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The Colonized Writes Back: Satyajit Ray Decolonizes Arthur Conan Doyle's Detective Fiction

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Abstract

Detective fiction reassures readers that justice will be served: those who deviate from the norm will be punished. This paper criticizes the imperialist system and holder of power as it relates to the way imperialist ideals of race, class, and gender are produced as knowledge for readers in detective fiction, such as in the works of British writer, Arthur Conan Doyle's "The Adventure of the Speckled Band" (1892) and "The Adventure of the Three Students" (1904). The paper analyzes how this imperialist system is then challenged by postcolonial nations and its writers, such as Indian writer Satyajit Ray's "Feluda in London" (1989) and "Danger in Darjeeling" (1965) through the figure of a detective, a sidekick and mystery. The postcolonial nation, which is portrayed as dangerous, challenges the established order of its former colonizer. Although Ray's short stories decolonize the knowledge produced in Doyle's texts in regard to race and social hierarchy, they fail to change the way women are represented in detective fiction: by not giving women any space in his detective fiction stories, Ray fails to challenge recognized truths about women and the way they are portrayed in Indian fiction. Within the framework of world literature, this paper engages with research that considers the manner in which the identities of (post)colonial India and women are formed in socio-political environments and portrayed through detective fiction. Texts published in postcolonial India by Ray challenge the way racism and class are portrayed by Doyle and the Empire he so loved. Women, however, find no place, and no justice, in Ray's detective fiction.

Keywords:

Detective fiction; Imperialism, Literature; Patriarchy; Post-colonialism; Sherlock Holmes; World literature

Introduction

Detective fiction gives readers the reassurance that justice will be served: those who deviate from the norm will be punished (Siddiqi, 2006). According to detective fiction writer—and the creator of Sherlock Holmes—Arthur Conan Doyle, fiction is a tool that is used to convey social norms to readers. Doyle states: "To get an idea to penetrate to the masses of the people, you must put fiction around it, like sugar around a pill" (Favor, 2000, p. 398). If the norms of society are conveyed through fiction, then one should also consider how

imperialist ideals of race and gender are produced as knowledge for readers and then challenged by writers in postcolonial nations. Indian detective fiction writer Satyajit Ray's uses his works "Feluda in London," (1989) and "Danger in Darjeeling" (1965) to subvert the racist knowledge Doyle produces about Indians in his "The Adventure of the Speckled Band" (1892), and "The Adventure of the three Students" (1904).[1] Doyle's figure of Sherlock Holmes travels across nations in Ray's stories, and a world literature reading of the texts published in postcolonial India allows readers to see the manner in which Doyle constantly places Indians and women as the other: as others who are positioned and displayed as inferior to the British male characters (Favor, 2000).[2] However, although Ray's texts challenge the image of the inferior Indian, women do not find a place or justice in Ray's detective fiction because they are not portrayed to be a part of the system in need of correction.

The "Unusual" Through the Gaze of Ray and Doyle

John H. Watson states in "The Adventure of the Speckled Band," that Holmes only associated himself with cases that appeared to be "unusual." In this story, "unusual" refers to the characters who have been touched by India. As such, foreigners are used by Doyle to indicate the normalcy of British society (Harris, 2003). The other is used by Doyle to indicate how those who do not assimilate into either "working-class labour or vocational professional forces can come to signify criminal Otherness" (Fluet, 1998, p.134). Doyle's audience is "'invited to take for granted' an understood, perceptible difference between its own Englishness and the criminal, 'Orientalized' Englishness Grimsby Roylott manifests" (Fluet, 1998, p.134) in "The Adventure of the Speckled Band."

In "The Adventure of the Three Students," Doyle uses race to render an individual suspect. When Mr. Hilton Soames pays a visit to Holmes in order to ask him to find the person who copied the proofs of a passage from the exam that was taking place the next day. One of the first questions Holmes asks is if anyone had visited him after he had the papers. Mr. Soames immediately points out that a young Indian student, Daulat Ras, came to discuss the exam. The reader is thus introduced to Ras as both an Indian and a suspect. His race becomes an

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1. "Danger in Darjeeling" was originally called "Feludar Goendagiri" in Bengali. The first collection of Feluda stories were translated into English in 1988. The Feluda stories have been translated in other languages such as Spanish, Italian and French, as well (Nandi, 2019). Thus, they have been marked as world literature that enter other nations through translation.
2. The other in this paper is used to refer to women and non-Europeans in order to showcase the manner in which Europeans and men presented themselves as the dominant in the Empire.

adjective used to describe his character. As the story continues, not once do Holmes or Watson refer to Ras by his name, instead they call him "the Indian student" or "The Indian." Ras is characterized first by Mr. Soames as a "quiet, inscrutable fellow, as most of those Indians are"—a racist generalization applied to all Indians in a kind of truncated syllogism: all Indians are inscrutable; Ras is an Indian; Ras is inscrutable. Ras is indeed silent: he never utters a word, unlike the other two students. Thus, the "benign" and "silent" Ras (Roy, *The Manichean Investigators,* 2008, p.34) is not granted a subject position, as an individual able to present himself as an "I" through speech (Belsey, 1985). Furthermore, Ras is the only one of the three students that is described through his race, with the addition that he is "methodical." The other two students, Gilchrist and Miles McLaren, are "fine, manly" or "brilliant" – although McLaren is identified as "wayward" he still has the quality of being a "brilliant fellow when he chooses to work." In addition, when Gilchrist is identified as the culprit Watson describes him as "a fine figure of a man, tall, and agile, with a springy step and a pleasant, open face" in direct opposition to the way Ras was described as a mysterious individual. It could be said that the text is telling its reader to beware of racist presumptions by making the culprits fine fair Caucasians and the suspicious other innocent. However, the comparison reinforces the otherness of Ras. In contrast, in "Danger in Darjeeling," Ray's characters speak against assumptions based on physical characteristics in the opening pages of his short story. Tapesh states: "Who knew that this friendly old soul [Rajen Babu] could get into such trouble? Why, he seemed totally incapable of getting involved with anything even remotely sinister!" (p.3) At this statement, Feluda snapped, "How can you tell just by looking at someone what he might get mixed up with?" and is only pacified when Tapesh mentions Rajen Babu's actions: "He has done a lot for the poor Nepali people who live in slums" (p.3).

Another way Doyle's fiction incites fear of the other is through animals, specifically cheetahs and baboons. In "The Adventure of the Speckled Band", Helen explains that Roylott, a British Doctor who is marked by time spent in India, kept a cheetah and a baboon which made Helen and her sister wary. She states: "We had no feeling of security unless our doors were locked." This comment parallels arguments made in relation to immigration. The first time Holmes and Watson spot a baboon, Watson gives it human characteristics: "from a clump of laurel bushes there darted what seemed to be a hideous and distorted child, who threw itself upon the grass with writhing limbs." By equating it with a child, Doyle blurs the line between an Indian, an animal and a

human. Furthermore, Watson states that he had forgotten that the doctor had "Strange pets" and commented that they might find a cheetah on their shoulder any minute. In his characterization of Roylott's pets, not only is Watson cautioning readers at the infiltration of strangers in their space, but he is also warning them that the threat is hidden and can strike at any moment.

Finally, the representation and depiction of the culprits in Doyle's work indicates the writer's imperialist agenda. The murder weapon in Doyle's "The Adventure of the Speckled Band" is revealed to be a speckled band which is said to be "the deadliest snake in India" (Doyle, "The Adventure of the Speckled Band", 2002). Sherlock remarks that "violence does, in truth, recoil upon the violent, and the schemer falls into the pit which he digs for another." Through the use of a deadly snake that is supposedly found in India, Doyle, once against connects violence to its colonized nation. However, it should be noted that the speckled band was based on "The rare East Indian poison which leaves no trace however, this rare Indian poison did not exist" (Harris, 2003, p. 450). Doyle fabricates a poison to incite fear in the reader's mind, while emphasizing its Indian origins.. In addition, Holmes explains that the idea of the snake being used as the murder weapon occurred to him immediately when he heard that the doctor had creatures from India, and that the poison that was used to kill Helen's sister could only been devised by a "clever and ruthless man who had an Eastern training." India's influence on Roylott is the only evidence Holmes needs to deduce that Roylott is guilty (Harris, 2003). Placing Roylott as the criminal, and connecting his criminal behaviour to his time in India allows for Doyle to portray the idea that "the detection and policing of criminal identity in England was deeply implicated with the suppression of the foreign nationalities commanded throughout the Empire" and that by policing Roylott, Doyle was able to police the "unseen," the "imagined" colonial subject in India and the unassimilated "domestic…Other" (Fluet, 1998, p.134).

Ray reverses the colonialist roles and knowledge produced by Doyle in "Feluda in London." Out of the three companions, Feluda is presented to be the most rational. When he asks his companions what they think of England, Lalmohan Babu replies, "Oh Felu Babu, I haven't got words to describe my feelings" (p.570). Lalmohan Babu's inarticulateness implies that the imperialist's lands are so profound that the colonized does not have the appropriate vocabulary to even describe his perception of it. To this Feluda asks: "Why? The books you write seem to suggest you have an endless stock of adjectives. Why are words failing you now?" For a writer who is

assumed to have at his disposal a plethora of words to be speechless is a testament to his subjugation. However, after Feluda's question, Lalmohan Babu admits that the only word he can think of is "super-sensational" (p.571). Feluda consistently challenges Lalmohan Babu's fascination with England, and thereby questions the imperialist's hierarchal power and control over others.

While British and French detective fiction writers in the nineteenth century chose "imperial centers of London or Paris as the usual locales of the investigators' exploits," (Roy, "The Postcolonial Sleuth", 2018, p. 80), Ray chose Kolkata to be the setting of his detective fiction. Kolkata was the capital of British India until 1911 and had a "recursive relationship with London" (Roy, "The Postcolonial Sleuth", 2018, p. 80).[3] In Ray's detective fiction, Kolkata becomes the postcolonial metropolis where the colonized is able to challenge imperialist ideals of race and class. Feluda's street is named after the patriotic Bengali poet Rajanikanta Sen who protested against Bengal's partition and imperialism through his songs (Roy, "The Postcolonial Sleuth", 2018, p. 81). In contrast, the connection to Kolkata presented in Doyle's "The Adventure of the Speckled Band": Helen's stepfather is said to have moved to Kolkata after completing his medical degree. Up until his move, Roylott is presented as a hardworking man who comes from a good family, and who decided to pave his own path due to the gambling in his family that "Crushed [the house] under a heavy mortgage." Roylott, before his move to Kolkata, is presented as a sensible man whose character and skill landed him a practice. It is in Kolkata however that he becomes violent and beats his native butler. Roylott, after being imprisoned, returns to England as a "morose and disappointed man" whose temper, dangerously close to mania, is blamed on his time in the "tropics" – a vague generalization that indicates the way non-Western locales   are homogenized and treated as one group. Finally, Roylott's manic violence is described as hereditary but this trait does not manifest in him until he is touched by an alien nation. Thus, India becomes "a laboratory in which England's hereditary criminal are identified" and if it had not been for India, then perhaps Roylott would not have become violent (Harris, 2003, p. 459). The notion of the colonies corrupting Englishmen is subverted in Ray's "Feluda in London," where Peter dies at the hands of Majumdar because of the violent racist comments he hurls at Majumdar and other Indians. Peter continuously

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3. It should be noted that until 2001, Kolkata was named "Calcutta." The renaming is a form of indigenization and a reclaiming of identity, for Calcutta in Bengali has always been pronounced as "Kolkata" but during British conquest, the colonizer named the city as "Calcutta" for its own ease (Ghosh, 2015).

pesters Majumdar about his skin colour and his race and hurls insults at him: "It's only your skin that's white. If I scratch it, I'll find its black under the surface. You are nothing but a black native" (p. 583). When Peter's racist comments become too much and he tips over the boat, Majumdar does not help him back in and instead he ends up being responsible for Peter's death. Redemption, however, soon follows. Ray opts to paint Europeans as villains.. JSimilar to the way India is portrayed as the source that disturbs the peace in England in Doyle's "The Adventure of the Speckled Band", Ray's story positions England as having the power to tamper with the "societal balance in the East" (Roy, "The Postcolonial Sleuth", 2018, p. 82) for an Englishman—Reginald Dexter—is responsible for Majumdar's death in Kolkata. Majumdar's death is followed by another: a suicide—the Englishman dies at the end of the Ray's story.

Women: Through the Gaze of The Dictator at Home and Abroad

Imperialism is not the only form of subjugation for citizens and it easily coexists with other forms, such as patriarchy. The Victorian age saw the rise of artists as professional and the novel as a form in which social realities were portrayed (Kerr, 2010, p.190). In that context, Doyle's texts are described as "asmuch the social performance of masculinity as the production of texts." In Doyle's "The Adventure of the Speckled Band," women are not given the spotlight, despite the fact that the mystery was provided by and revolved around Helen. Helen's character is used as catalyst for the plot to unfold; she introduces the mystery, brings Holmes to the scene of the crime, but after that she is virtually written out of the narrative. Helen's silence in the story—beyond the introductory pages and a few sentences at the scene of the crime where she indicates that she is dependent on Holmes with her statement, "I assure you that I am in your hands"— robs her of her ability to be her own subject in the story. Furthermore, Helen is robbed of any future chance to have a voice in her own story. Watson begins the narrative by stating that the only reason he can share the story of Helen is because she is now dead, and she had promised him to secrecy while she was alive. Helen has already passed away: Doyle has killed off the woman even before her story begins and Holmes and Watson speak *for* Helen at the end of the short story. This positions her as the "feminine 'other' in the economy of patriarchy (Hennessy and Mohan, 1989, p.333). Thus, the story is "haunted by the mysterious state of mind of a woman who is unable to speak" (Belsey, 1985, p.671), for Watson states at the end that it was not necessary to relay to the readers how "the terrified girl" was informed that her

stepfather died because the story was already long as it was, however Doyle dedicates the next five hundred and thirty words to Holmes' explanation of the way he solved the mystery.

Women are further subjugated by Doyle through Helen, for as a young woman, Helen is infantilized and judged by her appearance. In the beginning, Watson states that she was "in a pitiable state of agitation, her face [was] all drawn and grey, with restless frightened eyes, like those of some hunted animal." Through this description, the woman is reduced from human to animal who has "no one to turn to"—except for Holmes. This portrays women as inferior to and dependent on men. After she relays her worries to Holmes, she states that she had felt her heart lighten and she puts her "thick black veil over her face" and "glide[s] from the room." Watson's narrative also judges her for looking older than her age. He observes that her features and figure belonged to a woman of the age of thirty, but her hair was prematurely grey. Thus, the woman is first reduced to a hunted animal and then is judged for appearing older than her years.

Women in Doyle's text are silenced and suppressed. Ray's short stories reflect the same image of women. In fact, Ray tells his wife that there is a "big snag" in writing detective stories. In the Forward to *The Complete Adventures of Feluda* (vol.1), Bijoya Ray states that Ray conveyed his perspective on including women in his stories by commenting: "The magazine [which he wrote his stories for] is meant for children and adolescents, which means I shall have to avoid sex and violence—the backbone of crime thrillers." The assumption that women cannot be referred to, discussed, or dealt with in any other context than sex mirrors Doyle's portrayal of women as objects that can be silenced by men. In Ray's stories, most of Feluda's clients are not married, or they are widowed, and their wives are not mentioned (Chowdhury, 2015). This could be a product of the idea that women in the "closed familial order" were "extraneous" and their agency was an "unnecessary distraction" to the boys reading the stories in the children's magazines ad who were retaining their own agencies (Chowdhury, 2015, p.125). When Ray was questioned about the lack of women subjects in his stories, he replied that having a woman might mean that her relationship with Tapesh might get complicated. In short, he states: "It's a structural problem." Women do not neatly fit into Ray's structure. Their inclusion would be problematic and would cause complications to and with other male characters. Their presence is a threat to the stable patriarchal structure of Ray's detective fiction. Women are associated with the "erotic and hence the phobic" and Feluda's deep

infatuation with crime and mystery can also be psychoanalyzed as a "metaphor of his absent, actual libido," which allows his clients to rely upon a "sexless and "incorruptible" eye of the private detective" who can "assert to have the deepest claims of penetration" in law and society (Chowdhury, 2015, p 125).

Conclusion

Ray's Feluda pays tribute to Doyle's Holmes in both "Danger in Darjeeling" and "Feluda in London." Through the circulation of texts from England to India, the perceptions Doyle and the Victorian era had of their colony, India, reached Feluda and Ray. While Feluda states that all he knows of detectives and investigation is due to Holmes, he should not be mistaken as a mere reflection of his predecessor. Rather, Feluda questions and challenges the imperialist's racism and class hierarchy. Feluda does not mimic his "colonial master" (Roy, "The Postcolonial Sleuth", 2018, p. 80). However, Ray's challenges only extend to as far as race and he fails to critique the portrayal of gender portrayal in Doyle's work. Analysis of Ray and Doyle's stories through a world literature reading of the texts allows for one to see the importance of decolonization of knowledge and of recognizing gender inequality isprevalent in structures of domination at home and in tyranny abroad. As Virginia Woolf identifies in her 1938 book *Three Guineas*:

> [A]re we not all agreed that the dictator when we meet him abroad is a very dangerous as well as a very ugly animal? And he is here among us, raising his ugly head, spitting his poison […] Should we not help her to crush him in our own country before we ask her to help us crush him abroad? (p.50)

For Woolf, the dictator abroad is clearly visible and she assigns the dictator the pronoun "he" and states that he is "dictating how you shall live" – the indignation felt at the suppression of freedom is equivalent, for Woolf, to the emotions felt by "your mothers [when] they were shut out, when they were shut up, because they were women" (1983, p. 94). The dictator abroad is the dictator at home, and Ray, through "Feluda in London" and "Danger in Darjeeling" has fought the dictator abroad that attempted to suppress Indians. However, while fighting the dictator across the border, Ray colludes with the enemy regarding women and becomes the dictator at home: silencing women and failing to write back to the colonizer with justice for women.

Biography

Zaynab Ali is a PhD student in English at York University. Her interests lie in the field of world literature and in the examination of the creation, reception, and circulation of exilic identities and their search and perception of 'home' in a world which dichotomizes exilic identities as stateless.

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Curanderismo: Chicana Epistemologies and the Transcorporeal Body in Ana Castillo's *So Far from God*

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Abstract

This research paper explores the spiritual healing practice of curanderismo, a folk practice that operates according to a holistic approach to the body that simultaneously remedies physical, spiritual, and psychological ailments. This kind of alternative knowledge is based on female intuition and oral teaching traditions that challenge the often invasive practices of modern scientific medicine in a way that reclaims female power through a reimagined relationship with the environment. Curanderismo is an embodied knowledge that exists in the borders of modern culture, given that it is practised by individuals who inhabit liminal spaces on the cusp of various identities. This folk healing is often practised by Chicana women, individuals who navigate their Mexican, American, and Indigenous identities. In this essay I examine these border identities in order to suggest that curanderismo is used to transcend the violence that these women are subjected to, particularly in Ana Castillo's 1993 novel *So Far from God*. In this novel, Sofi and her four daughters Esperanza, Caridad, Fe, and La Loca attempt to navigate an often inhospitable world in the fictional town of Tome, New Mexico. I use Gloria Anzaldúa's *Borderlands La Frontera* and Stacy Alaimo's *Bodily Natures* as main theoretical frameworks in order to investigate both metaphorical and literal approaches to the Chicana body's interaction with the outside world, through the alternative knowledge of curanderismo. Through their medicinal practices, the figure of the curandera attempts to counteract and remedy the way that patriarchy and capitalism exert destructive forces on the Chicana body.

Keywords: Curanderismo, Chicana, border identities, alternative knowledge, medicine

Introduction

In a 2017 interview about Chicana feminism and the environment, artist, political activist and fiction writer Ana Castillo says: "We have to ask ourselves, are we destroying more than we are creating?" (p. 133). Due to her involvement in what was largely male-dominated Latino activism in the 1970s, Castillo became reflective of the destructive forces of patriarchal and capitalist "might and greed," against the procreative feminine forces that "continue to sustain us" (2017, p. 133). Building on this

insight, this essay explores the spiritual healing practice of curanderismo, a folk practice that operates

according to a holistic approach to the body that simultaneously remedies physical, spiritual, and

psychological ailments. This folk healing is often practised by Chicana women, individuals who navigate

their Mexican, American, and Indigenous identities. In this essay I examine these border identities in

order to suggest that curanderismo is used to transcend the violence that these women are subjected to,

particularly in Ana Castillo's *So Far from God* (1993). In this novel, Sofia and her four daughters

Esperanza, Caridad, Fe, and La Loca attempt to navigate an often inhospitable world in the fictional town

of Tome, New Mexico. Throughout the narrative, the women endure toxic working conditions, disease,

and patriarchal violence. Using their bodies as a main focus of my analysis, I examine Gloria Anzaldúa's

Borderlands La Frontera and Stacy Alaimo's *Bodily Natures* to investigate both metaphorical and literal

approaches to the Chicana body's interaction with the outside world, through the alternative knowledge of

curanderismo. Through medicinal practices, the figure of the curandera attempts to counteract and remedy

the way that patriarchy and capitalism exert destructive forces on the Chicana body. Consequently,

curanderismo is a force for social change within these border communities, and one that brings agency to

its inhabitants.

The Borders of the Body

An analysis of the metaphorical aspects of the body in Chicana epistemology would be

incomplete without reference to Gloria Anzaldúa's seminal 1987 text *Borderlands La Frontera.* Anzaldúa

explains that "The U.S.-Mexican border *es una herida abierta*[1] where the Third World grates against the

first and bleeds. And before a scab forms it hemorrhages again, the lifeblood of two worlds merging to

form a third country – a border culture […] It is in a constant state of transition" (1987, p. 25). Anzaldúa

uses the metaphor of a body's bloody wound to communicate the reality of two cultures, American and

Mexican, violently colliding with one another. Although this interaction operates in a seemingly

destructive way, it is interesting that the wound that is formed produces a third space, implied through the

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[1] *es una herida abierta"* translates as "is an open wound" in English (translation my own).

word "merging," and what Anzaldúa refers to as "a border culture." Therefore, there is a regenerative outcome born from this bloody and destructive encounter, which recalls Castillo's reflection on destructive and creative forces. Furthermore, this new border culture is represented as fluid and ever-changing. Indeed, Elizabeth de la Portilla writes that in "the fluid nature of borderland identity, people occupy multiple spaces of 'being in the world'" (2009, p. 106). This negotiation of identities could be seen as fragmentary and therefore destructive, due to the implication that an individual who moves between all of these identities cannot be whole. However, the multiplicity of identity characterized by a Chicana positionality has the ability to be constructive and thus creative because of its complex and potentially integrative nature. Anzaldúa describes this Chicana border identity as *la mestiza[2]* which she explains "is an identity born of conflict" and that "'within us and within *la cultura chicana,[3]* commonly held beliefs of the white culture attack commonly held beliefs of the Mexican culture, and both attack commonly held beliefs of the indigenous culture'" (as cited in de la Portilla, 2009, p. 107). This points to the complexity and divisiveness of a three-layered American-Mexican-Indigenous border identity, in which all three components conflict with one another. Specifically, the former two colonize the latter, resulting in various hierarchies of power. Additionally, the words "born of conflict" again imply that this kind of border identity is simultaneously destructive ("conflict") and regenerative ("born"). We begin to understand the potential empowerment of this mestiza border identity directly because of its alterity, as it challenges overly simplistic views of identity.

Up until now, the Chicana body, and the wounds on its surface, have been treated as a metaphor for multiple identities that grate against one another in both violent and constructive ways. However, treatments of the body, and specifically the body oriented in this liminal border space, start to become literal when we consider the practice of curanderismo. Even the figure of the curandera, who is a spiritual healer, is at the cusp of multiple boundaries. Colette Morrow argues that curanderismo "emerged from the synthesis of fifteenth-century Spanish and Latin American medical practices" that "were especially

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[2] *Mestiza* translates into mixing in this context (translation my own).
[3] *la cultura chicana* translates into Chicana culture (translation my own).

compatible with the beliefs of indigenous populations" (1997, p. 68). Similar to Chicana identity then, curanderismo is also a mestiza of multiple positions with diverse origins. The origin of this kind of folk medicine is not only composed of multiple identities; furthermore, curanderismo is a holistic form of medicine that does not only heal the physical body. Indeed, Morrow explains that "this unique position endows the power of spiritual, psychological and physical healing on the *curandera*, whose cures typically reflect the belief that health is a composite of all three categories" (1997, p. 68). Therefore, curanderismo is also subject to a borderland identity, because its practice treats healing as a knowledge that understands the body as one part of an integrated whole, which greatly differs from Western conceptions of the body.

Furthermore, I argue that this kind of intelligence, or cultural practice, emphasizes the body's connection with nature. In other words, the body is porous in a way that allows it to affect nature, just as nature affects the body. In order to explain in more detail the significance of porosity, I will refer to this phenomenon using Stacy Alaimo's term transcorporeality. Alaimo defines transcorporeality as a state in which "the human is always intermeshed with the more-than-human world," and that we are "inseparable from 'the environment'" (2010, p. 2). If we apply this to curanderismo then, we understand that its practices bridge the gap between the internal that lies beneath the boundaries of human skin, and the external, the environment that our bodies constantly interact with. De la Portilla speaks to the porous nature of the practice of curanderismo itself, that "there are no hard boundaries in the practice of curanderismo. Just like the border area it occupies, the boundaries of the practice are fluid" (2009, p. 25). This statement recalls the porosity of the borderlands according to Anzaldúa, specifically in that it is a location that is marked by a fluid transition. Therefore, the enduring legacy of the curanderismo practice over many centuries does not indicate that it is stagnant and unchanging; rather, it is constantly being updated and personalized.

The Practice of Curanderismo

Despite the acknowledged fluid nature of this practice, there are some core rituals that curanderas traditionally use. In *So Far from God,* we see many of these teachings in the section "A Brief Sampling of

Doña Felicia's Remedies." It is important to note here that curanderismo work is an extremely intuitive and embodied form of knowledge. For example, each of the following entries is captured in quotation marks, which suggests that it is communicated orally, not only to Doña Felicia's apprentice Caridad, but to us as well. An example of a condition that can be treated by curanderismo is *aigre*, otherwise known as internal draft, which is "'wind that sometimes causes headaches, an earache, stomach pain, and so on'" (Castillo, 1993, p. 66). This reinforces the body's porosity and its transcorporeal relationship with the environment, given that wind so easily penetrates the body. Curanderismo demands an almost entirely new, or at least non-Western, conception of the body. Indeed, de la Portilla explains that the body is "an empty vessel," or similarly, "a corporeal manifestation of a person's essences" (2009, p. 53). Therefore, it has the ability "to absorb and reflect influences in the natural environment" (2009, p. 72). This forces us to reimagine the body as a receptacle while simultaneously subverting the notion of a passive environment. As we see in the example of *aigre*, human body and exterior world flow into one another. Additionally, a very traditional practice is what Doña Felicia calls *limpias,* or spiritual cleansings. This ritual in particular is emblematic of the holistic approach that curanderismo uses to treat the body, as it cleanses an individual's spirit. Doña Felicia explains that the curandera will make "a small broom with branches from the rue bush, rosemary, and hierba de cruz" which is then brushed "over the person, up and then down in sweeping motions" (Castillo, 1993, p. 70). Again, this is an example of using natural ingredients in order to cure the body holistically, in ways that address the psychological and spiritual components of the permeable human body.

Chicana Bodies and Violent Forces

La Loca also has specifically curandera-like knowledge due to her ability to heal her sisters. Throughout the book, this youngest daughter is never referred to by the name given to her at birth; she is only ever referred to pejoratively as La Loca, or "the crazy." This is because at the age of three, she dies and is miraculously reborn, and this unsettling and logic-defying incident causes many erratic changes in her behaviour, hence her name La Loca. In particular, La Loca is imbued with knowledge of "women's bodies. She had never delivered a human baby, but she knew all about a woman's pregnancy cycle. There

wasn't even a medical book around for Loca to have learned from" (Castillo, 1993, p. 164). Therefore, this knowledge is not learned through studying; it is inherent, just as much of the craft of curanderismo is innate and embodied. Her sister Caridad becomes pregnant several times and La Loca performs her abortions using her special knowledge. Additionally, the narrator writes that, "healing her sisters from the traumas and injustices they were dealt by society – a society she herself never experienced firsthand – was never questioned" (1993, p. 27). Due to the fact that it is Caridad's choice to have the fetuses aborted, La Loca's actions are considered to be a cure for Caridad's body, because she is respecting her sister's decision to retain control over her life. Although killing the fetus inside of Caridad is inarguably an act of destruction, La Loca's healing actions are curandera-like, given that she relieves her sister of a fate that she did not want and performs a healing that makes Caridad psychologically, spiritually, and physically whole again.

There are many instances throughout the novel in which the bodies of La Loca and her three sisters are attacked by external forces. For example, Caridad suffers a terrible mutilation when she is assaulted, and the police dismiss her case. However, the force that attacks Caridad is "made of sharp metal and splintered wood, of limestone, gold, and brittle parchment. It held the weight of a continent […] and mostly, as Caridad would never ever forget, it was pure force (Castillo, 1993, p. 77). The entity that ravages Caridad and leaves her body in fragments is anything but human. I argue that this attack is symbolic of the compounding of a history of patriarchal violence that is perpetrated on the Chicana body. This is because the material weight that the entity is composed of is phallic in its description: the "sharp metal" that parallels Caridad's stab wound, and the "splintered wood." It is only after Caridad's miraculous transformation (in which she wakes up whole one day) that she becomes a curandera, allowing her to heal and repair other bodies in the borderlands.

Curanderismo vs. Modern Medicine

Chicana bodies are also attacked by less mysterious forces in the novel. For example, Fe confronts capitalist violence when she ingests lethal chemicals while assembling weapons at Acme International. Fe and her female co-workers soon begin to feel ill; however, when they complain about

their symptoms, "the nurse g[ives] them each ibuprofen tablets [and] advice about pre-menopause and the

dropping of estrogen levels in women over thirty" (Castillo, 1993, p. 178). The women are dismissed and

continue to suffer from their toxic working conditions, in a way that ominously echoes the police's

dismissal of Caridad's assault. Shortly after Fe miscarries her first child, she discovers that she has

cancer. Moreover, to her horror, Fe learns that the chemical that she has been primarily working with was

"*heavier than air*," (p. 188) and screams "'WHERE DID _ GO […] IF NOT IN _ ME?'" (p. 189).[4] Fe's

realization reinforces the idea of the porous body, one that has the ability, as an empty vessel, to contain

that which exists outside of it. It is important to note that throughout the book, Fe is always very skeptical

of curanderismo and spiritual approaches to the body. This explains her initial inability to understand the

collapse of the boundary "separating" her inner body from her work environment. Furthermore, after her

diagnosis, Fe is subjected to what she calls torture at the hands of the hospital staff. Due to the removal of

the cancerous moles on her skin, "Fe's flesh almost all at once was scarred all over" and "surgically

scraped" (p. 186). These examples show the invasive and brutalizing treatment that she experiences at the

hands of modern medicine, to the point where "there was so little left of Fe to be buried" (p. 186).

Ironically, modern methods that are used in an attempt to heal Fe only destroy her further.

Towards the close of the novel, La Loca herself begins to show signs of illness. Her mother Sofia

calls upon Dr. Tolentino, a family physician who diagnoses La Loca with human immunodeficiency

virus, a diagnosis that is perplexing to say the least given that La Loca never leaves the house or sees

visitors. The incurable nature of this disease does not prevent Dr. Tolentino's attempts to try to fix La

Loca. The doctor's techniques are very invasive: he performs what the narrator refers to as a psychic

surgery, in which he submerges his hand through La Loca's skin and into her stomach. This procedure

results in the removal of "a bloody coagulation" (Castillo, 1993, p. 228), as well as "some cystic fibroids

and finally a tumor that had lodged itself to one of Loca's ovaries" (p. 229). This graphic description of

the surgery contrasts with the work of curanderismo, especially in its vastly different approaches to the

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[4] Earlier in the novel, Fe's prior boyfriend, Tom, inexplicably sends her a note telling her that their relationship is over. Upon reading the note, Fe, who has just been out shopping for a wedding dress, screams for days on end which garners her the nickname "Fe la Gritona" (37). Subsequently, Fe's speech is permanently altered, and the gaps in her speech in this quote are a reflection of this.

human body. Curanderismo highlights the porous nature of the human body, a vessel in which this boundary is always in a state of transition due to the fluctuation of energy that flows from inside to outside, and vice versa. Contrarily, the invasive procedure that Dr. Tolentino performs on La Loca recalls Fe's fragmentary experience at the hospital; Fe is left in pieces, just as composite parts of La Loca's body are removed and "held up for [her] appraisal" (p. 228). Ultimately, La Loca dies not long after Dr. Tolentino's intervention, sharing the same fate as her sister Fe.

The Empowerment of a Porous Body

As we have seen, a porous body is one in which various forces and energies move through and across its borders. This, along with the view of the body as a vessel, may suggest that the body is a passive object being acted upon, especially considering how the Chicana bodies of Esperanza, Caridad, Fe, and La Loca are the targets of multiple patriarchal and capitalist attacks. However, I would like to suggest that the relationship that the sisters experience between their bodies and the environment only becomes more agential through their deaths. For example, despite the fact that Esperanza is tortured and killed while working abroad as a reporter in Saudi Arabia, she returns in a form that is interchangeably called "transparent" (Castillo, 1993, p. 163) and "ectoplas[mic]" (p. 186), and whose presence spiritually endures and is felt by her family. Caridad, and La Loca after her eventual death, live on in spirit form in a very present way that their mother Sofia senses. Indeed, Fe is the only sister who is just "plain dead" (p. 186). In fact, Deborah L. Madsen suggests that the permanent nature of her death "reflects the spiritual death of self-denial and cultural self-hatred experienced by Fe before her body dies" (2000, p. 101). Fe could never bring herself to subscribe to an alternative view of the body, in which a person's being is a combination of physical, spiritual, and psychological components. As a result, when she physically dies, she is unable to manifest in spiritual form as her sisters do.

Conclusion

Curanderismo, and the alternative view of the body that is at the center of its epistemology, is the reason why the Chicana bodies in *So Far from God* resist victimization and transcend the various forces that seek to oppress them. Indeed, despite the deaths of their former physical bodies, Esperanza, Caridad,

and La Loca are very visible and present at the end of the novel, in a way that is very much real. It is the figure of the curandera, as represented by doña Felicia, Caridad, and La Loca, who has the transformative potential to elicit positive social change for Chicanas, individuals who live along what Anzaldúa famously refers to as the borderlands. Returning to Ana Castillo's question "are we destroying more than we are creating?" (2017, p. 133), we can understand that although the destructive forces are persistent, alternative knowledges are a source of empowerment that defy victimization.

Biography

Valerie is pursuing her Masters degree in Literature at Concordia University, which is where she completed her bachelors in Honours English. Her research interests include feminist critical theory, Montréal and Québec writing, as well as Chicana epistemologies in Ana Castillo's books. She also enjoys bringing popular culture into the academy, including TV shows like Buffy the Vampire Slayer. In 2018 she was an invited speaker at Bishops University and John Abbott College, where she presented an essay on gothic film and literature called "'A Monstrous Love': Perverse Sexualities and Decaying Bodies in Guillermo del Toro's Crimson Peak and Neil Marshall's The Descent." She was shortlisted for the MacGuigan Prize in the English department at Concordia University, for her essay entitled "A Spectacle of Ghosts: Hidden Narratives in Nadine Gordimer's 'The Ultimate Safari.'" Upon entrance into the graduate program, Valerie was awarded the Faculty of Arts and Science Merit Scholarship. In the Fall 2019 semester, she was elected as the Academic Representative for the Student Association of Graduate English at Concordia. She has a book review on feminist theory and pedagogy that has recently been published in The Canadian Journal of Action Research.

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"undead in our grammar": Spectral, Textual Animacy in Academic Writing

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Abstract

The language writers use to talk about the dead determines who or what experiences a cultural afterlife. To explore spectral, textual animacies, I put Jeffrey Wolfrey's "Preface: On Textual Haunting" in conversation with Mel Y. Chen's chapter "Lead's Racial Matters." I focus on academic style in the humanities to explore where textual spectres fall on the animacy hierarchy. I chose this focus because academics follow standard citational practices and the humanities specifically uses the literary present tense. I argue that texts are animated through haunting: they move from the bottom, or inanimate portion of the animacy hierarchy, to affect the top, or animate portion of the hierarchy. One way in which texts are animated is through reading, as well as writing style, specifically the ways in which anthropomorphization animates text through first-person pronouns, the literary present, and intertextuality. What is more, texts allow for a multiplicity of hauntings because readers can interpret a text in multiple ways, making texts the producers of animacy. This spectral animacy is expected and therefore normalized. I end by noting that the English literary canon animates white men more than other bodies. My exploration of spectral, textual animacy is important, then, because power structures, such as the patriarchy, capitalism, and colonialism, affect certain in/animate bodies disproportionately, ultimately perpetuating the systemic oppression of marginalized people.

Keywords: culture, writing, literature, reader, humanities, intertextuality, texts, style, spectres, haunting, animacy

The language writers use to talk about the dead determines who or what experiences a cultural afterlife. My exploration of spectral, textual animacy is important because power structures, such as the patriarchy, capitalism, and colonialism, affect inanimate matter so that certain bodies—namely white, middle to upper-class men—and their texts become animated more than others. By "animated," I mean endowed with cultural life that makes them seem like more of a vital presence in the world than other bodies and objects. Textual animacy is therefore directly relevant to questions of whose voices are listened to, and the problem of systemic marginalization along lines of race, gender, class, and so on. To explore spectral, textual animacies, I have put Jeffrey Wolfrey's "Preface: On Textual Haunting" from his book *Victorian Hauntings: Spectrality, Gothic, the Uncanny and Literature* in conversation with Mel

Y. Chen's chapter "Lead's Racial Matters" from her book *Animacies: Biopolitics, Racial Mattering, and Queer Affect*. My research question started by asking where texts fall on the animacy hierarchy, concluding that they move from the bottom, or inanimate portion of the hierarchy and affect the top, animate portion through written and cultural practices. I will start by explaining animacy theory and textual haunting before moving into some examples from academia, specifically first-person narration, intertextuality, the literary present, and textual agency. I will then consider the implications of textual animacy and social inequity in the literary canon, and end by discussing how we can develop textual haunting practices that are good for us.

So, what is animacy theory and how does it help us understand the work of spectres? Chen's (2012) animacy theory posits a hierarchy where animate, or living, subjects are at the top of the hierarchy, such as humans and animals, followed by inanimate matter, such as lead (159). However, Chen (2012) argues that inanimate matter can become animate, or "undo the purported mapping of lifeliness-deadliness scales" through cultural phenomena such as the media (167). Overall, the animacy hierarchy privileges the living. Ghosts, on the other hand, are typically spectres of the dead and the past, yet they exist, live perhaps, in the present. In this way, a specter "calls into question the linearity of time" (Weinstock, 2013, 62). Derrida says that specters are both of the past and foretell the future (qtd in del Pilar Blanco and Pereen, 2013). A haunting thus "demands justice, or at least a response" (del Pilar Blanco and Pereen, 2013, 9). Ghosts demand that their stories shape the actions of the present in order to affect the future. In short, in/animate matter as well as ghosts are capable of affecting the living, in addition to collapsing hierarchies and/or time.

Lead moves up the animacy hierarchy through its terrifying connotations of death, whereas textual haunting is ordinary and acceptable. Lead becomes animate through language, for instance: "inanimate pollutants…'invade' all kinds of consumer products" (Chen, 2012, 166). This language draws from a rhetoric of terror (Chen, 2012, 173). In the same way, we might think of ghosts' demand

for justice as a threat as well: Western society regards ghosts as invaders from the past that terrorize the present. And yet, when it comes to textual haunting, Wolfreys (2013) says that authors communicate through the text, which is "a gesture within an acceptable range of oscillations" (72). Thus, English speakers are conditioned to view the animated and haunted text as normal. The reason being, as Wolfreys (2013) explains, is "we implicitly assume some presence, form or identity which was once present and which was once the origin of any given text" (72). Again, textual animacy and haunting are acceptable because we expect that the texts were written by a person that might be dead, or they might be citing someone who has died. Therefore, textual spectres, just like lead, are at the bottom of the animacy hierarchy because texts are inanimate, but their contents, the haunted voices of the past, affect the living. However, these ghosts are not terrifying because texts are a site where the dead have always been permitted to live and speak among the living, as a mundane "fact" of the world and its relations.

Academics are typically trained to write objectively, that is, without bias, imagination, and emotion. To do so, they might try to avoid anthropomorphization, a kind of animacy. Anthropomorphization is an imaginative technique because it requires that a non-human subject, such as an animal, lead, or text, perform in a "human" way, a way that it literally cannot perform in reality. An example of anthropomorphization in action is through lead-painted toys that have a "facial front" that "reifies parents' fantasy that the toy must be a familiar and safe substitute for a 'person'" (Chen, 2012, 161). Thus, parents and children understand the toy with a human face as safe because it looks human, whereas lead is dangerous because it supposedly attacks humans in a human-like fashion. Likewise, the animacy of texts has to do with anthropomorphization where "acts of reading anthropomorphize the text" (Wolfreys, 2013, 72). Texts are inanimate, but they become animated by the reader, where the textual information comes alive in the reader's mind. Despite the hegemony of "objectivity," this mode of animacy is also a commonplace of literary criticism—it is not only that readers are always inadvertently doing this, but rather that we explicitly grant agency to texts themselves

in the wake of "Death of the Author" schools of criticism that eschew human authors as the ultimate authority over a text's meanings and effects. The literary discipline is premised on the notion that texts have more agency than other objects. What is more, academic writers cannot avoid anthropomorphization, what with first-person narration, intertextual hauntings, the literary present, and the reader animating the text.

While literary criticism's embrace of Roland Barthes's theory of the "Death of the Author" may imply that the text is animated at the expense of the author, in practice the relationship between textual and authorial animacy is more complicated. This complexity is evident through first-person narrative techniques. The reader simultaneously animates the author and the text when reading first-person pronouns. That is, when the author invokes their own materiality in their text, they come alive. Authors effectively anthropomorphize themselves when they write in the first person. An example being: "In this paper, I will argue." By saying what one intends to write, they are giving the reader an opportunity to consider the author's position and positionality, making it possible to consider how their background informs their argumentative stance. Authors typically use first-person pronouns at select points in an academic argument: for instance, when establishing one's thesis, recounting a personal story, and/or concluding one's essay. These pronouns remind the reader that the text they are reading is another person's ideas, and this reminder of another person, dead or alive, brings the author of the text alive in the reader's mind, moving the text from inanimate to animate through the act of reading.

Intertextual hauntings are a similar form of animacy to first-person pronouns. Intertextuality refers to a primary or secondary source that shapes or supports an author argument. Intertextual hauntings happen when authors cite someone else's work, or even pair two or more authors' ideas together. It is the conversation that happens between authors, between texts, that animates the dead, the living, and the text itself through reading. For example, "we substitute the author's proper name in rhetorical formulae such as 'Dickens comments', 'Tennyson says that', 'George Eliot remarks', as though the text were

merely a conduit…by which the author communicates" (Wolfreys, 2013, 72). The first-person pronoun engages with the reader directly, whereas intertextual hauntings bring different people, living and/or dead, together to speak to each other within the confines of the text. Further, as Kidder and Todd say on the position of the author, "Writers we revere feel like colleagues and confidants, as if they were speaking to us directly" (qtd. in Saint-Amour, 2018, 370). So, not only is the reader haunted by the text, but so too is the author in conversation with their sources. What is more, these conversations appear to be at the top of the animacy hierarchy because they can be between living and living-dead authors. I say "living/dead authors" because the "dead" authors are being anthropomorphized into living beings through literary criticism's insistence on using the present tense to analyse text, a method known as "the literary present."

The literary present affects the animacy hierarchy through its relation to time. It is a technique typically used by academics in the humanities when discussing literature or other art pieces: one must write about the text, the author, its characters, and so on, as if they exist in the present, no matter the date of publication, nor the author's status as alive or dead. For instance, Wolfreys (2013) writes "George Eliot remarks" in the literary present, even though Eliot died in the nineteenth century. Eliot can no longer literally remark anything, yet humanities scholars insist on working with not only artwork but the creators themselves as if, in the moment of analysis, they were alive. The author's thoughts can then live outside the body and in the text, and the author and their work thus "outlive the moment of its creation and survive in fresh readerly presents" (Saint-Amour, 2018, 371). In other words, writing about past texts as if they were written in the present is one way to animate the texts and the dead. By refusing death in this way, the literary present is a form of anthropomorphization that moves the dead and their work from inanimate to animate.

The reader can also animate the text in particular ways by how they write or talk about it. Wolfreys (2013) explains that in reading a text, we re-animate it: "We speak of the text as 'saying

something', we write that the text does things or makes things occur, as though it had a life or will of its own" (72). A logical extension of Barthes's literary critical premise is that texts *do* have agency, and their agency is in many ways more significant than that of the person who authored the text. Thus, one common stylistic device in academic writing is when one anthropomorphizes the text: "The article says…" or "The novel tells the story of…" In these examples, it is not the author that is telling the reader something, it is the text itself that does the telling, which of course is impossible. Notably, the literary present is present in these examples too, further animating the text. In a like manner, the reader may engage in "textual projections, apparitions if you will" because they are invested in the story, the characters, the setting, the emotions, and so on (Wolfreys, 2013, 73). When the reader imagines the story they read, they appear as ghostly apparitions. Significantly, anthropomorphizing the text and seeing apparitions show how texts are open to interpretation outside of what the author intended, and these additional meanings are animated by the reader. Not only are texts haunted by voices from the past, but readers create unlimited sites of new hauntings through interpretation, making texts the producers of animacy.

How, then, does an understanding of textual animacy and the ways it is generated help us better understand the politics not only of the "literary present," but of *cultural* presence? Crucially, the animacy hierarchy is hierarchical in more than one sense. It is hierarchical based on privilege, so some people—middle to upper-class white people—are more visible in media such as television and advertisements, than other people, for instance, poor women of colour. Chen (2012) takes up a similar and opposing concept when she discusses the invisible labour that goes into painting the lead on toys. For the most part, media outlets were concerned solely with white children of middle and upper-class families being poisoned by lead, rather than the actual labourers that painted the lead onto the toys themselves (Chen 2012). In the same way, some texts are privileged by the literary market and educational institutions and are therefore visible over others. We can turn to the English literary canon as an example. The canon is

a collection of documents, such as poetry, plays, and novels, that scholars have deemed the most important or influential of all published works written in English. Thus, some writers' words have "the status of general knowledge" and thus, "Some of the dead were more undead in our grammar than others" (Saint-Amour, 2018, 377). That is, authors that appear in the English literary canon are animated more frequently than those that do not appear in the canon. Authors or texts that have been regularly animated since the establishment of English literary studies in the eighteenth century, and continue to be so today include the Bible, William Shakespeare, John Milton, Edgar Allan Poe, Johnathon Swift, Charles Dickens. All of the famous authors just mentioned are white men, and despite criticism of the fact that most of the authors in the canon are white men, these authors remain in the cannon and in academic syllabi. And it is no surprise that the authors that appear in the English canon are white men given that white men are the most privileged group. It makes sense but it is not okay. Spectral, textual animacy gives more power to white men, even dead ones(!), through their spectral presence than living and dead people of any other positionality. Essentially, white men refuse to die. As a result, we continue to repeat the same ideas over and over, ultimately perpetuating the status quo and further silencing marginalized groups.

In some ways, textual haunting is good: it is a normalized way for people to "be together with the dead" in an everyday way. Yet, textual animacy is implicated in the same harmful cultural dynamics as every other part of hegemonic culture. What kind of haunting, then, should we cultivate, care for, and sustain going forward—what kind of textual haunting is good for us? Considering who gets haunted is one avenue for exploration. It is likely those with privilege that are haunted the most, given that books cost money and take time to read, and the working class has less money and less time than middle to upper-class groups. Thus, educational institutions could buy work written by marginalized authors in bulk and give these books for free to marginalized communities that have little to not access to books. I also think for our university syllabi, moving away from the classic white dead men theories, novels,

short stories, poems, plays, and so on is a step in the right direction, and instead including work by marginalized writers (i.e., Black, Indigenous, and People of Colour (BIPOC). What is more, in our writing, we could try citing writers and scholars with marginalized backgrounds. I am thinking of Sara Ahmed, for instance, who in her latest book, *Living a Feminist Life,* explicitly states her citational policy: she says, "In this book, I adopt a strict citational policy: I do not cite any white men" (15). I'm not suggesting that this is an easy practice: my own paper draws primarily from white men…And I want to point out that for marginalized people, it is not always doable to cite marginalized writers and scholars. Ahmed even says, "When I was doing my PhD, I was told I had to give my love to this or that male theorist" (15). She even offers examples of people asking her if she followed Derrida or Lacan. But because Ahmed is a queer woman of colour, she is also expected to be fluent in critical race studies scholarship, and queer theory scholarship, and feminist scholarship. These expectations are another form of oppression because white men are only expected to know and cite other white men. So I recognize that it is not as easy as just saying you will never cite white men again. I think, though, our reading and citational practices are important sites for cultivating textual animacy and haunting in a way that interrupts hegemonic cultural dynamics, and I ask then, that we try to interrupt these dynamics when possible.

Biography

Sylvie Côté is a Cultural Studies and Critical Theory master's student at McMaster University. Her major research project is concerned with the representation of sex trafficking and sexual fantasies of abduction and sexual assault in BDSM erotica, a project that is funded by the SSHRC award. In her spare time, Sylvie enjoys circus-related fitness classes and spending time with her cat, Charlie.

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Missing, Murdered or Concealed: Margaret Atwood and Canada's Literary Venus

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Canada

Abstract

"Missing, Murdered or Concealed*"* explores Margaret Atwood's determination in her 1972 thematic guide, *Survival,* of the missing Canadian literary Venus. Upon examination of Chapter 10, "Ice Women Vs Earth Mothers: The Stone Angel and the Absent Venus," Atwood theorizes that a Canadian literary Venus is possibly not absent or missing from Canadian literature but is concealed. This analysis navigates this concealment. My methodology investigates native texts listed in an appendix by Atwood at the end of Chapter 4*, "*First People: Indians and Eskimos as Symbols." *Survival* was designed around texts that Atwood encountered growing up but did not present to her an imaginable and tangible literary Venus. "Missing, Murdered or Concealed" argues for a new understanding of how Atwood possibly could not locate a Canadian literary Venus in Canadian literature by omitting a Native literary voice. This essay prompts readers today in contemplating the place of women as sacred and divine in Canadian culture and literary traditions while in the place of acknowledging the atrocity of missing and murdered Native women in our Canadian society. In envisioning a more contextual literary landscape when attempting to discover Canada's literary Venus, I advocate that there needs to be consultation with Native scholars, writers and artists to help provide a more comprehensive understanding of the Canadian literary Venus. We cannot respectably continue to include *Survival* in a university syllabus without facilitating students to examine the nationalist polemic of the text, in learning about the Native Cultural Renaissance of the 1960s and 1970s, understanding the marketability and reason for publishing the guide and scrutinizing Atwood's appendix of 'non-fictive' Native texts.

Keywords:

Margaret Atwood, Canadian Literature, Survival, Venus, Native Literature

Missing, Murdered or Concealed: Margaret Atwood and Canada's Literary Venus

In Chapter 10 of *Survival: A Thematic Guide to Canadian Literature*, "Ice Women Vs Earth

Mothers: The Stone Angel and the Absent Venus," Margaret Atwood asks her reader "why no Canadian

writer has seen fit- or found it imaginable- to produce a Venus in Canada?" (*Survival* 238) Venus

manifests in diverse forms in literature. She epitomizes sensual love and childbirth. Venus is The Muse.

Atwood locates tension with representations of Venus in Canadian literature. She identifies that Venus is

dichotomized. There is the "sexual love department presided over by whores, or by easy and therefore

despised women" (*Survival* 245). The women who produce babies are reserved for "Diana figures,

nonentities or even Hecates" (*Survival* 245). Atwood's analysis suggests that Canadian literary female

characters are victims of polarity and projected on to by writers. The Canadian literary Venus has

"neither the sexual attractiveness nor the power possessed by the bitch-goddess in American

literature…nor are they ever allowed the wise womanliness often characteristic of 'mature' Venus-

figures in European fiction" (*Survival* 246). Atwood pointedly finishes her chapter by proposing that

"Venus is not necessarily absent but concealed" (*Survival* 251). This paper will explore this

'concealment.'

Atwood isolates her source reading list for *Survival* from an Anglo-European lens, which is a

settler experience of 'bare survival.' She brought together texts in *Survival* that she had access to,

essentially the ones *she* read. "The main idea," Atwood writes, is "hanging on, staying alive" (*Survival*

41). I wonder if our Canadian literary Venus is 'hanging on', and how well she is 'staying alive'

amongst the fabric of a body of literature that has split her, most likely 'othered' her, and has deemed

her either 'absent' or 'concealed.' Venus, in her composite of love and childbirth, is missing.

"Are there any real women?" Atwood implores, "or rather, are there any women in Canadian

literature who appear to be leading normal married lives, having children who are not dead?" (*Survival*

249). In comprehending this rendered tragic-figure laying in dormant like Pratt's lizard, sleeping on the

Canadian shield, my methodology is to turn to a missing voice and one that could have been included in

Survival, a native voice, to attempt to find Venus.

A Native voice depicts women differently than *Survival's* Anglo-European lens. In her book *The Sacred Hoop,* Paula Gunn Allen writes that, "the tribes see women variously, but they do not question the power of femininity. Sometimes they see women as fearful, sometimes peaceful, sometimes omnipotent and omniscient, but they never portray women as mindless, helpless, simple, or oppressed" (Allen 44). This depiction contrasts with the world of fictive female characters Atwood faced. Annis Pratt in "Dancing with Goddesses: Archetypes, Poetry, and Empowerment," an in-depth analysis conducted on the representation of Venus in literature, discusses the representation of women within native writing: "while remaining wary of facile analogies between Native American and European symbols, it is helpful to look at a few examples of such archetypes as Moon Goddess, Love Goddess, Crone, and Healer in Native American poetry. For one thing, Native American women poets do not attribute 'Terrible Mother' characteristics to their mothers in the way that white poets do" (Pratt 331). Perhaps Venus is 'concealed' somewhere other than Anglo-European texts. Venus could be hidden or masked within semantics. The reality is disturbing in how society has treated a native voice, let alone native women, and depicted native figures in literature. An investigation of the depiction of native women in Canadian literature that Atwood potentially could have included in *Survival* could surface whether a 'Canadian' literary Venus was in fact written-out of a national thematic guide of Canadian literature in the 1970s.

In Chapter 4 of *Survival*, with a dated title, "First People: Indians and Eskimos as Symbols" Atwood acknowledges literary constructs that conformed a native presence to a white settler consciousness. Atwood states, "Indians and Eskimos have rarely been considered in and for themselves; they are usually made into projections of something in the white Canadian psyche, a fear or a wish" (*Survival* 109). Atwood puts forward that a native voice at this time of her reading and writing was almost non-existent. The question of Atwood's accessibility to certain native texts is relevant in this analysis. At the end of the chapter she provides her readers with an "Appendix: Writing by [she uses the term] Indians" which states, "All the books in this chapter are by white people. What the Indians themselves

think is another story, and one that is just beginning to be written. For a preview try: Cardinal, Harold, *The Unjust Society;* Hurtig, McLuhan, Terry, *Touch the Earth*; N. Pitseolak, *Pitseolak*; OUP. Redbird, Duke, and Marty Dunn, *Red on White*; N. Wabashego, *The Only Good Indian*." (*Survival* 128). Atwood's transparency of the shortness of her appendix is confronting because in leaving out a more in-depth engagement with the listed Native texts, *Survival's* methodological perimeters completely exclude discussion of Native literature from the 1960s cultural movement known as 'The Native Renaissance.' The question is in determining how much of this literature was readily available to readers at this time. In a biography on Atwood from 1998, author Nathalie Cooke includes details of critique on *Survival's* exclusion of a Native voice that Atwood "had selected the negative side of Canadian literature, the literature of surrender, but had neglected the Native 'struggle literature'… she had left out works that celebrated Canada with a 'perfect sense of being…home" (Cooke 294). This paper will contemplate excluded 'struggle literature' by engaging with one source listed in Atwood's appendix to start to extend the scope of the perspective of Atwood's original analysis. Atwood has 'appendicized' an era of writing that could potentially reveal the Canadian literary Venus.

Survival does not speak to the presence of a 'Native Cultural Renaissance' rising up around Atwood at the time of writing and publishing the thematic guide. In *Before the Country: Native Renaissance, Canadian Mythology*, Stephanie McKenzie contextualizes that "during the 1960s and 1970s, and in the midst of Aboriginal social and political activism, an explosion of writing by First Nations and Metis authors entered the Canadian literary market and announced the arrival of not only significant individuals but also a body of literature after almost six decades of Aboriginal 'silence' in the Canadian publishing world" (McKenzie 7). Where is this 'explosion' of literature in *Survival?* In a literary article appearing in the journal "Canadian Literature," in 1990, "A Double-Bladed Knife: Subversive Laughter in Two Stories by Thomas King," Atwood explains the exclusion of a native literary voice in *Survival*:

> Once upon a time long ago, in 1972 to be exact, I wrote a book called *Survival*, which was about Canadian literature; an eccentric subject in those days, when many denied there was any. In this book, there was a chapter entitled *First People: Indians and Eskimos as Symbols*. What this chapter examined was the uses made by non-Native writers of Native characters and motifs, over the centuries and for their own purposes. This chapter did not examine poetry and fiction written by Native writers in English, for the simple reason that I could not at that time find any; although I was able to recommend a small list of non-fiction titles. The closest thing to 'imaginative' writing by Natives were 'translations' of Native myths and poetry, which might turn up at the beginnings of anthologies, or be offered as a species of Native fairy tale in grade-school readers (Atwood 243).

The crux of *Survival* functioning as a public text for a Canadian literary consciousness is that Atwood's thematic guide is in actuality a subjective work and nation-building.

There is one source listed by Atwood that she could have turned to if accessibility enabled. In *The Only Good Indian,* there is a screenplay by Nona Benedict titled, "The Dress," and a poem by Duke Redbird titled "Old Woman" - who is also listed in her appendix- that both engage and negotiate the identity of native women at this time of generational effects of the colonial process on native peoples. Benedict's screenplay of five scenes shows a young woman (aged about 18), presumably a 'secretary' and a depiction of her encounter with white urban life. "On the screen there flash pictures of: segregation, an Indian girl standing in an open field, an Indian girl looking up, at skyscrapers, an Indian girl mingling with white people staring at her" (Benedict 65-66).   The scenes jump around quickly with the lights flashing on and off. Next, "At the back of the scrim the grandfather is talking to a little girl," the Grandfather says to her, "and not everyone will treat you as nicely when you are off the reserve. But then, perhaps you are too young to understand that yet" (Benedict 66). The play closes with the young woman speaking to her friend:

> Indian girl with Friend: Friend asks, "Why are you going through with this ritual?" "Well, that's the Indian way of life and I'm Indian. I'd like to keep the old culture and the ancient dances because I'm proud of my people. I believe that once you lose your identity you become another blade of grass when you could have become a flower. That's not saying anything against the people who have

become blades of grass, it's just that I hope to become beautiful in spirit as my ancestors were. (She turns to her friend and smiles.) I hope you know what I mean…Yes, I'll continue my education, you can still have a good life mixing the old with the new. I'm positive you can if you try hard enough. If you give everything you try a good fight you can come out a winner (Benedict 69).

She might not have included a play depicting a Native woman of courage and strength in honouring her Native heritage with respect because the nature of the text was a play. This 'imaginative' piece might not have been considered to be literature by Atwood at this time of her reading.

Duke Redbird's poem, "Old Woman," also could be considered another artistic piece that Atwood characterized as 'turning up' in an anthology but not included in *Survival*. Speaking to the Old Woman, "How close you are to the earth/ How low you've bent." Redbird wonders, "And what of you/ Will you sink below the surface/ Of my perception/ And slip away from my understanding/ And stand in the darkness" (Redbird 181). This Old Woman risks extinction. Is she a metaphor of what colonialism has done to the Native woman? Is she our missing and concealed Canadian literary Venus before colonialism bent her low and risking slipping beyond our perception? "Old woman," Redbird observes, "I know who you are/ I know this barren waste land/ Upon which I stand/ Was once a forest. / And you old woman/ Had life and beauty/ Energy and passion/ Love and abundance/ Freedom and chatter with the gods" (Redbird 181-182). This Old Woman is a victim folded inside a larger national process of extermination. "Did they leave you with anything at all/ Except pain and misery and hunger/ What last word, before you give up/ Your spirit to eternity/ Did they leave you even that/ One word, one thought/ To take with you to the last hunting ground/ Love?" (Redbird 182-183). 'They,' assuming those of a settler society or nationalists who would create texts like thematic guides. There is no 'one word, one thought,' just an appendix at the end of a chapter on the disparate treatment of Native figures in Canadian literature historically. I wonder if Atwood intended for anyone to actually read these 'non-fictive' titles she listed as a 'preview' or how much thought and consideration went into addressing a readership who would be interested in them later on.

The crux of this analysis is acknowledging that *The Good Indian* is only one text listed by Atwood and this analysis draws on only two examples. More extensive research of the works produced during the Native Cultural Renaissance could unearth more writers and literary figures that would help fill in the gaps of Atwood's narrative. The reality hinges on what texts Atwood had access to and honouring *Survival's* bias in being a thematic guide comprised of the texts that were within arm's reach for Atwood. Her scope and breadth of texts exemplifies the stereotype of an Anglo-European Canadian readership. Native literature has continued to evolve and become separate from Canadian literature altogether in some currents. Today, Native literature is not deemed 'unimaginative' or lacking of literary components as was the tone in *Survival*. In "A Necessary Inclusion," Renate Eigenbrod notes how the term *literature* is more inclusive, "it does not underscore a rigid divide between orature and literature," and "argues for a continuation of a literary tradition beginning in precontact times" (Eigenbrod 6). The reality is that Native literature has carved out a space as a counter public in Canadian society when, respectfully, components of this discourse were original but stencilled over through a processual implementation to extinct Native culture and specifically, Native women.

As Native literature has evolved since 1972 so too has the depiction of female Native literary figures. She is not only an Old Woman bent low, she is also a "Post-Oka Kinda Woman," and "Here she comes strutting down your street. / This Post-Oka woman don't take no shit./ She's done with victimization, reparation,/ degradation, assimilation,/ devolution, coddled collusion,/ the 'plight of the Native Peoples'" (Cuthand 132). It appears that this Post-Oka Woman would not tolerate the quality of conditions Atwood's literary Venus endured and perhaps would further exist in harmony with some of Atwood's contemporary female literary characters controlling their own bodies and surviving dystopic landscapes.

When we acknowledge the state of Canada's 'Missing and Murdered Native Women,' she is not doing well. Atwood could write a more current thematic literary guide that will move beyond *Survival*

while providing a retrospective look at her shaping of Canadian literature and the public. I think that guide would do well, but Atwood does not feel that she would write *Survival* today: "[she] wouldn't need to"(*Survival* xxiii). I take the stance that it is needed and time to do so. Venus was not necessarily missing or concealed, she was possibly excluded and existed before colonialism. The current state of Native women in Canadian society and a reclamation of the Native woman in Native literature creates a more developed Venus than outlined by Atwood in 1972.

Canadians "identify [themselves] through [their] literature," we can acknowledge from the state of *Survival,* despite the intention of borderline satirical discourse in an insecure literary field, we have excluded a native voice and we do not know where our Venus is (Frye 113). Regardless of what Atwood includes and leaves out of her analysis, this literary choice in itself exposes the reader to Canada's realities. There needs to be a consultation with native scholars, writers and artists to help provide a more comprehensive understanding of the Canadian literary Venus. We cannot respectably continue to include *Survival* in a University syllabus without facilitating students to examine the nationalist polemic of the text, learning about the Native Cultural Renaissance, understanding the marketability and reason for publishing the guide and scrutinizing the appendix of 'non-fictive' Native texts. We cannot accept that Native literature is a counter public. "I'll leave you with two questions which someone asked me while reading the manuscript of this book: Have we survived? If so, what happens *after* Survival?" (*Survival* xxv). Atwood felt that was a good place to end. I ask especially if there is a Canadian literary Venus in hiding, 'how will we be here?' In honouring the tone of this essay, more so, 'how will [she] be here?

Biography

My writing is born from navigating the raw and confronting connections that living in a small-town project by scouring collapsed domestic landscapes. I am an educator and writer from Madoc, Ontario who orients towards the ferocity and serenity of nature and what we can learn as humans from the face of forest in our own lives. A graduate of Guelph University (B.A.) and Queen's University (M.A. and B.Ed.), I am currently completing my Masters in English in Public Texts at Trent University.

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Ocean of Plastic

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Abstract

This series of images taken on the rocky shores of Orchid Island, Taiwan illustrates — with a humorous and ironic tone — the effects that global mass consumption have on remote localities. The 45km2 island, situated off the south-eastern tip of Taiwan, is increasingly subjected to the forces of capitalism and globalisation. Startling amounts of plastic rubbish are washed on the shores of the island. During a walk on the beach, one can encounter water bottles that drifted all the way from China, fishing gear thrown off large vessels, and microplastics coming from all corners of the planet. One is suddenly forced to realize that this small island is not disconnected from the rest of the world. In fact, it is profoundly entangled with the global system. Nor are the islanders completely innocent. The tentacles of large corporations and capitalist ideology have reached the people of Orchid Island. Since the island has been under the regime of the Kuomintang, it has been subject to rapid modernization. Its borders became open to tourism, land management projects, and private companies. Today, the traditional Yami houses have almost all disappeared, making room for hotels and convenience stores. Customs are no longer practiced for survival, but maintained as tourist attractions for capital gain. With these changes, the local Yami people have discovered an attractive and convenient lifestyle, albeit at a cost: their once pristine, ancestral land is increasingly populated by waste.

Keywords: plasticene, anthropocene, climate change, sustainability, eco-resilience, indigeneity

Biography

I am a Master's student in Anthropology at the University of Ottawa. I completed field work on Orchid Island, Taiwan among the Yami indigenous group in June 2019. I am particularly interested in the intersection of indigeneity and ecology. My research aims to uncover the ways localities perceive and react to the transformations prompted by global forces, such as capitalism, colonialism, and climate change. How do people adapt to perpetual change in their ecosystem? Change and uncertainty have the power to trigger new forms of solidarity, identity, and mobilization. Through an anthropological lens, I explore human and non-human plasticity in a world always in becoming.
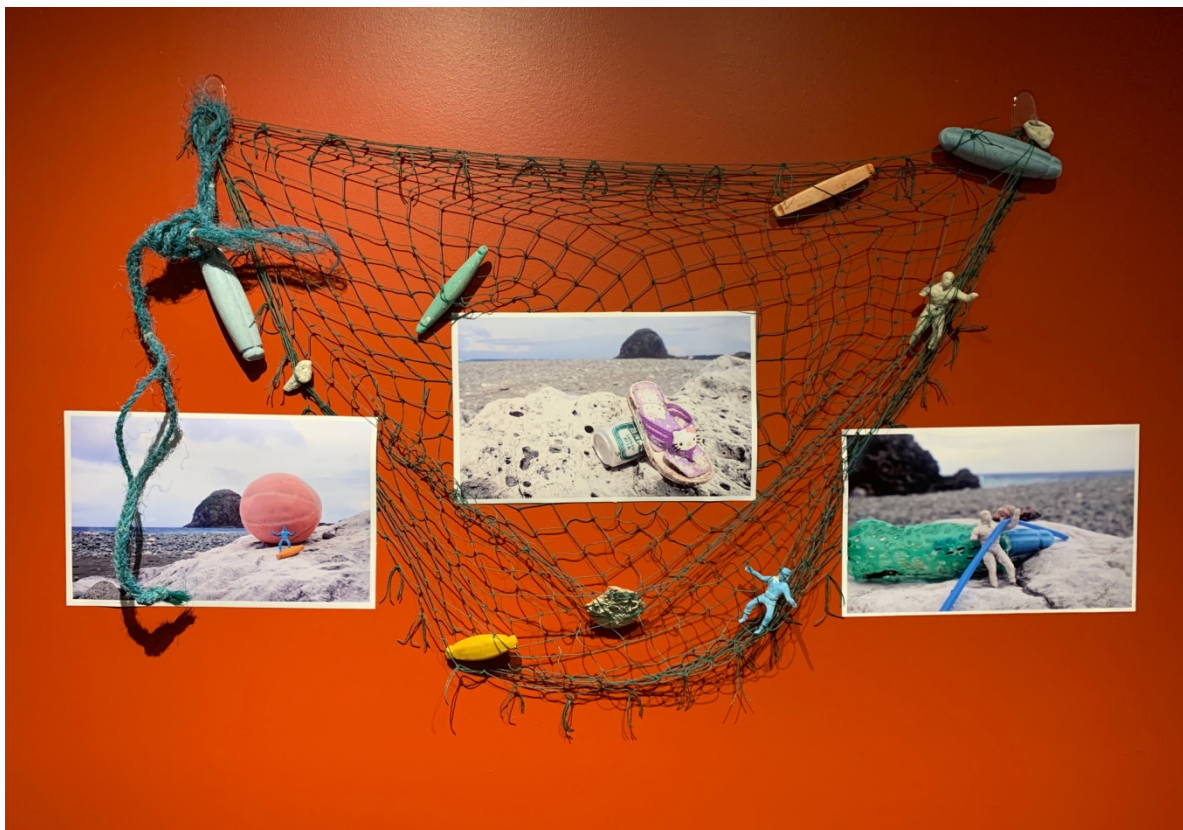
Constant State of Flux: South Asian Diasporic Expressions in the *Third Space*

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Abstract

In the popular mainstream culture of the West, spearheaded by the United States mass-media imports, many ethnic minority identities lack "authentic" cultural nuances, their representation is often one-dimensional constructed through stereotypes and perceptions. In this article, we see "ambivalence" and "ambiguity" as pivotal concepts to understand *hybridity* and *transnational* identities of the South Asian diaspora in the West. These are *performative* categories, embodied and enunciated in interstitial spaces which postcolonial theorist Homi K. Bhabha sees as *Third Space*. The assimilation and integration of the South Asian diaspora in the West are seen as intercultural encounters between ethnic minority and the mainstream host culture. The "in-between" identities formed in these encounters are often in a state of "constant flux;" often navigating a *transnational* existence, or a *hybrid* one – an intermix of South Asian and Western belonging. The facilitation and occupation of such *space* help in gaining "cultural agencies" – the *hybrids/actors/individuals*, observably second-generation immigrants through cross-cultural *affinities*; I posit they act as *authentic* "interlocutors" between the ethnic migrant diaspora and the mainstream hosts. South Asian diasporic artists through their involvement in the mainstream mass-media discourses help in the *authentic* representation of South Asian identities over the ones constructed through stereotypes, generalizations and misrepresentations.

Keywords: Authentic, Hybridity, Identity, Intercultural, South Asia, Stereotypes, Third Space

South Asian Diasporic *Hybridity* and *the Third Space*

The South Asian diaspora in their host societies, traverses a unique belonging, often a transnational one: "home" is both 1. Here: in the Indian subcontinent (Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri-Lanka) and in previous British colonies of Haiti, Mauritius, Guyana, Trinidad, West Indies, as well as parts of the Middle East and East Africa, where South Asians migrated both as indentured labour and as free immigrants; 2. There: in their Western host societies (Australia, Canada, New Zealand,

the U.K. and the U.S.)

The definition of home and identity for South Asian immigrants is *transient,* always shifting and evolving; they see it in the landscape that they are familiar with; the language and the people that they know (Bhabha, 2017); binding generations and demographics of South Asians in their Western host societies. The negotiation of identity is what Bhabha (1994, p.227) sees as "a constant state of contestation and flux caused by the differential systems of social and cultural significations […] the unstable element of linkage" This feeds into "ambiguity" and "ambivalence" — a *performative* category of South Asian ethnicity and Western citizenship; this defies performative categories based on "monoculturalism" constructed through perceptions and stereotypes often *with* which South Asian ethnic minorities and Western mainstream cultures view – "each other."

Bhabha sees *Third Space*, as an effective facilitator to enunciate a "third culture;" allowing *authentic* intercultural discourses that facilitates "multicultural" performativity and embodiment for ethnic minorities in the West. The *hybridity* of South Asian diasporic members in the *Third Space* is formed and facilitated through intersections of different cultures; it's the embodiment and cross-cultural affinities of South Asian ethnic and Western mainstream identities. The occupation of such space, often a "lived experience" for many second-generation immigrants is about traversing two different spaces simultaneously; one is their diasporic community, and then the other is outside it — where the majoritarian/mainstream culture of the host society is. It's an intermixing of cultures of the "home" as well as the "host"— a *hybridization*.

The South Asian diaspora in the West is a multi-generational one; first and second-generation identities are different from each other; they observably assimilate, acculturate and integrate into their host societies in different degrees. Growing up in the cultural setting of their host societies equips second-generation

immigrants with *requisite* cultural, social and linguistic skills to "fit in better." Whereas many first-generation immigrants who are not able to develop these skills, often see themselves as *economic* citizens of their host societies. They often rely on their co-ethnic networks for cultural, personal and social needs. This is also accentuated by racial and systematic discrimination that many South Asian immigrants face, creating psychological barriers in terms of alienation and hesitation in their host society.

In culturally diverse Western societies, the lack of effective social cohesion between members of the mainstream and the minority groups can be seen as lack of intercultural competency — unable to meet some certain effective and appropriate objectives to relay different ideas with clarity and cultural sensitivity (Lustig and Koester, 2010). The mainstream mass-media also "misrepresent" and often doesn't necessarily reflect cultural needs for many first-generation South Asian immigrants. This is a major reason for the popularization of South Asian mass-media across its diaspora in the West. These cultural products in the majority are produced and distributed by Mumbai-based Hindi film and television industry ("Bollywood"). The popular mainstream "pastiche" in terms of "Non-Resident Indian" cinema sees the broader South Asian diaspora as an extended "national family," who are living in the West (Forrest, 2010) – represented as 'Desis' (South Asians) re-located in 'Videsh' (foreign land.) Transnational media acts as cultural outlets for South Asian communities, whereas the mainstream host ones often develop through its mainstream cultural narratives.

South Asian Representation in Western Popular Culture

The Western mainstream "cultural identity" is shaped by dissemination of American exports through films, television, books, music and so on. Their reach of American "cultural exports" is also a global one competing with as well as influencing mass-media industries everywhere, positioning American mediascape leading "global cultural flows" (Appudurai 1990, 9). This means being a pivotal facilitator in

intercultural communication *amongst* disparate communities: Mainstream American/European "white identities," and the minority ones of its immigrant; marginalized ones of LGBTQ+ community, women and other lower classes. The mainstream one is *better* represented, often explored through "authentic" modes, a well-rounded characterization of Western white identities tracing their culture, ethnicity, social structures, history and motivations while the minority-marginalized ones observably lacking this. This creates a major site of *conflict*, stemming from a "lack of authorship" for many non-mainstream identities: I phrase it as, "having to hear their side of the story through someone else's mouth." Lived experiences can create "authentic" authorships, one based on personal experiences and the knowledge gained through it. It also can act as a "recollective," a reflection on lived experiences which has passed, pivotal to experiences of minorities (Marshall, 2011, p.104); for South Asian ethnicities, their representation in the Western mainstream media culture lacks this, often misrepresented through *stereotypes*.

The construction of perceptions, representation and stereotypes of South Asian ethnic identities in the mainstream Western societies can be understood through Edward Said's theory of *Orientalism*. In it, he posits Western colonial viewpoints have historically seen non-Western, non-European and non-Caucasian identities through a "power binary" of, "Us v/s Them" creating the category of the *Other* (Said, 1978). This seen through "alterity," means standing out of the standard conventions and norms of mainstream Western media. Bachmann (2017) sees, " 'alterity' itself unfolds as a projection screen for imaginations, fantasies, wishes, national anxieties, and self-exaggerations — visions of the unknown as well as projections onto the alienized, exoticized, or stereotyped *Other*."

South Asian ethnic identities are *often* homogenized as that of "Indians," – disregarding the heterogeneity of the diaspora. South Asians in the West are portrayed as "exotic dreamland:" the *third world*, a landscape of *oriental* tropes of *chaos* and *poverty*; *magic* and *mysticism*; *irrationality* and *illogic*; *spirituality and sages; Bollywood* and *curry*. The popular American animated television series *The*

Simpsons (1989 –), and the Oscar-winning film *Slumdog Millionaire* (2008) even though different cultural products meant for different audiences, plays out stereotypes, where India is inserted in history through the West (Forrest, 2010). In the West, there's an expectation to *perform* South Asian identities; for men, it's relegated to few professions: academics, cabbies, convenience store clerks, doctors and engineers. Apart from these —"Brown" identities of *men* are lumped together, a post 9/11 public perception — accentuated by popular mainstream Western media. It's a perception that sees Brown men as a constant security threat through "islamophobia," argued as a post-*Oriental* attitude that plays out in the form of racial profiling in public spaces. This media representation reflects the mainstream consensus in the West, often failing to distinguish between disparate Brown identities of ethnic diasporas of the Middle East and South Asia (Harris, 2016). For South Asian women, stereotypes play out in different ways; they exude an "exotic/erotic" beauty, in Eurocentric standard, it's the one where "women of colour" – are beautiful contextually; one that is not a standard model of perceived physical beauty, but one that also includes "personhood" (Deliovsky, 2008). Then there is a generalized trope — one of their "oppression," where South Asian patriarchy has been oppressing their "agencies," and they needed to be saved by a rational Western mainstream host cultures, a pastiche for cinematic themes known as "white saviour complex."

These stereotypes often construct "public perception" of the mainstream audiences of the West. Through their popularization and distribution around the globe, they further reinforce these perceptions, representations and stereotypes; in minority communities, they construct psychological ideas of inferiority and insecurity, especially children growing up failing to associate with a strong and positive role model who "looks like them." Indian-American comedian Hari Kondabolu sees a stereotypical representation of South Asian identities as "signals" of *racialization*; he thinks media representation of Brown identities doesn't feel "honest" (Reese, 2017), in other words, "authentic."

Authentic Interlocutors: In-between/Hyphented South Asian-Western "Identities"

The construction of modern South Asian urban identities, both resident and non-resident can be seen as identity processes rooted in discourses of both South Asia and the West, facilitated by knowledge of English often as either first or second language, as well as consumption of Western films, media and other cultural products. Observably these members engage in diasporic artistic and cultural endeavours that portray nuances of South Asian cultures, ethnicities, and social structures. These are both *transnational* and *crossover* in nature — transcending national boundaries to appeal to both diasporic and non-diasporic audiences, reflected in films, mass-media, visual arts, music etc. It's often countering the thrust of globalization, which homogenizes "identities"(Singh, 2006, p. 205). I argue that these South Asian diasporic creative processes are important "identity works," facilitated in the *Third Space*, where "nuances" of South Asian and Western societies are "enunciated."

These can be seen as *effective* techniques in authentic intercultural communications between minority and mainstream populaces helping alleviate miscommunications, which are seen as, "misfires" (Fox, 1997). The three modes of communication trying to reach an "effective level" which can't be based on "one-way adaption," where minority identities adopting a fixed national mainstream narrative; an acculturation process into dominant mainstream cultures adhering to a "national ethos" that is dictated by monolithic identity tags, such as American, Aussie, British, Canadian etc. This negates *transnationalism* and *hybridity* — adopted by many immigrants; it's reflected in an opting a *hyphenated* belonging such as Bangladeshi-Canadian, Indian-American, Pakistani-British, Sri Lankan-Australian and so on.

I see South Asian diasporic artforms a strong reflection of this; identities in "a constant state of flux" creating *ambivalent* categories. I see it as "in-between" negotiations of marginalized/minority belongings in their Western host societies — a cross between "South Asian" immigrant and "Western" cultural identities — a reflection of a South Asian-Western "identity." Indian-American filmmaker Mira Nair's film *The Namesake* (2006) reflects this through multi-generational navigation of both India and America

as home and host, exploring *hyphenated* identities through nostalgia, memory and belonging. Indian-British filmmaker Gurinder Chadha in *Bend it Like Beckham* (2002), reflects the "diasporic home-Western hostee dynamic" playing out in an Indian Punjabi family in the UK, reflecting multi-generational subjectivities, failure of assimilation for immigrant parents due to racial experiences; their children navigate intercultural belonging through *hybridity*, resisting "problematics" prevalent in both spaces.

Similarly, artists, comedians, filmmakers, musicians and other creatives of South Asian origin embody multiple *subjectivities* and through their occupation of mainstream cultural spaces of their host societies, they represent their diasporic identities. The presence and performance of South Asian ethnicity in mainstream spaces can be seen as the embodiment of the "third culture" which Bhabha (1994) argues is facilitated in the *Third Space*. In such a space identity are performed negating stereotypes as well as monolithic cultural perceptions. The collectivization and fragmentation of South Asian belonging shown through various artists such as Aziz Ansari, Guz Khan, Mindy Kaling, Hasan Minhaj, Riz Ahmed and many others show *hybridity* and *transnationalism* playing out in various modes— effectively disseminating nuances of being "Brown" in the West, the embodiment of "third culture" that forms at interstices of intercultural encounters of mainstream and minorities. I argue these identities are "authentic" interlocutors, communicating "culture" of both their diaspora and the host culture through "nuances." Their involvement in cultural spaces of the West provides them with "agencies"— a postcolonial subjectivity of *hybrid* identities where *they* can speak for themselves and author their *narratives*, able to mobilize and navigate both Western mainstream cultural spaces as well ones of their ethnic diaspora. I see them occupying and facilitating this *Third Space*, the *hybridity* of both minority/mainstream, able to both champion and criticize the "problematics" of both South Asia and the West.

Reflecting on the "third space of enunciation"

Like many South Asian popular artists, I firmly believe that our location in the vast swath of Western, South Asian and the global mediascape can be found, relayed and understood through the occupation, creation and invitation in the *Third Space*; it is embodied, and through the enunciation of the cultural knowledge of its occupants and facilitator, it can create intercultural experiences of empathy, understanding and appreciation. These are observed in campuses of colleges & universities, in the capitalist centres of economic exchange, in everyday interactions of the diasporic and its host, but most prominently relayed through expressions of cinema, media and popular culture's stories and imaginations. South Asian diasporic cinema and cultural productions may talk about the nostalgia of the immigrant, or may be critical of their diaspora or the host-nation outside it; they tell innocuous stories of the transnational; they engage in abstraction, where the audience can make their conclusions. Through these diasporic expressions, two cultures can be seen interacting in an "authentic" space of enunciation.

In Bhabha's (1994) view, "it is to the city that the migrants, the minorities, the diasporic come to change the history of the nation". Appadurai (1993,p.423) in his arguments connects these diasporas around the world to what he calls as "one mode in a postcolonial network of diaspora." The "third space of enunciation," can be seen as a postcolonial framework trying look at multicultural subjectivities that aims to inculcate the habit of envisioning media transnationally — deploying historical and cultural knowledge to mutually "co-implicated communities" (Stam, 2003, p.17). In research-creation modality, Barrett (2010) sees them as, "Arts-based methods can be employed as a means to create 'critical awareness or raise consciousness'; they are useful for 'identity work,' they can help 'give voice to subjugated perspectives,' 'promote dialogue,' (including extending academic work to wider audiences)." These intercultural techniques, I argue can help us, peer, into any ethnic diaspora, in a bid to find "commonalities," based on care for one's community, culture and ethical values. It's creating inclusive ways for ethnic minorities and mainstream members to *co-exist* through competent cultural iterations-

intersections; mutually constructing meaning of "national identity" and the "mass-media" that represents it.

Biography

Anushray Singh is an Indian filmmaker, media artist and writer based in Canada. He has received his MFA in Film & Media Arts from the University of Windsor (2020); B.Tech in Civil Engineering from the Vellore Institute of Technology (2017). His academic & research interests are Authenticity, Embodiment, Hybridity, Identity, Intercultural encounters, South Asian Diaspora, Transnational media and the Third Space; they have been presented in various academic conferences in Universities like Brock, York, Ryerson and Windsor. His filmography includes an SSHRC funded documentary *The North Was Our Canaan* (2019) and *Zuerst/First: A Visual Poem* (2019), featured in Arts Visual & Poetry Film Festival Vienna.

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