to look sceptical. "What are you, an insurance company?"

He smiled modestly in reply.

There was nothing to lose, she decided (508)

The network of alliances that Dina builds both within and without her garrison apartment transcends all boundaries of gender, age, class (and caste), privilege, and religion. It becomes a model of an interdependent support network that can be created within a plural, urban environment.

A Fine Balance's re-imagining and re-imaging of "the garrison mentality" in the "wilderness" is in some ways not dissimilar from the re-imagining of "the garrison mentality" that Frye argues would accompany the urbanization of Canadian society:

It begins as an expression of the moral values generally accepted in the group as a whole, and then, as society gets more complicated and more in control of its environment, it becomes more of a revolutionary garrison within a metropolitan society. But though it changes from a defence of to an attack on what society accepts as conventional standards, the literature it produces, at every stage, tends to be rhetorical, an illustration or allegory of certain social attitudes. (Frye 233)

The "certain social attitude" that *A Fine Balance* illustrates is that "[h]uman suffering" is "a by-product of massive indifference" (Frye 245) but not the indifference of the "wilderness," but

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rather the savage chaos of governmental corruption, police brutality, and the collective

indifference of individuals within a society. It is society's "massive indifference" to the abuses

that it tacitly sanctions that is the most dangerous aspect of the urban "wilderness" in which *A*

Fine Balance exists. In a "*sovereign, socialist, secular, democratic republic* with a

parliamentary system of government society" ("Government") where, as Beggarmaster points

out, it is as useful for the individual to rely on the protection of the state as it is to "complain to

that crow on your window" (509), *A Fine Balance* seems to pose the question: why do the

individuals within this society tolerate this abuse? Is it because, as Beggarmaster's "weary" (509)

observation suggests, the individuals within this society have become inured to the systematic

abuse? Is it because like Nusswan, Dina's brother, they approve of the government's program of

"fear which disciplined people, made them punctual and hardworking" and long for even greater

government action "to give a boost to the programme" (666)? Is it because, like Ibrahim, they

have after years of "drudgery and deprivation" (100) become entirely focussed on their own

survival in the face of the society within which they exist and they can spare nothing for anyone

else?

This appearance of Frye's "garrison mentality" within Mistry's *A Fine Balance* suggests

that *A Fine Balance* needs to be read as not only an historical novel of India's nationalist past but

simultaneously a social intervention in Canada's nationalist present. The "garrison" of Dina's

apartment and the "garrison mentality" that develops within it argue that within *A Fine Balance*

we need to read its overt context and content within the reflection of Canadian anti-colonialist

nationalism and its implications for *this* society. The echoes of Atwood's premise of "survival"

and "Basic Victim Positions" within the narrative underscores the need for the reader to be alert

to the *mise-en-abîme* the novel creates between the two national identities. The incorporation of

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Atwood's "survival" within *A Fine Balance* extends the frame of reflections between India's past and Canada's present from the "garrison" of the protagonists to incorporate the whole community of the impoverished. Much like Dina's sense of "self-preservation," the whole of the community of the poor is narrated as determined to survive. The Beggarmaster and his charges would appear to respond to Atwood's question, "If a man feels he can survive only by amputating himself, turning himself into a cripple or a eunuch, what price survival" (Atwood, *Survival* 33), with the answer that no price is too high to pay for survival. It is a "grim survival" that Dina, Ishvar and Om demonstrate: "[t]he heroes survive, but just barely; they are born losers, and their failure to do anything but keep alive [is] pure Canadian" (Atwood, *Survival* 34). Dina's poverty has forced her into endless servitude in her brother's house. Ishvar and Om have been forcibly sterilized and mutilated and reduced to beggars. However, they maintain their interdependent community and continue to cling to their grim survival. Maneck, who appears to thrive and enjoy economic success, ultimately commits suicide in the face of his friends' grim survival gesturing to "the Canadian gloom [that] is more unrelieved than [in most other national literatures] and [with] the death and failure toll out of proportion" (Atwood, *Survival* 35). Whether Maneck kills himself because he has encountered "[t]he real terror" inherent in the "garrison mentality" which occurs when "the individual feels himself becoming an individual, pulling away from the group, losing the sense of divine power that the group gives him, aware of a conflict within himself far subtler than the struggle of morality against evil" (Frye 228) or because his narrative death "demonstrate[es] Mistry's emphatic condemnation of the model of postnational detachment represented by Maneck" (Herbert 25), Maneck is an example of a failed attempt to survive.

What I would argue is the cause of Maneck's failure to survive is not entirely different from Herbert's assessment that Maneck is the "model of postnational detachment." However, reading this detachment from the perspective of "the garrison mentality" and "survival" makes it possible to read Maneck as "lost in the wilderness." The wilderness that has consumed Maneck is his complicity in the "massive indifference" that allows the systemic abuses depicted in *A Fine Balance* to exist and persist. After he completes his exams, Maneck leaves Dina's "garrison" and ultimately leaves India to work in Dubai, not returning until the death of his father eight years later. However, in that time, Maneck has been transformed from the young man who defended Dina's apartment with an umbrella and has become one of the indifferent. It is not that this Maneck is unable to empathize with the suffering of others; it is that this Maneck is no longer willing to risk himself to ease their suffering. As he recalls the maidservant in Dubai who "had begged him for help" he is forced to recognize that he was "[u]neasy about intervening" in her suffering and he was "as helpless as she was" in the face of his own sense of self-preservation (677). In his final confrontation with Dina, he is also forced to recognize that, like the maidservant, he abandoned his former garrison-mates to their suffering:

> "You come after very long. A few more years, and I won't see you at all. Even now, you're a shadow in this room."
>
> "I was away, working in the Gulf."
>
> "And what was it like?"
>
> "It was…it was — empty."
>
> "Empty?"
>
> "Empty…like a desert."

"But it is a desert country." She paused. "You didn't write to me from

there."

"I'm sorry. But I didn't write to anyone. It seemed so … so pointless"

(703)

Even when he learns of the fates of Dina, Ishvar, and Om, Maneck cannot bring himself to

intervene in their suffering; however, he also cannot not empathize with their pain. This internal

tension reduces him to "terror" (704) and he is again, as he was in the case of the Dubai

maidservant, helpless:

Wait, he wanted to call out — wait for me. He wanted to hurry after them,

go back to Dina Aunty with them, tell her he had changed his mind.

He did nothing. The two turned into the cobbled walkway and

disappeared from sight. He could hear the castors clattering briefly over the

uneven stones. The sound died; he continued on his way. (706)

Maneck has left the garrison and severed the interdependent bonds that held that society

together. He has abandoned himself to the "emptiness," the wilderness of individual self-

preservation and monstrous indifference as surely as he has abandoned others to their own

suffering. However, he is not indifferent and so he must fail to survive. The character of

Maneck within *A Fine Balance* may be a symbol of "Mistry's condemnation" of the kind of

social disengagement that Maneck enacts. However, I argue that Maneck also exists as a

warning to the reader. As Slaughter's metonymic model of humanitarian reading suggests,

Maneck is the character with whom the reader is positioned to identify, as Maneck is the

character who *could* have intervened in the suffering of the others. However, Maneck does not

intervene and this lack of courage and unwillingness to risk the self results in his self-destruction.

The warning to the reader, then, is that to fail to intervene, to become one with the "massive indifference" of the wilderness, is to fail to survive.

A Fine Balance places readers in the centre of two reflections and calls on us to read a relationship between India and Canada. However, it leaves it up to the reader to understand the relationship between a horrific historical moment and a present that might lead to an equally horrific future. This reflective connection between India's past and Canada's present not only collapses the distance between these two nation-states but also collapses the time between the Indian history described and the Canadian present allegorized. *A Fine Balance* is simultaneously an historical novel *and* a novel of a dystopian future. This interpretation not only disrupts the security of the boundaries that frame each national entity but also disrupts the "Western" claim to possession of the more progressive position. Instead, what the reader is forced to recognize by adopting the position reflected in South Asian-Canadian literature, is that Canadian social and cultural realities can be improved by writing a new history of the present by incorporating diasporic histories that exist beyond its national boundaries.

Conclusion: Where is here?

In this study I have attempted to demonstrate that it is possible to "do the nation differently," not so much by attempting to renegotiate the meaning of the "nation" but instead by changing our notion of what the word "Canada" identifies. In my analysis I have focused on the negotiations and interactions between different historical, cultural, and social vectors that take place at a specific geographic location, a location which, for lack of a better word, I refer to as "Canada." This "New World" location is, as Stuart Hall argues, the "ground, place, territory" (243) where different cultural vectors of influence intersect and transform each other in ongoing processes of negotiation and creolization. The Canadian nation, with its ideology, "official" history, and nationalism, is certainly one of the vectors that is engaged with in the production of South Asian-Canadian diasporic subjectivity and its reflection in literature; however, it is not the only, or the dominant, vector of influence. The complex social, cultural, and historical influences of the South Asian diaspora and the equally complex relationship of *both* the South Asian diaspora *and* the Canadian nation to the project of European colonialism must also be considered relevant vectors in the processes of negotiating South Asian-Canadian diasporic subjectivity.

One of the implications of this approach to South Asian-Canadian literature is the realization that as we try to negotiate what Lily Cho refers to as a "history of the present which understands that the past is not simply past" ("Dreaming" 193) we must include in our consideration histories that are not solely framed by the boundaries of the Canadian nation-state. The history of this place is inflected and creolized by the streams of cultural and historical influence that have intersected here. These are part of the "histories which remain unredressed,

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memories which continue to haunt, and legacies of exploitation and dislocation which have yet

to be narrated other than as unfortunate features of a regrettable past as surely as the "features of

a regrettable past" that have taken place on this ground (Cho, "Dreaming" 193). We need to be

aware of the consequences and implications of the "continuous journey" regulation and the

Komagata Maru Incident for the negotiation of South Asian-Canadian diasporic subjectivity;

however, we must also be aware of the consequences of the partition of the Punjab at the time of

the formation of the modern states of India and Pakistan. As Anita Rau Badami points out to us

in *Can You Hear the Nightbird Call?,* the complex repercussions of all these historical influences

are relevant not only to the negotiation of South Asian-Canadian diasporic subjectivity but also

to understanding the bombing of Air India Flight 182, what Commissioner Major, in his final

report, emphasizes is a "Canadian atrocity" and "the largest mass murder in Canadian history"

(Major, "Opening" 2). The ongoing history of the society of this place is not just about events

that take place here. The history of the Canadian present is interdependent with the histories of

all of the peoples of this society.

In terms of this study, the complex historical contexts of the Canadian location of the

South Asian diaspora mean that I have had to engage each text individually in terms of the

historical threads that are reflected in the works. Very much as Sharon Pollock expresses in her

introduction to *The Komagata Maru Incident*, "I feel that much of our history has been

misrepresented and even hidden from us" (98). However, this misrepresentation cannot be

solely attributed to what I have called a conceit of deceit, a pattern of lies of omission and

commission that is visible in the space of tension between the pedagogical and the performative

narratives of the Canadian nation. Instead, we must also consider traditional approaches to the

academic study of South Asian-Canadian literature and how some of these methodological

strategies may have inadvertently created room for these texts to be read ahistorically. One

particularly disturbing feature of contemporary practice is the tendency to prioritize the moment

of European colonialism in readings of South Asian-Canadian diasporic subjectivity. As I have

argued, the experience of colonization and conquest in the region now known as South Asia has

a much longer and more complex history than the relatively brief subjugation of the region to

European colonial powers. This is not to negate the impact of European colonialism but, rather,

to raise the question of the unspoken assumptions that may shape postcolonial studies and its

approach to South Asian-Canadian literature. Why emphasize the role of the British Raj and

forget the role of Mogul Shahs? Is the power position of the colonizer and the oppressor

reserved for "white" people while "brown" people must always assume the role of subaltern and

victim?

　　This question becomes more urgent when we consider the place of postcolonial diasporic

movement within South Asian-Canadian diasporic subjectivity and literature. In the postcolonial

moment, the Canadian location of the South Asian diaspora continues to grow not simply

through voluntary movement but also through catastrophic displacement. Veenesh Dubois,

author/performer of the one-woman show "Under the Mango Tree," explores in her play the

violent displacement of Indo-Fijians as a product of post-independence racism in Fiji and the

negotiation of Indo-Fijian-Canadian diasporic subjectivity. Rana Bose, co-founder of Teesri

Duniya Theatre and founder of Montreal Serai, was prosecuted and imprisoned as a political

dissident under Indira Gandhi's regime, and when finally released, was forced into *de facto* exile

in the "New World." Farida Karodia's political activities in a post-independence but still

apartheid South Africa resulted in her being forced into diaspora when the South African

government withdrew her passport. In Canada, Karodia, as a writer for the Canadian

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Broadcasting Corporation, began her career writing radio dramas and produced her first novel, *Daughters of the Twilight*, about the experience of apartheid in South Africa. These postcolonial diasporic movements raise the question of what constitutes an "authentic" diaspora, and not only because the creative works of these authors refer to oppression not by a colonizing power but by an independent postcolonial nation. These works also point out that "home" lost (or found as in the case of Sadhu Binning's *No More Watno Dur*) within South Asian-Canadian diasporic subjectivity is not consistently imagined as "South Asia." While some sense of cultural or ancestral connection to South Asia does occur in all these works, "South Asia" is not consistently positioned as the object of desired "return." This begs the question: does the requirement of diasporic studies for diasporic subjectivity to be framed by a longing for the ancestral "home" reinscribe a racist ontology? Can culture and its expression either by the individual or the collective be imagined as primarily an expression of embodied (and grounded) "authentic" identity?

These complex aspects of South Asian diasporic subjectivity, that are uniquely visible from the Canadian location within the South Asian diasporic network, allow the study of South Asian-Canadian literature to become a site from which it is possible to reconsider the ambiguity of Canadian literature's colonial/postcolonial status. As Laura Moss points out in "Is Canada Postcolonial? Introducing the Question," arguments against the legitimacy of studying Canadian literary culture in terms of its postcoloniality are too often grounded in an argument that would appear to suggest that "whiteness" can only be read as the "victimizer" and "brownness" as the necessary "victim." However, in the face of the "downright antagonism [. . .] for those who suggest that Canadian literature can be read in conjunction with postcolonial theories" (Moss 3), South Asian-Canadian literature, through its negotiation with what I have called *Présence*

Canadiénne, this place's vector of influence, locates Canadian literature and its postcolonial status within a continuum of expressions of postcoloniality. The iteration of narratives of the *Komagata Maru* Incident, for instance, brings into conjunction moments within the colonial/postcolonial histories of the Dominion of Canada and British India inviting comparison of the relationship of both spaces to colonial power and highlighting in both spaces the (failed) attempt to establish autonomy from the Imperial centre. Badami's *Can You Hear the Nightbird Call*? again brings into conjunction both the colonial and postcolonial moments of Canada and, in this case, specifically the Indian nation-state. She iterates the *Komagata Maru* Incident and she calls attention to the co-temporality of Canada and India's push towards independent nationhood: Canada establishes legal citizenship only in the year in which India gains its independence from the imperial centre; both nation-states, in the moment of Leela's 1967 diasporic movement, are struggling to establish narratives of their autonomous nationhood. Mistry's *A Fine Balance* reflects the dangers of Canada's postcolonial, nationalist present (and future) in the atrocities of India's postcolonial, nationalist past. As the plays of Vancouver Sath and Rahul Varma argue, in this location neither the processes of colonialism nor the processes of postcolonialism can be read as identical to the way in which those processes have played out in other locations. In each location the negotiation with colonialism and postcolonialism will be inflected and reflected in the specific social, political, cultural, and historical realities of a specific location to produce a continuum of colonial/postcolonial subjectivities.

By placing Canadian space and Canadian literary culture within a continuum of expressions of postcolonial subjectivity, South Asian-Canadian literature disrupts what David Chariandy argues is the "spatial and psychic distance [of First World ethnic studies] from Third World nationalism" (para 3) by flattening the implicitly hierarchical frames of "First

World" and "Third World," "Developed" and "Developing" Worlds, "Global North" and "Global South." Allowing colonial/postcolonial subjectivity to be seen as reflected within Canadian literary culture allows for the realization that Canada never was "a white man's country" and that the "white civility" that Daniel Coleman observes is created within English-Canadian literature is tied to a Canadian anti-colonial nationalism. Canada is, as Frank Birbalsingh, an Indo-Guyanese-Canadian academic, argued in his 1972 essay "National Identity and the Canadian Novel," an "ex-colonial state" that is, like other ex-colonial states, in the process of "trying to build [a] nation on a common model that is predominantly British" (57). The "myths of Canadian innocence, deference, and goodwill" (Brydon, "Metamorphoses" 5) inscribe an anti-colonial nationalist identity that is in opposition to both the British Imperial centre and the potential neocolonizing force of the United States. These myths also inscribe within the academic study of a Canadian national*ist* literature certain persistent structures. Multiculturalism within Canadian nationalist literature is represented as a temporal novelty. However, Daniel Coleman's study of "white civility" persuasively argues that the "whiteness" and "Britishness" of figures like the Anglo-Celtic settler/invader are a fiction that is quite literally created within fiction. South Asian-Canadian literature demonstrates that the Canadian anti-colonial claim to "Britishness" is an aspect that unites rather than separates the figure of the Anglo-Celtic settler/invader and South Asian-Canadian diasporic subjectivities. Nationalist literary culture is divided into "English" (or Anglo-) and "French" Canadian literature, repeating the trope of the "Two Solitudes" model of Canadian society and radically limiting the body of work that can be read as part of the canon of Canadian national literature. The work of Teesri Duniya Theatre demonstrates that there is not only a body of multilingual literature being created within the Canadian space, but there is also an audience that is more fluid in its linguistic identity

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than the English and French poles of Canada's "official languages" suggest is possible. Sadhu Binning's poetry points to a body of literature written in Punjabi that identifies itself as Canadian and attempts to engage with transnational Punjabi literature from a distinctly Canadian space; however, it is decidedly not a Canadian national*ist* literature. Birbalsingh points out that "[w]ide contrasts and local differences inevitably prevail where the countries receiving the British model are greatly varied in geography, linguistic forms and historical experiences," and that all the ex-colonial countries "experience broadly the same cultural instability and uncertainty" (57). This study of South Asian-Canadian literature points out that Canadian society, and the study of Canadian nationalist literature, ignores the "instability and uncertainty" of the postcoloniality that shapes its understanding of itself at the peril of its present, and potentially, its future.

South Asian-Canadian literature and the way that I have approached its analysis certainly challenges the authority of the national (and the nation-state) to organize bodies of literature; however, it does not confirm a globalizing world view. The negotiation of postcolonial diasporic subjectivities reflected in South Asian-Canadian literature represents a transnational flow of people, ideas, and cultures that are not necessarily contiguous with transnational flows of capital and labour. As I have argued, an understanding of the history that shapes Canada's present needs to reach beyond the boundaries of the map of the nation-state. However, these "relationships to global politics" (Dobson xi) need to be read within the context of the local and the specific. This place, this location, the ground beneath our feet, brings into contact a unique set of vectors that shape a South Asian diasporic subjectivity that is both specific to here and a subjectivity that has a specific perspective on the whole of the South Asian diasporic network. Only from here, from this particular vantage point on the reflections (and reflections of reflections) visible within the

networks of diasporic movements and transnational flows of capital and labour can South Asian-Canadian diasporic subjectivity and its reflections in literature be continually negotiated.

While the motif of Indra's net insists that we recognize the specificity of location, it also affords us an opportunity to read the interdependence between different locations. This is essential not only to readings of the interdependence of Canada within a spectrum of expressions of postcoloniality but also to readings within the body of literature produced in this place for relationships that do not map onto a "minority-majority" binary opposition. Instead we can read "minority" literatures, including the literature of the dominant "minority," in terms of "the *differential* relations between communities and histories in Canada" (Cho, "Diasporic" 96). Rather than fostering the erasure of differential access to power implicit in the claim that "we are all immigrants to this place," (Atwood, *Journals* 62) reading Canadian literature through the metaphor of Indra's net allows for patterns of influence, interdependence, and mutual transformations to become visible in the play of reflections visible at the location of the text. This tactic both creates the possibility for reading "minority" literatures differentially but also blocks the potential for what Uma Parameswaran has called "self-ghettoization" in the study of ethnic literature: the tacit reinscription of the claim to discover "authentic" ethnic identity in literature. The motif of Indra's net provides for a flexible reading strategy that is able to read together the complex historical, social, and cultural contexts of South Asian-Canadian literature; it also permits a reading strategy flexible enough to see the broader play of reflections (and reflections of reflections) in the networks of literature produced in this place.

This study is connected by many threads to other "jewels" within the academic study of not only South Asian-Canadian literature, but also a more broadly framed Canadian literature and a more broadly framed South Asian diasporic literature. Along these threads lie many

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questions and opportunities for further exploring the complex dynamics of South Asian-Canadian literature. In this study I have focused on only two South Asian-Canadian theatrical institutions and selected examples of their performance texts; however, there are considerably more than two South Asian-Canadian theatre companies within the frame of Canada, representing multiple regions of Canada and multiple moments of the South Asian diaspora. A more sustained study that incorporated both institutional analysis and textual analysis would permit a more nuanced reading of the negotiation between South Asian-Canadian theatre and Canadian theatrical nationhood. What reflections on the "official" history of the national theatre would be visible from a broader range of vantage points? What connections exist within the network of South Asian-Canadian theatre, if any? What connections exists between the network of South Asian-Canadian theatre and other "minority" theatres in Canada? How can we read together South Asian-Canadian theatre and South Asian-Canadian poetry and prose, not only in terms of textual analysis but also in terms of their material conditions of production/performance?

There is a growing movement that attempts to read South Asian diasporic literature not in relationship to the "ancestral" home but rather across the nodes of the South Asian diaspora. Neilesh Bose's anthology *Beyond Bollywood and Broadway: Plays From The South Asian Diaspora*, is just one example of this approach in its attempt to read South Asian diasporic literature in terms of its negotiation with the specific and local conditions of its diasporic location. What particular perspectives on this larger diasporic network are reflected in the location of South Asian-Canadian literature? How does a multilingual approach affect this perspective? Is South Asian-Canadian literature more readily accepted within the diasporic network in relation to a particular linguistic mode? Why? How is South Asian-Canadian

diasporic literature reflected within the network of South Asian diasporic writing? What can reading this play of reflections both in and of South Asian-Canadian literature tell us about the ongoing appeal of nationalism: both the nationalisms of the diasporic location and the "long-distance nationalisms" of the nation-states that have emerged in the "ancestral" homeland (Goonewardena 661)? What can this tell us about the movement and transformation of "good" and "bad" diaspora politics (Goonewardena 666)?

The threads that interconnect South Asian-Canadian literature to other literatures produced in Canada provide what are possibly even more interesting plays of reflections to examine. Many different diasporic movements and transnational migrations have intersected with the place of Canada. Can reading narratives that reflect the negotiation of diasporic subjectivities from the perspective of different diasporic movements and different diasporic moments give us greater insight into the changing shapes and articulations of Canadian nationalist identity in relation to the racialized "other." For example, what reflections would be visible when reading John Marlyn's *Under the Ribs of Death,* his exploration of Hungarian-Canadian identity in the Canadian Prairies before the Great Depression, alongside Anita Rau Badami's *Can You Hear the Nightbird Call?*, her exploration of multiple individuals' negotiation with South Asian-Canadian diasporic subjectivity in British Columbia from the Second World War to the mid-1980's? What would reading Joy Kogawa's *Obasan* alongside the iterations of the *Komagata Maru* Incident be able to tell us about the politics of commemoration and memorialisation? Can comparing the poetic speaker in Marilyn Dumont's *A Really Good Brown Girl* and the poetic speaker in Sadhu Binning's *No More Watno Dur* give us more insight into the differences between individual identities that are developed in negotiation with, rather than in subordination to, racial oppression? Like the motif of Indra's net, the play of reflections and

patterns of interconnections that intersect with the location of South Asian-Canadian literature are more infinite and complex than any single mind can comprehend.

What I have learned from this study of South Asian-Canadian diasporic subjectivity and its literary reflection is that Northop Frye's question, "Where is here?," is a red herring. "Here," has never required either the Canadian nation-state or the Anglo-Celtic settler/invader to inquire about its location. "Here" has never been in question, despite the attempt of the dominant "minority" to attempt to delimit "here" for the diverse peoples of this place. "Here" is the "New World" location where what is conveniently called the Canadian nation has been, and continues to be, the site of ongoing processes of creolization and cultural negotiation. The individual members of the society that is always already in the process of forming here provide the conceptual connections between this collective and collectives that transcend not just national boundaries but also the limiting framework of global capitalism. Reading South Asian-Canadian literature through the motif of Indra's net argues that "here" is not just the ground beneath our feet; it is the unique vantage point from which we can observe our position within complex patterns of identity and interdependence. The answer to Frye's question "Where is here?" is infinitely more simple and infinitely more complex than the boundaries of a nationalist "Canadian Imagination."

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